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**Special Issue  
Multilingual Classroom:  
Expectations, Opportunities and Challenges**

*Editors*

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## From the Editorial Desk \_\_\_\_\_

### **A Critical Lens on Multilingualism in Education: Bridging Gaps or Building Barriers?**

Multilingualism has often been championed as a transformative force in education, promising to foster global understanding, inclusivity, and equity. Its proponents highlight its potential to enhance problem-solving, creativity, and critical thinking skills, create vibrant learning environments where students gain cognitive, cultural, and social tools to navigate an interconnected world. Yet, beneath this aspirational vision lie significant challenges. Structural barriers, policy inconsistencies, and sociolinguistic inequities often impede the practical realization of multilingual education's promise, raising the question—does it bridge divides or create new ones?

True progress lies in embracing multilingualism not just as a celebration of linguistic diversity but as a commitment to providing meaningful opportunities for all learners. By addressing its inherent challenges, we can transform multilingualism into a lived reality. Moreover, in India, even NEP 2020, a path-breaking policy document where multilingualism is concerned, has also not given English language the space it deserves in a multilingual curriculum. Its relationship with other Indian languages and how they can grow together in each other's company has not been studied. It is therefore important to discuss the various ramifications of such a confluence coherently and objectively.

In the introductory paper, R. Meganathan stresses the need to search for a multilingual pedagogy that incorporates the languages of the learners along with the common language of the classroom and the English language. Nivedita M. Barua and Sudipto Bezboroa's paper underscores the importance of embracing linguistic diversity to promote equitable educational opportunities and prepare students for global citizenship. It argues that the use of English should not overshadow the preservation and cultivation of students' mother tongues. In a similar vein, Mahanand Mishra's paper focuses on tribal multilingual education in Odisha which was initiated as a community-based government programme from 1996-2015 to provide meaningful learning opportunities to tribal children and foster linguistic diversity in school education.

Nsom K. Nsom and Brinda Chowdhari's analysis of the 2018 Reform Cameroon Primary School Curriculum establishes that a balanced approach of multilingual strategies and tailored instruction, benefits young learners more in enhancing community and international engagement than any other

strategy. In her paper, Tejaswinee Bhattacharjee showcases the profound impact of linguistic diversity on cognitive mechanisms and neural structure and highlights the fact that Indian multilingualism is a fertile ground for interdisciplinary exploration. Minakshi Lahkar's paper focuses on how a multilingual classroom for the teacher is both a challenge to be overcome and a resource to be cherished. L. Grashya and M. John Suganya, in their article, have provided a modern strategy of designment as an alternative to assignments in order to optimize outcomes in multilingual classrooms of military children. Dr. Venkenna argues that embracing multilingualism as a resource is essential for achieving educational equity. A comprehensive model for post-pandemic multilingual education which emphasizes technological accessibility and cognitive inclusivity is the theme of Peerzada Owais Adil and Neelofer Shafi's paper.

In an unusual turn, Muhammedali C. Puthiyapurayil explores the multilingual ESL students' beliefs about feedback on writing since beliefs are a central deciding factor in human behaviour and learning. Interestingly enough, Aliya Halim proposes the creative method of storytelling to teach English in a multilingual classroom and gives practical examples for using storytelling as language input in task-based learning instruction. Whereas A. Sathiyaraj, M. Deivam and T. Arul Kavya advocate strategies such as promoting multilingual identity and providing models to support language learning. Sheela George's paper highlights how important it is to provide teacher training and develop policies to create a supportive multilingual environment, Sanjiv Kumar's paper examines the challenges and expectations of educators and students in incorporating graphic novels as a pedagogical tool in multilingual classrooms. Ashish Awasthi and Ram Prakash Gupta focus on how the role of literature can be made simpler and important in a multilingual classroom.

Our interview with Professor Kathleen Heugh in this issue is at the heart of the debate on multilingualism. She is a Professor in Applied Linguistics at the University of South Australia. She shares her understanding and learning from her research and project work on multilingualism in Africa.

Other than these scholarly contributions, we have the usual fare of book reviews and language games and activities. Enjoy our selection!

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## Multilingualism and the Language Classroom

*R. Meganathan*

### Abstract

This paper attempts to present the different dimensions of multilingualism and multilingual education in diverse Indian contexts. Mother tongue-based multilingualism as the overarching philosophy and goal to 'bring in' the languages of learners into the classroom and accommodating at least three languages (which includes English) is explored in the current contexts. An illustrative activity using 'think aloud protocol' conducted with Class IX learners and experienced teachers informs the natural characteristics of authentic multilingualism in Indian classrooms. Intervention at the policy planning level to classroom pedagogical processes is needed to achieve the holistic multilingualism where languages are taught-learnt in tandem across the stages, particularly during the formative years of learning. Search for a 'multilingual pedagogy' to make use of the languages of learners along with the common language of the classroom and English language appears imminent.

**Keywords:** Multilingualism, multilingual education, language pedagogy, mother tongue-based multilingualism, three language formula, translanguaging, english language, language hierarchy, language mapping

### Multilingualism and its Dimensions

Multilingualism has been and is the buzz word since the 1990s in educational discourses and practices across the globe in varied perspectives even though the understanding of its dimensions is still evolving. This is because multilingualism as a social construct and an educational

policy and practice is highly diverse. Western multilingualism, it can be assumed, is mostly due to colonial effect, as a consequence of the world wars, particularly World War II and migration in the present times. It is more of an urban and professional multilingualism while Indian multilingualism is societal multilingualism i.e., people know/speak more than one language in society for they acquire the languages in social contexts. As Cenoz and Gorter (2013) observes, 'Multilingualism is at the same time an individual and a social phenomenon. It can be considered as an ability of an individual or it can refer to the use of languages in society' (p. 5). The dictionary definition of multilingualism is 'Multilingualism is the presence or use of more than one language in a society for social, cultural, professional and academic functions' (Li, 2008; European Commission, 2007). India's linguistic diversity places the educational landscape highly diversified in terms of language-in-education planning and policy, curriculum and resources, and pedagogical processes. Multilingualism in school education may be perceived in four dimensions: (i) *Multilingualism as the overarching philosophy for school education*, (ii) *Multilingualism as policy*, (iii) *Multilingualism as pedagogy* and (iv) *Multilingualism as resource*.

**Multilingualism as the Overarching Philosophy for School Education:**

This informs about the centrality of language(s) in learning and the intertwining nature of language and learning. Language is the medium of understanding and learning. Multilingualism also promotes multiculturalism, recognizing the linguistic and cultural diversity of the society and the country.

**Multilingualism as a Policy:** This addresses the following questions:

(a) How many languages in school? (b) Number of languages to be learnt/studied during the different stages of school education. (c) How can *mother tongue-based multilingualism* be realised in the classroom? Mother tongue-based multilingualism is that all children begin their school education in their mother tongue and move on to add many (at least two) more languages by the time they complete their secondary school—three-language formula as an 'ideal' and 'convenient' strategy for promoting mother tongue(s)/regional language in school education along with the official language, i.e. Hindi and the associate official language, i.e. English.

**Multilingualism as Pedagogy:** How to make use of the languages of

learners in processes of teaching-learning of languages and content subjects? (Strategies like code switching, code mixing, code meshing (Canagaraja, 2013), Bilingualism, Translanguaging (Garcia, 2009; García and Li, 2015).

**Multilingualism as a Resource:** Language plays a role in the cognitive development of children and the development of attitudes and values, socialisation and so on. Children make use of the language/knowledge as a resource (say, previous knowledge or abilities, mother tongue/first language) to learn new knowledge/language. Learners use their language repertoire (underlying linguistic abilities in general as also the abilities of the already known language) to learn other aspects of the same language or a new language. Another process is skill transfer from one language/first language to second and other languages. Cummins (2009) lists five types of transfers across languages: transfer of (a) Conceptual Elements/Understanding, (b) Metacognitive and Metalinguistic Strategies, (c) Pragmatic Aspects of Language Use, (d) Specific Linguistic Elements, and (e) Phonological Awareness. This is learning languages through languages/linguistic skills one possesses. When children know/learn more languages their attitudinal development, value development and socialization get enriched. This enables learners to become multi-skilled, emotionally balanced and helps learning the content subjects, language switching and mixed-language-classroom transactions in any classroom setting to be viewed as necessary pedagogic strategies because it supports transfer of knowledge and skills across languages.

