



**LLCd Symposium.**  
**SPEAKERS AND PRESENTATIONS.**

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**Brief Bio:** Anuradha is a developmental psychologist/human developmentalist and Associate Professor at Nirmala Niketan College of Home Science, a premier women’s education institution affiliated to the University of Mumbai. She currently teaches in B.Sc., M.Sc., and PhD Human Development programs, and has served one term as a Department Head. She has also taught at both her alma mater universities and at the Nirmala Niketan College of Social Work, University of Mumbai. Over the years, she has taught courses on language and cognitive development, supervised ECCE practicum in courses on Human Development/Child and Family Studies and has been a member of a National Taskforce for development of guidelines for ECCE institutions in India. Anuradha’s research career began as an undergraduate student and has spanned over two decades in varied areas such as resilience, education, and spirituality. She has completed her master’s degree from the Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, India, and her PhD from the University of Tennessee at Knoxville, USA.

**Theme:** Language Diversity and Cognitive Science

**Title of Presentation:** Complexity of Literacy Learning in Indian Contexts

**Abstract:** For different children in India, the task of becoming literate and thereafter proficient in reading and writing a language is not uniformly complex and exceeds the challenges that have been recognized in literacy and language-related research in countries characterized by greater homogeneity. Not only are Indian languages alphasyllabaries (Nag, 2007), the contexts for learning to be literate are incredibly heterogeneous in India. This includes variable multilingualism such that a classroom could include children with different first languages, none of which need be the language of instruction in the school. Moreover, languages have different statuses—some favoured, others disfavoured; and the status of the same language could change depending on whether the user is located in a region where it is a majority or a minority language, making the user an insider or an outsider, a regular or a migrant. Next, factor in the relatively low literacy rate in India, the prodigiously high poverty rate, escalating drop-out rates from primary to secondary/higher secondary with sharply tapered enrolments in tertiary education. Clearly, parents

need not be literate. Alternatively, parents need not be literate in the language taught at school. Readiness for success in school prior to school entry, and support for school tasks whilst being enrolled will sharply vary across diverse families. Value and relevance for school tasks will likewise differ across families. Regrettably, access to quality education is not guaranteed especially for the underprivileged. Most importantly, for many children, the home and school are incongruous with regard to language, values, content for learning, and more broadly, culture. For a substantial proportion of children, especially rural and tribal, the school experience is simultaneously a rejection of the child's (rich) culture and heritage, a process that is psychologically and sociologically disempowering and annihilatory of plurality, equity and cultural development.

In this presentation, a systems view of literacy learning in Indian contexts is proposed which is both integrative (i.e., with regard to extant literature from multiple disciplines and cultures) and innovative. A systems view is construed as an application of systems theory with key concepts such as irreducibility, interrelatedness, holism, embedment, role of context, structure-function bidirectionality, and plurality. In the systems view proposed in this presentation, cognisance of Indian contexts is tied together with varied threads adapted from both Indian (e.g., Agnihotri, 2009; Arulmani & Nag-Arulmani, 2004; Gupta, 2004; Jhingran, 2009; Mohanty, 2009, 2010; Mohanty, Mishra, Reddy & Gumidyala, 2009; Nag, 2007; National Curriculum Framework, 2005; NCERT, 2006a, 2006b, 2006c, 2006d, 2006e, 2006f; Panda, 2004; Panda & Mohanty, 2009) and non-Indian literature (e.g., Bloom, 1998; Gibson & Gibson, 1955; Gupta, 2008; Hakuta & Diaz, 1985; Hakuta & Garcia, 1989; Hakuta, Ferdman, & Diaz, 1987; Heugh & Skutnabb-Kangas, 2010; Snowling, 2009) yielding reiterative and novel outcomes that explain complexity in literacy learning. Case examples are used to illustrate the proposed theory.

Case examples include the first generation literacy learner, first generation English learner, literacy learners in languages not used in the home, and literacy learners in languages used in homes. For each case example, the following is outlined with regard to literacy learning: challenges, the outcomes of these challenges, opportunities and resources, and educational policies, practices and activities to help children learn given these challenges and opportunities. Initiatives in India that exemplify the systems view articulated in this paper are also described (e.g., Sardar Patel Vidyalaya, Delhi; Eklavya's Primary Education Programme, Bhopal; SIP and PAL programmes, The Promise Foundation, Bangalore; the Rishi Valley Rural Education Centre, Chittoor; MLE in Andhra Pradesh and Orissa).

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