### **Mother Tongue-Based Multilingualism as Additive Bilingualism**

As discussed above, mother tongue-based multilingualism is the launching pad for additive multilingualism beginning with the mother tongue/home language/first language/the language in which the child has been socialized and move on to add more languages, at least two more languages under the three-language formula. Therefore, mother tongue-based multilingualism (MTBMLE) is additive multilingualism and three language formula is the strategy to achieve the goal of mother tongue-based multilingualism (Meganathan, 2011; NCERT, 2006a). The National Policy on Education (NPE) 1986 and the curriculum frameworks—1975, 1988, 2000, 2005 and 2023 recommend the implementation of the formula in its true spirit. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 liberates the formula to accommodate all Indian languages for it takes into

consideration 'the Constitutional provision, aspiration of the people, regions and the Union, and the need to promote multilingualism as well as promote national unity'. And the Policy goes on to recommend, 'The three languages learned by children will be the choices of the states, regions, and of course the students themselves, so long as at least two of the three languages are native to India.' (p.14). However, not all children study their mother tongue/home language/the language in which they have been socialized in school neither is their language the medium of instruction in school, particularly in the contexts of tribal and minor languages.

### **Multilingual Education and the English Language**

English language has found its place, over the last three decades or so, as the common second language in school education across the states. This place as the second language has 'happened' as a process of rationalization in the school curriculum, instrumental motivation and for upward mobility. English is the second language for majority of learners as the language is introduced from Class I in all the states and union territories (Meganathan, 2011; and 2015) in formal schooling. It is also a language in pre-school as part of the Foundational Stage in *anganwadis* and (private) nursery schools. However, it is not the second language for quite a section of learners whose mother tongue/first language is tribal or minor languages. In case of tribal, minor language learners the state language is equal to first language or the second language and English language becomes the third language. The complementary and supplementary role of English (NCERT, 2005; 2006) is an illustration of additive multilingualism in every Indian school education situation—be it tribal, minor language situations, urban, rural, English medium or non-English medium situations. What does English language do amongst languages in multilingual education? As the position paper of the national focus group on teaching of English developed as part of the National Curriculum Framework 2005 observes that the 'aims of English language is the creation of multilinguals' Further, 'English does not stand alone. It needs to find its place along with other Indian languages i. *in regional-medium schools*: how can children's other languages strengthen English teaching/learning? ii. *in English-medium schools*: how can other Indian languages be valorized, reducing the perceived hegemony of English?' (NCERT, 2006, pp. 3-4). The developments in language-in-

school education since the National Curriculum Framework 2005 reveal that number of languages included in school education has increased as multilingual education gains momentum at the state level while English as the medium of instruction is on the rise. It would be fitting to say that multilingual pedagogies, i.e. pedagogical processes for multilingual education is evolving to use more than one language for teaching-learning of languages and content subjects. This premise (of multilingual pedagogies) is an imperative to understand that multilingualism and multilingual pedagogies are not teaching languages in isolation, separately which is 'isolated multilingualism'. In majority of Indian situations, teachers practice 'isolated multilingualism' in the name of multilingual education. The elusive question is, 'how do we teach or enable the learner to learn/use more than one language concurrently'? In other words, how can the teaching-learning of languages be done in tandem?

### **Multilingualism in the Classroom**

A language learning activity conducted among the learners of class IX in a low resourced English medium school and also with experienced teachers in Delhi reveals interesting features of the processes of language use (and learning) as adopted by young learners as well as teachers. The same activity was conducted with learners in the classroom and teachers in a training session separately. The activity conducted is known as 'think aloud protocol' processes. Learners are given a non-verbal or verbal input and they, in groups of four or in pairs, have to speak out whatever they think as they do/solve the task. The first set of tasks is the identification of six differences between two pictures, which look the same. This is a common weekly feature in newspapers and magazines in India. The second task is solving a riddle. Learners worked in pair for the second task. The riddle had to be solved by speaking out the thinking process (and language processing) one undergoes as the riddle is solved (The tasks are given at the end of the paper.) The learners/teachers were given the rubrics beforehand so as to work in pairs and the task had to be done by taking turns. They could use any language for speaking out. Three trainers went around and observed the activity. The following were observed:

<i>Sl. No.</i>	<i>Participants Actions</i>	<i>Language(s) Performance</i>
1.	Students started noticing the differences and were not speaking out. Teachers were noticing the differences and were speaking out as they noticed the differences.	Learners: No verbal language performed. Teachers: Performed language, spoke out soon after noticing the first difference.
2.	On the instructions of the trainers/ teacher, the participants took two minutes to 'read' the pictures and the text of the riddle and began to speak out.	Learners spoke in Hindi, English, Punjabi, Tamil, Bhojpuri and Haryanvi. Teachers spoke in Hindi, English, Punjabi, Tamil, Bhojpuri, Rajasthani and Haryanvi.
3.	Task repetition: When the task was repeated and both the participants were asked to speak out in one language only.	Both students and teachers found it difficult to speak (spontaneously) in only one language as they tend to code switch, code mix, rather code meshing.
4.	Task repetition in individual groups: Participants from select pairs were randomly asked to speak out to the whole class.	One of the pairs had to speak. Code switching and code mixing happened with ease.

The performance of learners and teachers in the multilingual tasks above with non-verbal input reveals many a phenomenon of Indian language classrooms. Languages were used freely as per the participants' linguistic repertoire. This goes on to support what Bialystok (2013) and Bialystok et al. (2012) in their assertion observe that 'the cognitive advantages of multilinguals are associated with simultaneous mental activation of multiple languages in the minds of multilinguals even as they attend to a target language and their experience of switching between languages'. It was also noticed what Cummins postulates the 'common underlying proficiency' (CUP) across all languages, facilitating positive transfer across languages (Cummins, 1981, 1984 & 2009). This is because the mother tongue/first language is well developed for effective control over cognitive-academic mental operations, or to the level of what Cummins describes as cognitive-academic language proficiency (CALP). As Baker (2006) argues, language attributes are not separated in the cognitive

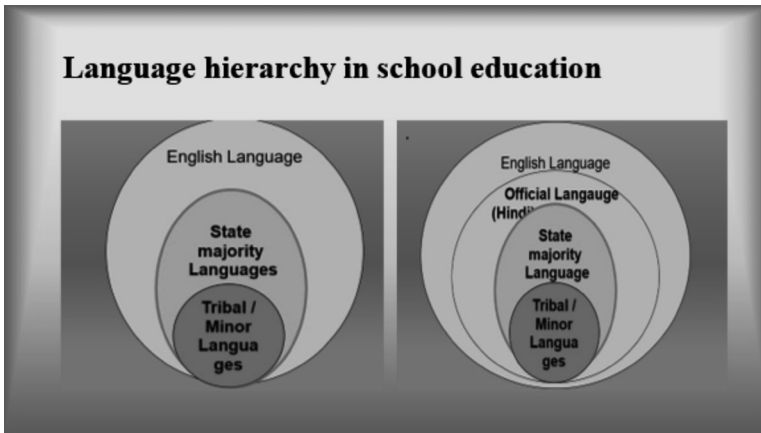
system, but transfer readily and interactively. (Cummins's BICS and CALP and the Iceberg are well known and I don't feel the need to explain here.) This was also underscored by Vygotsky (1962) when he suggested that with acquisition of language children's thinking becomes 'verbal'; language progressively takes over thought processes.

Many research studies in Indian contexts support the benefit of multilingual abilities of learners as a resource and needs to be adopted in the pedagogical process (Agnihotri, 2009; 2014; Mohanty, 2010 & 2013; Mohanty & Skutnabb-Kangas, 2013; Mohanty & Panda, 2015). The evaluative study of Multilingual Education (MLE) in the state of Odisha conducted by NCERT also reveals that the 'MLE programme has a positive impact on students' achievement in language and Mathematics conducted in tribal languages. The significant achievement found in the oral, written and total tests in language and Maths by children of MLE schools is better in comparison to that of non-MLE school children' (NCERT, 2011). A recent study by Lightfoot, Balasubramanian, Tsimplici, Mukhopadhyay & Traffers-Daller (2022) conducted in two different multilingual situations—Hyderabad and New Delhi—brings out the realities of multilingual education in India for it records how teaching practices and language use might interact for the promotion of multilingual learning. This calls for further explorations of classroom pedagogy. There has been a recognition of multilingualism and multilingual education at the policy and curriculum level. Yet the creation of materials, resources and a pedagogy for multilingual education, be it Translanguaging which might like to declare that 'there is no one language as mother tongue' and 'multilingual tongue' is the mother tongue of learners in many a multilingual situations across the world, particularly in India, has not advanced. The need for an eclectic pedagogy which makes use of the languages of learners as the common language of the classroom and the English language for its supplementary and complementary role is a tall order. The following measures may be suggested for achieving multilingual learning at the classroom level.

- 1. Teacher Developed Multilingual Pedagogy:** The teacher is central to the planning of the teaching-learning in the classroom. The teacher's critical language awareness for understanding the language situations in the multilingual milieu of the country and the region along with the knowledge of language pedagogy is essential for a multilingual classroom. The various dimensions

of multilingualism as discussed in the beginning is central/ integral to the critical language awareness as this paves the way for understanding the power equation in language education as shown below. The language hierarchy, as manifested currently could be captured in two different contexts—one with the state majority language (like Maharashtra—Marathi, Tamil Nadu—Tamil, West Bengal—Bangla) and the other is the states with no majority language or many tribal, minor languages (like the north eastern states and states like Jharkhand or select regions in some states). This warrants on the part of the teacher to plan strategies and pedagogical processes for promoting the languages of learners in the classroom. Engagement with more than one language concurrently and exercising the linguistic faculty of learners by providing opportunities to use languages for various purposes would be the kind of pedagogy one expects as part of the multilingual teaching.

**Figure 1:** Language Hierarchy in Two Indian Contexts



2. **Language Mapping:** Let us agree that ‘making use of the languages of learners’ along with common language of the classroom and the English language is multilingual pedagogy. This pedagogy needs to be understood at different levels from curriculum development to classroom teaching. Teachers and schools need to know about the languages learners speak in their homes, where and with whom they speak the languages. In other words, there is a need to understand the language profiles of learners along with their

socio-economic profiles. Language mapping of the classroom is a requirement for planning the multilingual classroom, resources, pedagogy and assessment. Teachers with the support of parents map the language use through a survey of their learners. 'Who uses, which language(s), with whom, for what purposes and at which places?' is the information which would help in planning for multilingual education and its processes. States like Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh have conducted language mapping surveys while planning their curriculum in the recent years.

3. **Doing Away with Medium of Instruction:** With multilingual education and a translanguaging pedagogy as the overarching curriculum and processes for language education in school, the very idea of one language medium would become redundant. It is time that the notion of medium of instruction is diffused and decide the language in which/through which the content subjects will be taught. There are illustrations of such practices in the centrally administered systems, viz. Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan (KVS) and Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti (NVS) where some content subjects are taught in English and some are taught in Hindi or in the state language. This reveals the problem in the assumptions by curriculum implementers and teachers on enabling learners to understand and acquire concepts. Social Science is taught in Indian language medium and Science and Mathematics are taught in English medium. This may not be the ideal way of understanding the language needs of learners for understanding and applying concepts. However, teaching in one language as medium would not be conducive for promoting multilingual education in schools. Let teachers and learners use languages as they feel comfortable to interact, understand and argue (for the whole discourse of the classroom) in the classroom. This is essential during the foundational years of learning in tribal and minor language situations. This would also reduce the hegemony of one language medium education.
4. **English Language, its Role and Place in Multilingual Education:** As discussed earlier, English language is the common second language across the country in school education and a language from Class I and even before. The multilingual education programmes and experiments in states like Odisha have proven

that English language finds its place along with the tribal, minor language and state majority language. This synchronizes with the aims of English language education advocated by the position paper on teaching of English (NCERT, 2006b). English language curriculum and educators need to understand this development and address the needs of other languages for realising a holistic multilingual education.

Thus, multilingualism as the overarching philosophy and multilingual education as policy, resource and pedagogy have been evolving in their various dimensions. Innovative pedagogical processes as designed by the (informed) teacher could further the objectives of skill acquisitions and harmonious language development in the learner.

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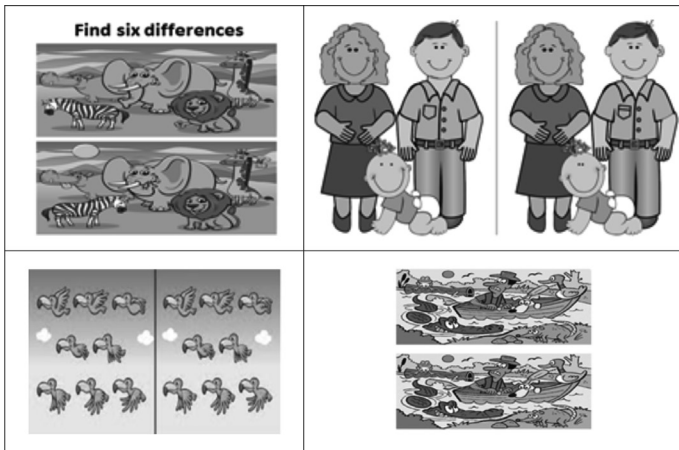
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## Annexure 1

### Think Aloud Protocol Activity 1

In groups of four find the six differences between the two pictures. Please speak out as you think.



Source: Pictures taken from sources which are copyright free and free to use for non-commercial purposes.

## Think Aloud Protocol Activity 2

Here is a riddle. In pairs read out the riddle and solve the same. Speak out as you think.

### She-Goat, Wolf and Cabbage



Source: Picture taken from Creative Commons <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/3.0/>

A farmer is returning from the market, where he bought a she-goat, a cabbage and a wolf (what a crazy market!). On the way home he has to cross a river. His boat is small and won't accommodate more than one of his purchases. He cannot leave the she-goat alone with the cabbage (because the she-goat would eat it), nor can he leave the she-goat alone with the wolf (because the she-goat would be eaten). How can the farmer get everything on the other side of the river intact? Solve the puzzle.

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## Role of Home Language(s) in Facilitating Learner Recall While Reading Academic Texts in English

*Nivedita Malini Barua & Sudipto Bezbaroa*

### Abstract

This study explored the effects of post-reading group discussions on the reading comprehension of twenty university students of intermediate-level English. Each group read a text and produced individual written recalls. Group 1 responded in writing without discussion; group 2 discussed the text in their L2 (English); the members of group 3 discussed the text in a shared home language; group 4 was a mixed group with mutually unintelligible language varieties while group 5 comprised of speakers of mutually intelligible language varieties. It was observed that the written recalls of the groups that engaged in post reading discussions were more detailed. Furthermore, participants who discussed the text using their home language(s) and other languages in their repertoire had better recalls than the ones that used only English in their discussions. The authors recommend the strategic use of learners' home language(s) in the English classroom.

**Keywords:** Home language, translanguaging, collaborative learning, group discussion, reading comprehension, recall

### Introduction

Reading comprehension plays a pivotal role in understanding the content area in all subjects and therefore it is considered as crucial for academic success (Smith et al., 2021). An important sub-skill of reading is being able to infer 'meaning from text' and it is considered as an important factor of 'sophisticated reading ability' (Oakhill & Cain, 2007 as cited in Smith et al., 2021).

However, studies have shown that from the primary to the tertiary level of education, the focus of teaching and testing of reading has been mostly on the content rather than reading as a skill (Srinivas, 2024). As a result, even at the tertiary level, where learners are expected to have developed some proficiency, serious problems related to grammar, vocabulary, understanding, and personal experience are observed (Suwanaroa, 2021).

In a country like India, where comprehension of complex academic texts in English is considered as a desideratum for academic success in higher studies, students lack the desired reading proficiency (Megala and Premraj, 2020). Tertiary level students are required to read dense academic texts in English authored mostly by foreign writers. The present study determines whether the use of learners' home language(s) and translanguaging facilitates reading comprehension of academic texts in English. For this study, learner recall was considered as the indicator of successful reading comprehension. Learner recall is defined as the ability of the learner to interpret and remember the information in the text (Pino et al., 2013). The participants in the present study spoke different language varieties with different levels of mutual intelligibility. The following research questions were formulated to determine the efficacy of learners' home language(s) in facilitating reading comprehension in English.

1. In what ways do group discussions facilitate reading comprehension in English?
2. In what ways do group discussions in learners' home language(s) facilitate reading comprehension in English?
3. In what ways do group discussions using different language varieties at the learners' disposal facilitate reading comprehension in English?

## **Literature Review**

### **Translanguaging and the Use of Learners' Home Language(s) in L2 Reading Comprehension**

Translanguaging refers to use of languages by multilingual students for both receptive and productive uses (García & Lin, 2016). It offers better opportunity for learners to make use of their home language(s) in collaborative interactions (Lämsä-Schmidt, 2024). Ocampo's (2023)

study corroborated that there was a high degree of correlation between reading comprehension and translanguaging. According to Hungwe (2019), the home language(s) of the learners help them to understand the meaning of the texts and also enable them to understand the concepts better.

In Almalki and Alzahrani's (2024) study that is quite similar to the present one, it was found that the use of L1 in collaborative discussions better facilitated the comprehension of L2 texts. In another longitudinal study involving two native Arabic speakers, it was observed that the use of home language better facilitated collaboration in interactive tasks (Lämsä-Schmidt, 2024). Studies as far back as Lee's (1986) have shown that better reading comprehension takes place when it is done in the reader's home language(s).

The present study has been influenced to a great extent by Turnbull and Evans' (2017) research that determined the role of learners' L1 in facilitating greater text recall in L2. There are a few points of divergences from that study in order to accommodate the differences between the linguistic contexts of the two studies.

### **Collaborative Reading**

Collaborative reading has its roots in Vygotsky's socio-cultural theories of learning (Salas & Larrain, 2024). In studies such as Pasaribu & Iswandari's (2019), it was found that collaborative reading practices fostered the learners' critical thinking skills along with enhanced reading comprehension. Goodmacher and Kajjura (2010) put forward arguments in favour of collaborative reading and even advised and provided examples on how teachers can facilitate a collaborative reading environment in the classroom. Zoghi et al., (2010) have advocated the use of collaborative reading combined with strategic reading. Vaughn and Edmonds (2006) found that more efficient reading and better comprehension strategies can take place if learners work in small groups.

### **Recall as a Means of Assessing Reading Comprehension**

Though recall as an assessment procedure for reading comprehension has limitations, it is one of the most reliable and valid means as compared to several other popular modes of assessment (Mermelstein, 2023). In Diakidoy et al. (2017) study, the ability to recall the main claim and

the amount of text information recalled and inferences made were the determining factors for measuring the level of comprehension of the participants.

Another significant work in this area is by Wiley (2005) who found that prior knowledge about a topic helped readers to retrieve information more effectively. This is relevant for the present study because some of the participants were made to discuss the content of the text among themselves that allowed them to gain access to a common pool of knowledge shared by the group.

According to Cao and Kim (2021), though retell is widely used to assess reading comprehension, it should not be the only measure of reading comprehension as research in retell as a measure of reading comprehension is quite limited. They also recommended knowing about more 'systematic approaches' to assess retell as a measure of reading comprehension. Moreover, they emphasized that retell assessments can vary in different ways. In fact, it was found that written retell helped in literal recall whereas oral retell enabled young learners to draw inferences and make generalizations (Vieiro & García-Madruga, 1997 as cited in Cao & Kim, 2021). In the present study, the participants engaged in both written and oral retell with the latter carried out in learners' home language(s) in case of three groups.

## **Methodology**

Twenty university students of intermediate-level English studying English Language Teaching at a university in the north-eastern part of India were selected for the study through convenience sampling. All agreed to participate in the project voluntarily. A seven-paragraph and 1,500 (approx) word-length text was chosen as a sample text that students in a postgraduate programme were supposed to be able to read without much difficulty. The text was an excerpt from the book *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics* by Ronald Wardhaugh (2014) that is used as a course book in the ELT programme. It is an expository text discussing the use of sexist language from a sociolinguistic perspective. The text that was selected for this study was an unseen passage that was not taught in the class.

Five groups of four participants each were created as small groups of three or four members work best (Burke, 2011). The participants in

group 1 were made to read the text individually and write individual written recalls. Group 2 was instructed to read the text and discuss only in English before writing individual recalls. All the participants in group 3 shared Assamese as their home language. Group 4 had participants who spoke different language varieties such as Sumi, Ao, Assamese and Bodo which were mutually unintelligible. Participants in this group were allowed to discuss the text in whichever language(s) they were comfortable in, which resulted in all of them using mostly English. In group 5, though all the participants spoke different language varieties, they were mutually intelligible.

All five groups represented different types of classroom interactions. Group 1 represented the traditional mode of making students read and write in the language classroom. Group 2 adopted the monolingual type of interaction that follows the immersion model where students are encouraged to speak and write only in the target language in class. Group 3 represented homogeneous groups that are allowed to use a shared home language while group 4 represented one type of multilingualism where students speak different language varieties that are mutually unintelligible. This type of multilingualism makes it challenging to interact in linguistically diverse contexts. Finally, group 5 represented a different type of multilingualism where though students speak different language varieties, they are mutually intelligible. In this type of multilingualism, students can access their own and their peers' linguistic repertoire in order to communicate with each other.

The language varieties spoken by each member of groups 4 and 5 are presented below.

#### **Group 4**

<b>Student</b>	<b>Home Language</b>	<b>L2</b>	<b>L3</b>	<b>L4</b>
S4.1	Sumi	Nagamese	English	Hindi
S4.2	Bodo	Assamese	English	Hindi
S4.3	Assamese	Hindi	English	-----
S4.4	Ao	Nagamese	English	Hindi

In group 5, the researchers included group members who understood one another's home languages as well as shared other common languages apart from English.

**Group 5**

<b>Student</b>	<b>Home Language</b>	<b>L2</b>	<b>L3</b>	<b>L4</b>
S5.1	Rajbanshi	Assamese	Hindi	English
S5.2	Maithili	Hindi	English	Bengali
S5.3	Bengali	Assamese	Hindi	English
S5.4	Assamese	English	Hindi	-----

All the group discussions were audio recorded and transcribed.

The participants in group 1 wrote their text recalls without any discussion while all the other groups discussed the content of the text followed by individual text recalls in writing.

**Data Analysis**

Comprehension of the text was examined on the basis of written text recalls and responses and transcripts of group discussions were scrutinized. The written recalls for all the individual group members were analysed using a set of criteria based on Kintsch's (1988) construction-integration Model and on Meyer's (1979) Structural Analysis: a hierarchical organization model that organizes the summary of the text and the main ideas or 'macro-propositions' into top level and supporting ideas or 'micro-propositions' and the order of ideas presented in the text into the bottom level.

Participants' written recalls were scored on a scale of 8 with 1 point given for each of these criteria: text summary; macro-proposition; micro-proposition; Top-down processing such as ability to make connections beyond the surface level; autobiographical links; speculation about meaning in the form of questions; illustrating important ideas with appropriate examples; Bottom-up processing such as recalling the wording of the text.

The transcripts of the audio recordings were checked for the following features:

- Level of participation of the group members
- Language varieties used
- Discussion on main and sub-points
- Examples and autobiographical connections
- Displaying overall understanding

## Findings and Discussion

### Observations Made During Group Discussions

**Table 1:** Approximate Duration of Group Discussions

<i>Group</i>	<i>Duration of Discussion (in minutes)</i>	<i>Language(s) Used During Group Discussion</i>
1 (No Discussion)	No Discussion	No Discussion
2 (Only English)	12.33	Only English
3 (Same home language)	17	Assamese
4 (Mixed group with mutually unintelligible language varieties)	18	Mostly English with a bit of Hindi
5 (Mixed group with mutually intelligible language varieties)	28:50	Assamese, Hindi, English

Table 1 indicates that the group that discussed in a shared home language and the groups which were allowed to discuss in language(s) that they were comfortable in were found to be engaged in longer discussions as compared to the group using only English for discussion. This may be because the participants could talk more freely in their home language or in languages that they had easy access to. This finding aligns with Turnbull and Evan's (2017) study. It seems that there is not much difference between groups 3 and 4 as far as the duration of group discussion is concerned. The duration of discussion was the longest in group 5. The reason for this may be attributed to the fact that all the participants in group 5 spoke different language varieties that were mutually intelligible and they used all these different varieties while speaking to the other group members. Since they were allowed to discuss in any language(s) they were comfortable in, they could access the different varieties without any restrictions indicating that discussion in languages that they were comfortable in facilitated reading comprehension. An analysis of the transcription of group 5 indicated that participants often resorted to another language they frequently used when they were looking for an appropriate expression that they did not know in their own home language.

To support this observation, a comment made by a participant in group 5 has been presented below.

*Matlab 'kajer log'... Meaning home help*

In the above comment, the speaker who is Bengali uses a Hindi word 'matlab' to give the meaning of 'a home help'.

The participants in group 3 and 5 were the only groups that dealt with a part of the text that was avoided by the participants in groups 1, 2 and 4. This part of the text dealt with the counter argument that devising a paired term like 'waitress' or 'actress' for the female counterpart is what should be considered as sexist. This finding aligns with the Turnbull and Evan's (2017) study that led the researchers to comment that when participants can communicate without any restriction of 'limited L2 proficiency', they are encouraged to discuss 'relatively complex topics'.

The use of one's own home language(s) facilitates making connections with one's experience. Groups 3 and 5 which discussed mainly in their own home language(s) or shared language varieties that they were comfortable in showed signs of cognitive processing such as making connections with their own experience. During the reading process, the reader retrieves what has been 'experienced, learned, and stored' (White, 1991, p. 173). In groups 3 and 5 there were also signs of reflective reading (Nourdad & Asghar, 2017). This strategy guides students to connect the information that they find in the text with themselves, the other texts, and the world, so they can interact and involve actively with the text (Wahyuni & Jufri, 2016). The following comments made by participants in groups 3 and 5 represent the type of connections that are possible. The original comments were in Assamese. The verbatim translations have been provided below.

### **Group 3**

*Recently an incident happened with me..you know I had a Flipkart delivery and usually delivery boys come but my delivery was made by a delivery girl!*

### **Group 5**

*S1: One more thing that is becoming common is that there are more and more female bus conductors.*

*S2: And also, there are more female employees in petrol pumps.*

*S3: We also assume that if it is a driver than it has to be a male.*

Another important observation was that even quieter students were seen to be contributing to the group discussions in groups 3 and 5. Though group work has been found to allow students to work in a 'less threatening environment' (Harmer, 1991, as cited in Alfares, 2017)

and brings down the anxiety level of the learners (Foster, 1998 as cited in Alfares, 2017), the freedom to use the language variety(ies) that students are familiar with or more comfortable with enables students to share their thoughts and opinions about what they have read about more freely without feeling restricted by one language. It was observed that though groups 2 and 4 were allowed to discuss the text content, they were limited by the use of only English (in case of group 2) and use of English again in case of group 4 to accommodate the mutually unintelligible language varieties of the group members.

### Findings from Written Recalls

**Table 2:** Total Amount of Written Recall Words Per Group

<i>Group</i>	<i>Average Number of Written Recall Words</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Comments</i>
1	213	4	Recalls in English
2	165	4	Recalls in English
3	217	4	Recalls in English
4	195	4	$\frac{3}{4}$ opted to write in English; however, at the time of discussion they opted to use a mix of Hindi and English as there was a Sumi speaker
5	351	4	Recalls in English

**Table 3:** Average Scores Obtained by Each Group for Written Recalls

<i>Group</i>	<i>Scores (on a scale of 32)</i>
1	8
2	10
3	24
4	15
5	24

The data in Table 2 indicate that there is not much difference in the average word count in the written recalls for groups 1, 3 and 4. However, as shown in Table 3, the average scores obtained for the written recalls do not align with the average number of words. This clearly indicates the importance of using learners' home language(s) or mutually intelligible languages during collaborative reading. Group 1 recalls were limited

to comments about the surface structure and showed fewer signs of comprehension. Group 2 recorded in greater detail, but suggested partial understanding thus indicating the effectiveness of collaborative reading. When we look at the data in Table 3, it becomes evident that notwithstanding the duration of the talk in the groups, there were major differences with respect to signs of cognitive processing such as making autobiographical connections and reflective observations during the discussions.

The average score in groups 3 and 5 written recalls was significantly higher as compared to the other groups. It was observed that the written recalls had the same basic information, but it was in far greater detail. Similar to the group discussions, there were signs of cognitive processing such as making autobiographical connections and reflective observations. The written recalls of the participants in groups 3 and 5, moreover, show that they dealt with topics not touched upon by the other groups. For example, some of them made references to the Whorfian hypotheses of linguistic relativity and determinism while making comments on the connection of the use of sexist language and general gender perception or biases. Moreover, they could argue in their recalls as to whether the problem of sexism lies in the language or if it had to do something with the society that uses it.

Group 4 (mixed group with mutually unintelligible language varieties) recalls were not as detailed and a few important points and original examples were missing. On the other hand, group 5 (mixed group with mutually intelligible language varieties) recalls were very detailed and included all the relevant points and examples along with examples of their own.

Overall, written recalls were mostly in English (barring one in Sumi in group 4) though participants were given the option to write their recalls in whichever language they wanted to. This may be attributed to the lack of training in writing in their own home language(s).

## **Conclusion**

The present study provides further evidence that participants who discussed the texts in their home language(s) recalled the most textual elements and features, produced recalls with the most words, discussed the broadest range of topics and displayed signs of higher order cognitive

processing. In the case of the mixed language group where participants spoke different language varieties that were not mutually intelligible, they were seen to be using mostly English. Though they recalled better than the 'only English' and the no discussion groups, their recalls were not as effective as the group that shared the same home language. In the case of group 5 that spoke mutually intelligible language varieties, they were seen to be accessing all the languages in their linguistic repertoire including English. Their recalls strongly indicated a sound understanding of the text.

The sample size can be considered as a limitation of the study as there were just 20 participants. A larger sample size could have facilitated the drawing of broader generalizations.

A recommendation that can be made in the light of the present study is that though collaborative reading using learners' home language can be useful in facilitating greater engagement with the text, care should be taken while grouping students for such work. Grouping can be done on the basis of mutual intelligibility among the learners.

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## Multilingual Education in Tribal Schools of Odisha: Voices from Below

*Mahendra Kumar Mishra*

### Abstract

Multilingualism is the original human condition, once egalitarian, but over time, the language of power has dominated, promoting monolingualism. This ideology marginalizes children's languages in education, leading to inequality. However, with migration and inclusivity, many countries embrace Multilingual Education (MLE) to provide equal access to mother tongues, especially for ethnic and linguistic minorities. This shift highlights the importance of linguistic rights and empowers communities. India's enduring multilingualism demonstrates the country's rich linguistic diversity, which has persisted for over 3000 years. This powerful tool empowers them and enlightens society about the importance of linguistics. India's enduring multilingualism, a social dynamic and social reproduction that has persisted for over 3000 years, is a testament to the country's rich linguistic diversity. This diversity is not just a fact, but a treasure that we must appreciate and respect. This paper addresses the use of multilingual education among Odia tribals in order to decrease the gap between mainstream and tribal groups. The latter are marginalized by the dominant culture (which uses the state language, Odia, in education) leading to the loss of education and their (tribal) language and linguistic rights.

**Keywords:** Multilingualism, equal access, tribal MLE programme, linguistic rights

Agnihotri (2014) argues that all children are multilingual, and classrooms are enriched with multilingual resources such as bilingual books, language learning kits, and culturally diverse teaching materials.

However, the current monolingual ideology often fails to consider these educational issues or the challenges faced by children in learning, leading to social discrimination against marginalized children.

Despite efforts to safeguard the language and culture of tribal people in education and society as per the Indian Constitution (Article 350A), many Indian states have retained their monolingual ideology in the education system, promoting dominant multilingual education in the name of mainstreaming. This has led to a restrictive curriculum ideology, which is a system of education that is primarily designed for the majority culture and language, thereby marginalizing the languages, cultures, knowledge, and identities of tribal communities.

In response to these challenges, the Odisha tribal MLE programme was initiated as a community-based government programme from 1996-2015 to provide meaningful learning opportunities to tribal children and foster linguistic diversity in school education. The program, which is deeply rooted in the community, commenced in 1996 initially in ten tribal languages and has since expanded to include 21 tribal languages and it is institutionalized in the state education system.

### **The Context**

Odisha was granted state status in 1936 during the British regime, based on Odia being a linguistic majority state. Odishā is a state with Austro-Asiatic, Dravidian, and Indo-Aryan language families, and the tribal population constituted one-fourth of the total state population. Odia was the state's official language and medium of instruction in schools reinforced in 1936. Till 1947, not many schools had been opened in tribal areas. The schools were initially opened in the coastal belt of Odishā along with the schools opened by the kings in their principalities. Students, irrespective of caste and language, learned in the school language in which enrolment of tribal children was abysmally low.

The non-use of the mother tongue is a significant factor contributing to child dropouts in tribal areas. Tribal children, whose mother tongues belong to the Austro-Asiatic and Dravidian language families, often struggle with the Odia language, which is part of the Aryan language family. The imposition of Odia as the language of power and knowledge in the tribal belt was a burden to tribal children. The dominance of the Odia language had severe consequences for tribal children's education.

They found it challenging to comprehend or speak in the Odia language in the classroom, and the content of the textbooks developed by middle-class educators was often beyond their understanding.

The state language policy, which created a gap between the home and school languages in Odisha, significantly contributed to the low literacy rate among tribal children. Evidently, over the span of fifty years, the literacy rate of tribal students saw a meagre increase from 7.40 per cent in 1961 to 37.40 per cent in 2001, leaving approximately 25 per cent of them without the appropriate education they deserved.

Teachers in tribal areas were mostly nontribal, and their attitude toward tribal children was apathetic. Their teaching in Odia resulted in high dropouts and low achievement of school failure, thus amounting to social discrimination and loss of human resources. The dominant nontribal teachers serving in tribal areas were engaged in schools over decades to teach them in Odia, where learning in the classroom was almost a pretended labour, knowing that without a communicative language between the teachers and students, no meaningful learning is possible. Education of tribal children in their mother tongue was a taboo in the system. Even the teachers belonging to tribal communities were also hesitant to use the mother tongue of children in the classroom since they were instructed to teach the children in Odia as a prescriptive school curriculum. Teachers also discouraged the tribal children from speaking their mother tongue in the classroom. They were of the opinion that using their mother tongue in school can have a negative effect on children learning Odia as a second language.

### **Goals**

The introduction of the Multilingual Education (MLE) programme in tribal schools was driven by three crucial and interrelated goals. The first goal was to enhance access and retention, thereby improving the literacy rate of Scheduled Tribes' children in the school system. The second goal aimed to provide equitable quality language education that respects the culture and knowledge system of tribal children, achieved through a tribal-sensitive curriculum and instructional materials. The third goal was to empower teachers serving in tribal areas with transformative training, enabling them to teach tribal children with meaning and comprehension, thereby providing basic literacy in their mother tongue and second language in classrooms.

### **Linguistic Survey 2005**

To assess the languages tribal children, speak and the teachers speak and understand the languages of the children, the state conducted the first linguistic survey under Child Census 2005 and found 11,479 schools with linguistic diversity in 72,000 schools. Their home language differs from the school language, and the children are unfamiliar with Odia, the state medium of instruction. It indicates six thousand two hundred villages where tribes from different groups have tribal monolingual situations in classrooms. For instance, if the Gajapati district has 815 schools, and 440 schools are exclusively Saora, then these schools are enrolled with hundred per cent Saora-speaking children. They are not exposed to the Odia language at all. It was realized that children up to class III could not achieve the desired outcome in learning Odia as their school language because of their Saora dominance in schools.

### **Significance of the MLE Programme for Tribal Schools**

As we prepare for the Tribal MLE programme, our activities are focused on understanding and addressing the inherent challenges in the system. It's crucial to define clear objectives and strategies, and to do so, we need a team that believes in change. People often resist new things because they are accustomed to the status quo and are reluctant to embrace change due to conservatism or a lack of awareness about the potential benefits of innovation. Therefore, the initial objective of the MLE programme was to comprehend the ground realities and explore the issues. Then, the aim was to transform the situation by creating a utopia, understanding the basics of MLE, and implementing MLE through democratic dialogue (Mohanty et al., 2009).

### **Language and Culture Matters in Transforming Teachers' Training**

In order to provide linguistic access along with the cultural understanding of children in schools, it was essential to foster culturally responsive teacher training through which teachers can understand the importance of children's language and culture in the classroom. Therefore, the training of teachers focused on three components: attitude, knowledge, and skills. Attitude means removing beliefs, negative attitudes, and ethnic superiority, becoming a positive teacher, respecting tribal children as people with self-image, and accepting cultural and linguistic

diversity as a resource. Knowledge means the local knowledge of the tribal society exists in their socio-cultural practices as productive knowledge to be used in school curriculum and develop culturally responsive curriculum. Skill stands for learning in home and school language as cognitive academic language skills that help teachers to know that learning a home language helps in learning a second language effectively. It was a significant innovation in the state academic domain that broke the convention of autonomous monolingualism, which is the practice of using only one language in a given context, into a culture of multilingualism and multiculturalism in the classroom.

The transformative training programme fostered a collaborative environment, where teachers from tribal communities were encouraged to explore and appreciate the significance of tribal culture and language. By using local knowledge and experience in the school curriculum, they were able to connect with new learning. Teachers learned to use oral tradition and community knowledge to create culturally relevant teaching materials and effectively develop curricular texts and language learning skills in ten languages. Each curriculum was developed based on the ethnocultural and linguistic properties of tribal children, making the teachers feel included and part of a team.

### **Culture and Language of the Tribes in the MLE Curriculum**

The state curriculum, designed for a middle-class society, uses Odia as the medium of instruction and focuses on Odia history, culture, and literature. This approach, while suitable for the intended audience, has inadvertently neglected the rich diversity of tribal communities, leading to a significant disconnect. It is crucial to understand and empathize with the impact of this curriculum on tribal communities and strive for a more inclusive education system that respects and values their unique culture and language.

Teachers in curriculum development were ignorant of the values of tribal language and culture to be used in the classroom. Therefore, a culturally responsive curriculum for MLE was conceptualized by adopting the thematic approach. For instance, the themes of the annual cultural calendar of the tribes, such as Earth, tree, water, fire, fruits, flowers, birds, animals, sky, moon, sun and stars, home, family, festivals, fruits, vegetables, seasons, weather, agriculture, and forest-based occupation,

were documented and applied while developing instructional materials closely to the children and communities. This process involved extensive interviews and discussions with the elders, ensuring their knowledge was accurately represented in the curriculum. The seasonal themes in the children's direct experience were selected to develop the curricular materials adopted from their respective cultures to design cultural texts as learning tools.

A community oral tale, legends, riddles, and songs are a treasure of cultural knowledge and are the source the older man, a respected figure in the community, preserves for posterity. They tell the stories to their youngsters on several occasions. When this tale is collected and transcribed into a big book, it undergoes a transformation from a natural speech act and speech event in performance to a structured sentence aligned with the pictures as a written text. The process of abridging the tale from a wider speech communication to a text helps children learn language. These texts empower the knowledge embedded in the community and introduce it into a school curriculum, making tribal children more communicative in their classroom with meaning and comprehension.

The teaching method uses linguistic and communicative competence to encourage effective communication between teachers and students in the classroom. This approach incorporates stories and songs to convey cultural knowledge and teach oral and reading language skills. Linguistic competence, a key aspect, focuses on learning language through a unique approach to sound-symbol combinations, letter identification, and word formation. This method not only enhances learning but also piques and arouses the student's interest in the language.

For instance, in developing the Saora primer for Class I, the Saora knowledge system was conveyed through oral communication in a classroom context. The Saora primer, *Erai Erai* (Come Come), incorporated themes such as the home, paddy field, forest, weekly market, hunting, forest products, sun, moon, stars, weather, seasons, musical instruments, fairs, and festivals. By embedding keywords and everyday familiar words into the communicative language, students were not just learning oral and written skills, but also developing practical skills applicable to their daily lives. This approach to education empowers students, making them feel prepared and confident in their ability to navigate their world.

## **Instructional Approach**

In MLE Odisha, a 'two-track approach to language acquisition was adopted. The Story Track used community stories and narration as curricular texts to facilitate natural speech acts and events using everyday language in the classroom. This track aimed to encourage children's complete expression with spontaneous language acquisition skills such as listening, speaking, understanding meaning, interpreting, reasoning, and creativity through reading. The benefits of this approach include fostering a deeper understanding of the language, promoting cultural appreciation, and enhancing communication skills.

On the other hand, the Literacy Track is based on basic literacy and is focused on correctness and accuracy in reading and writing. This approach was beneficial in teaching the alphabet and words to children. An alphabet book was created using the alphabets of tribal languages, highlighting their unique features. Emphasis was placed on their alphabets, vowels, consonants, and familiar words used in everyday life. The unique nature of tribal languages in terms of limited alphabets compared to Odia alphabets was also introduced in two phases. Alphabet charts and books based on tribal vowels and consonants were introduced in Class I, and Odia alphabets in Class II.

## **Instructional Design Adopting Cultural Theme**

The whole year is conceptualized as a cultural calendar based on which the cultural curriculum is designed in three terms. Term 1 is from July to September; Term 2 is from October to December and Term 3 is from January to March. Each term consists of 60 working days in schools, and each day, the teaching time is 300 minutes. The total teaching time in a week (six days) is 1,800 minutes; it is 18,000 minutes for ten weeks. Thus, thirty weeks total of 54,000 minutes of teaching time, i.e. dedicated to curricular and co-curricular areas.

After each term, we dedicate a week to comprehensive assessments. This ensures that our students' progress is not just measured but deeply understood. With three such assessment weeks annually, we leave no stone unturned in tracking our students' development. The curricular themes are distributed to daily lesson plans, covering a wide range of subjects and activities, from story and literacy tracks to mathematics, EVS, English (introduced in Class III, and other subjects like games,

health, play, music and dance, arts and crafts, storytelling, and library sessions, providing a comprehensive learning experience.

### **Language Maintenance Plan**

Mother tongue is adopted as a subject from Class I to Class V using children's oral literary texts and community funds of knowledge (Gonzalez, Molls & Amanti 2005). In Class III, mathematics and EVS were taught in the mother tongue, both oral and written. After that, oral MT with written and oral Odia was introduced in Classes IV and V. Oral Odia was also used in MT class. However, academic Odia was introduced in Class II for basic literacy. English is introduced in Class III using oral and visual activities, with some total physical responses. Thus, 30 weeks of a year was designed using sufficient instructional materials for children in the primary stage. There were 30 big books, 30 small books, and 30 listening stories for Class I and II each. Class I big book was in the mother tongue, and Class II big book was 60, 30 on MT and 30 in Odia. The Class I Big Books in the mother tongue was translated into Odia and taught in Class II to comprehend the known content in an unknown language (Odia). For literacy skills, children were taught alphabet charts, alphabet books, and yuktakshar books, and for second language learning methods like TPR, story books and known context and content were used.

### **Monitoring and Coordination**

The Multilingual Education (MLE) programme was a new concept to the system that the field functionaries were unfamiliar with. The critical MLE approach of using a mother tongue and second language could be straightforward for the tribal teachers to teach children in classrooms. However, the field academic coordinators are not mastering the MLE pedagogy. The reason could be their belief in dominant monolingual ideology or their need to be trained in MLE classroom monitoring.

After using the MLE approach in 1584 schools over five years, the tribal children were active in learning in their mother tongue and second language and mastered the Odia literacy skills with meaning and comprehension. The state engaged teachers from tribal communities willing to teach children in their mother tongues. The classrooms were engaged and teachers were able to teach two languages with a

meaningful dialogue showing the rapid progress in access, retention, and achievement.

### **Programme Evaluation by NCERT, New Delhi**

Considering the strength of the programme implementation of MLE, NCERT, New Delhi, with DFID support, conducted a programme evaluation in 100 MLE schools and 100 non-MLE schools, during 2009-2011 to assess the programme's effectiveness in the field. Children of MLE schools were higher achievers than those learning a second language. Universal access to tribal children, teachers' academic performance in a culturally responsive meaningful classroom, provision of learning materials in children's mother tongue, and adoption of the two track approach in classroom transactions made the teaching and learning process more engaging and effective for both students and teachers. Community organizations' prominent role in claiming the inclusion of mother tongue in schools as a marker of ethnic identity and tribal self-image, conservation of cultural biodiversity and human rights are the outcomes of Odisha MLE.

After a decade of implementation, the state formulated a language policy (2014) that strengthened MLE in scaling up, adopting a teacher recruitment policy; MLE in India is akin to an island of minority mother tongues, a beacon of diversity amidst a vast monolingual ocean. It is more than just a medium of instruction; it is a goal. MLE also plays a crucial role in preserving the ecological knowledge of the tribes, contributing to the aspiration of a sustainable green world. The programme's curriculum safeguards the values of greater humanity, making it a commendable initiative in education. The unintended outcomes of Odisha MLE are a celebration of cultural bio diversity and ethnic identity.

### **Impact of MLE in Odisha**

Odisha's MLE approach, a well-structured theme-based initiative sustained for over two decades, has not only strengthened the current education system but also earned recognition from the NEP 2020 and NIPUN Bharat as an ideal model. While other states like Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, and Madhya Pradesh have also initiated MLE, their programmes were discontinued. Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh, with the support of the Language and Learning Foundation, New Delhi, have undertaken the MLE programme, with Jharkhand focusing on five

tribal languages and Chhattisgarh on 16 languages. The success and recognition of Odisha's MLE approach by national policies serve as a strong endorsement for other states to initiate similar programmes for minority children, thereby providing them with language access and the opportunity to perform better than ever before, and has gained a global recognition.

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Note: The data used in this paper is based on the Linguistic Survey (Child Census 2005 of the School and Mass Education Department of the Government of Odisha. The tribal languages adopted in the first phase was Santali, Saora, Juang, Bonda, Kishan, Koya, Kui, Kuvi, Oram, Munda and Ho adopted Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTBMLE). The remaining eleven languages were undertaken translating the Odia textbooks for Classes I and II which were bilingual primers.

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# Multilingualism in Basic Education: A Vygotskian Analysis of 2018 Cameroon Primary School Curriculum

*Nsom Karlson Nsom & Brinda Chowdhari*

## Abstract

Primary Education is the bedrock for sustainable learning. On this basis, multilingualism's input in the 2018 Reform Cameroon Primary School Curriculum is construed. The tenet is that an analysis of the curriculum can provide clear-cut insights into the distinct values Cameroon's Ministry of Basic Education gives to the English language, French language and national languages. Vygotsky's contribution informs the teaching-learning design analysis (Cong-Lem, 2022). Four instructional parameters: time allocation, objectives, content and expected outcomes determine the pragmatic implications of the curriculum. Results show a significant imbalance in languages meant for young learners' cognitive development. English has 56 per cent of the language instruction time, French 33 per cent, and national languages only have 11 per cent. The linguistic disproportion insinuates a prioritization of official languages at the expense of national languages. The paper establishes that a balanced approach incorporating more multilingual resources and tailored instructions can better prepare young learners for community involvement along with international engagement.

**Keywords:** Curriculum, diverse young learners, English subsystem, multilingualism

## Introduction

Cameroon's linguistic landscape boosts two official languages, English and French with over 280 indigenous languages. In one multicultural study (Awah, 2022), these languages reflect the complexity that defines

Cameroon's historic and cultural landscape. This linguistic diversity though a resource, poses complex and multilingual challenges in educational policies and practices. The Ministry of Basic Education in Cameroon attempted to address this issue with the formulation and adoption of the 2018 Reform curriculum for the English Subsystem of Education. The curriculum seeks to align with the fourth Sustainable Development Goal (SDG4) which aspires for an inclusive and equitable education by 2030. If priority is given to early childhood literacy sustainable learning is secured. Nonetheless, Knauer et al. (2019) note that the implementation of mother-tongue-based multilingual education faces challenges in early child development. As such, the research paper offers a critique of the 2018 Reform Cameroon Primary School curriculum's approach to multilingualism. This is to know the value given to the national languages and cultures compared to official languages. Such an inquisitive attempt can decipher the implicit and explicit pragmatic messages about multilingualism. Its potential impact on the cognitive, social, and linguistic development of Cameroonian primary school children can be pinpointed. To do so, four parameters are identified and analysed. These involve the number of annual and weekly hours allocated to learn subjects such as English language, French language and National languages, stated objective per subject, teaching content/materials and terminal expected outcomes. The research hinges on both qualitative and quantitative data to present a comprehensive evaluation of the curriculum's effectiveness in fostering multilingual proficiency among Cameroonian primary school children. The main purpose is to provide a broader discourse on multilingual education and insights that can add to inform policymaking and pedagogical strategies in Cameroon and other multilingual countries across the world.

### **Early Education**

The importance of early childhood education cannot be overemphasized. McCoy et al. (2019) pinpointed that the need to support children's holistic development dates back to 1990 following the World Education Conference. In a study by Alemnge (2019), the importance of national integration into the curriculum of young learners is crucial. In his contribution, learner-centred and integrative approaches can underscore the development of competent skills and holistic development. So, using these approaches to teach children across the national territory promotes national unity. Similarly, Bayyurt et al. (2019) reinforce this claim with

the idea that the English language should be used as a Lingua Franca in the curriculum of multilingual and multicultural contexts. Responses from in-service teachers in Poland, Portugal, and Turkey support the claim. The responses indicate that the use of the English language as a lingua franca in language education goes beyond integration to the professional development of teachers. This triggers the curiosity to know whether using two or more languages as a medium of instruction can also be an alternative. Improving the teacher education model with practical insights for teacher training programmes in multicultural settings is pertinent.

### **English Influence**

Apart from contributing to nation-building (Burns and Roberts 2010), the English language also impacts employment, technology, and productivity (Kirkpatrick & Bui 2016). Research in Asian nations has shown that English is now widely used as a primary foreign language, official language, and even as a medium of instruction for students from minority linguistic backgrounds. These nations include India (Agnihotri, 2007), Pakistan (Shamim, 2008), Cambodia (Clayton, 2006), Bangladesh (Islam, 2015) Nepal (Phyak, 2016), Japan (Silver and Steele, 2005), and African nations such as Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Rwanda, Uganda, and Zambia (Aspinall & Chinouya, 2016). Past studies in language education policy in Asia have used parameters such as curriculum development, teacher training, and assessment to determine the status of English. Many Asian countries focus on incorporating English language education into their school curricula to improve language proficiency at levels while other countries only prioritize English language education from early school years, others lay more emphasis on higher education or professional training. Assessment methods vary from country to country depending on standardized tests while others use continuous assessment to evaluate language skills. Such observations show the diverse approaches taken by Asian countries in implementing English language education policies and practices.

### **Multilingualism in Basic Education**

Long before now, Tadadjeu (1975) argued that introducing Cameroon's indigenous languages into the school system can lead to a trilingual education system. This can be of great importance for linguistic,

educational, anthropological, and religious purposes. Secondly, he claims that developing African language courses in higher institutions and cooperating with other African countries can enhance language education and promote Pan-Africanism. The idea is further developed by Ekembe (2021) with colonized countries using English to construct national unity and historical legacies both at home and abroad. This can significantly address linguistic problems and promote cultural pride and national unity across the continent. In the same way, May (2000) notes that an understanding of past mistakes and the examination of issues such as racism and culture can address the difficulties of multilingualism and multiculturalism in education. Even though a plausible approach it seems much is yet to be said about the practicality of critical multiculturalism. Also, while the authors here indicate insights related to themes like tolerance, patriotism, and communal life to share the message of unity among learners, they seem to pay less attention to the input of multilingualism in the curriculum. In the view of Kennedy (2011), linguistic diversity has a key role in sustainable development practices. This is achievable by advocating for inclusive language policies that consider local languages. It is imperative to bring diverse perspectives and experiences together to enrich the discourse on language policy and development. In short, the intricate relationship between language, policy, and development can better inform strategies to empower communities. Communities preserve their cultures and traditions when inclusive language policies are implemented. Through such collaborative efforts, the education sector works towards empowering communities through their languages, promoting equity and participation in development processes. It could be interesting to look at the potential limitations in implementing inclusive language policies in diverse socio-cultural contexts.

### **Language Policies**

The status of Western languages and national languages in Cameroon is a point of discussion. In a recent study, Eyoh (2021) finds that the English alphabet principle is sufficient in the teaching and learning settings in Cameroon. His principal argument is that there is a need to opt for a common Alphabet system for a Cameroonian national language like Ngwo. This showcases the importance of the General Alphabet of Cameroonian languages and demonstrates that it can be

used appropriately and in harmony with that of official languages. This opposes the standpoint that the sole use of the English alphabet is enough. Nonetheless, Ekembe (2021) argues that the adoption of English as the primary medium of instruction (EMI) in a multilingual context has positive and negative consequences. On a positive note, EMI can promote Indigenous languages and the diverse linguistic landscape of Cameroon. This means that language policies have a key role to play in inclusive education. Thus, a clarion call is to be given to all policymakers, teachers, students and parents to all participate in the pedagogical pursuit.

As such, it is worth investigating the development of language policies that consider the linguistic diversity of Cameroon and promote the use of Indigenous languages alongside English. The paper provides a pragmatic evaluation of the 2018 Cameroon Primary School Curriculum with a focus on its approach to promoting multilingualism among young learners. Such an attempt can show the value policymakers give to official languages and national languages.

### **Sociocultural Theory of Lev Vygotsky**

Vygotsky is a Russian-born language scientist and psychologist. He is one among the likes of Jean Piaget who provided radical explanations for the processes of learning and cognitive development in children. According to an early study by Vygotsky and Cole (1978), a proper comprehension of language is ineffective when the mind is isolated from society. As such factors like perception, and memory are suitable for analysis in the education sector. His sociocultural theory (SCT) is essential for a social turn in education (Cong-Lem 2022). This is confirmed by Lantolf and Poehner (2023) who strictly advance that the theory's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) has and continues to inform teaching practices efficiently and effectively. In the same way, ZPD has been widely used in educational research Kostogritz and Veresov (2021). Through cultural and social approaches he uses the zone of proximal development to state what the child can learn on his own and what he needs to learn through assistance. These insights are used in this paper to understand the pragmatic insights into the curriculum for primary school children who are at the initial stage of learning. With the implementation of such an approach, the implicit and the explicit undertones of the curriculum have been revealed. These revelations are significant for the teachers in the primary sector and the parents or guardians of young learners.

The theory has been used to provide an indebt analysis of preschool curriculum in a multilingual nation like Cameroon.

### Method and Material

The qualitative method is used to analyze the official 2018 Reform Primary School curriculum. The curriculum is an eighty-six-page document chosen for this paper for three reasons. First, it is an official document from Cameroon's Ministry of Basic Education. Second, it is a reference for primary school teachers as it offers supplementary materials and guidelines. Third, it is the last updated curriculum for levels 1, 2 and 3 learners in primary school. On top of that, the document is deemed useful for researchers (Cameroon Primary School Curriculum, 2018). The link address, <http://minedub.cm/> was accessed to download the curriculum on the official website of Cameroon's Ministry of Basic Education known in French as Ministère de l'Éducation de Base du Cameroun. It is the government department charged with developing, implementing, and evaluating educational policy.

The analysis of this document aims to show how multilingualism is integrated into the Curriculum of the English Subsystem. In doing so, policies on languages taught in primary education are scrutinized according to three parameters. The parameters include the annual and weekly hours allocated for primary school pupils to learn the English language, French language and National languages, the didactic material and the terminal learning outcome. Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory has been used to check the quality of these teaching-learning educational criteria.

### Results and Discussions

**Table 1:** Annual Language Learning Time in Hours Per Level for Cameroon's Anglophone Subsystem of Education

<i>Subject Area</i>	<i>Level 1</i>	<i>Level 2</i>	<i>Level 3</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
English Language and Literature	172.5	172.5	172.5	56%
Français	103.5	103.5	103.5	33%
National Languages and Cultures	34.5	34.5	34.5	11%
Total	310.5	310.5	310.5	100%

(Source: Cameroon Primary School Curriculum, 2018)

**Table 2:** Weekly Language Learning Time in Hours Per Level for Cameroon's Anglophone Subsystem of Education

<i>Subject Area</i>	<i>Level 1</i>	<i>Level 2</i>	<i>Level 3</i>
English Language and Literature	7.5	7.5	7.5
Français	4.5	4.5	4.5
National Languages and Cultures	1.5	1.5	1.5
Total	13.5	13.5	13.5

(Source: Cameroon Primary School Curriculum, 2018)

### **Emphasis on the English Language and Literature**

Tables 1 and 2 above indicate that a significant chunk of teaching-learning hours is allocated to English Language and Literature annually and weekly. 172.5 hours allocation and 7.5 hours allocation respectively constitute 56 per cent of the total teaching and learning hours of English. These figures indicate that the English language is highly prioritized in Cameroon's primary educational curriculum. This priority can be possibly credited to the importance of English as an international language and its role in higher education. Hence, there is the need to train young learners in English to be able to access the world of business, science, technology, global communication and more. While less emphasis on national languages and cultures may highlight a potential area of concern from Vygotsky's perspective, it is pertinent to address the potential inclusion of national languages to support the cultural identity and holistic development of children within their specific multilinguistic and multicultural contexts.

### **Moderate Importance of the French Language**

The French language is allocated 103.5 hours, making up 33% of the total teaching-learning hours per annum. This implies that the French language is also important in the curriculum. This reflects Cameroon's bilingual nature where English and French are the official languages. The allocation suggests a significant, though secondary, emphasis on French compared to English in Cameroon's English Sub-system of Education. Given Vygotsky's postulation that language is a vital cultural tool that shapes thought and mediates learning, the curriculum's emphasis on English and French (89 per cent combined) implies that official languages are seen as critical tools for cognitive development and social interaction for young Cameroonian learners. The consistent teaching and learning

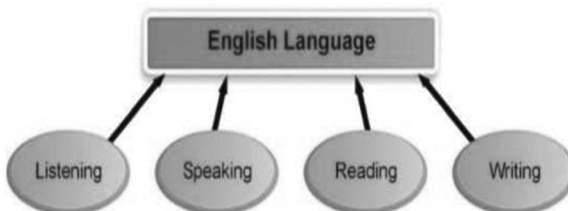
hours annually and weekly across different educational levels (1-3) indicate an effort to scaffold students' language learning within their ZPD. This approach ensures that young learners receive appropriate support to progress from their current level of understanding to higher competence in mainly English and French.

### Lesser Focus on National Languages and Cultures

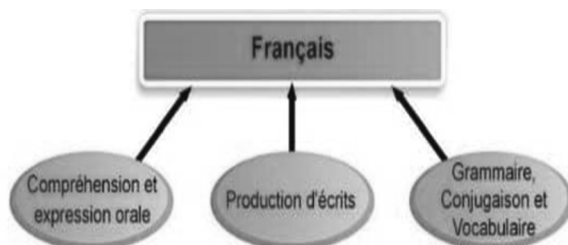
Only 34.5 hours are allocated to National Languages and Cultures annually. This is 11 per cent of the total teaching-learning language hours. This entails that while national languages and cultures are recognized in the curriculum, they are however given considerably less emphasis compared to English and French. This could be due to two practical reasons. The first reason could be the political need for a common language to maintain national unity and international engagement. The second consideration could be the challenges of incorporating multiple indigenous languages into the formal education system at once. Nonetheless, the data further highlights the multilingual context of Cameroon's education system, where multiple languages are part of the formal education curriculum. This reflects the linguistic diversity of the country and an imbalance in the attempt to cater to different linguistic communities.

The unequal distribution of teaching-learning hours could inform policymakers about the current priorities and areas that might need more attention. For example, there may be discussions on whether time allocation to national languages and cultures should be increased to better preserve and promote Indigenous languages and cultural heritage. Such an attempt can help to better integrate both the official languages (English and French) and the indigenous languages within the educational framework. In doing so, there can be a balance of global and native linguistic needs that effectively prepare diverse young learners for both international opportunities and national community engagement.

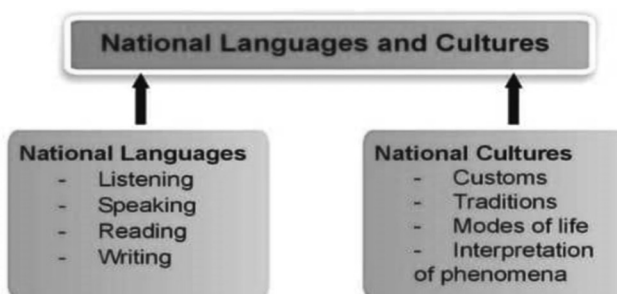
**Figure 1:** Components and Expected Skills in the English Language



(Source: Cameroon Primary School Curriculum, 2018)

**Figure 2:** Components and Expected Skills in the French Language

(Source: Cameroon Primary School Curriculum, 2018)

**Figure 3:** Components and Expected Skills National Languages and Cultures

(Source: Cameroon Primary School Curriculum, 2018)

Figure 1 shows that the curriculum is bent on developing listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills in English. This shows that English is the main language used in the primary English Subsystem of Education in Cameroon. The emphasis on building good competence level in grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation aims to transmit the foundational skills necessary for effective communication to the learners. These qualities are in line with Vygotsky's viewpoint that language is crucial for mental development. Also, the addition of a literature component in level two and level three aligns with Vygotsky's idea that exposure to culturally rich texts can introduce learners to complex narratives and diverse perspectives about cultural horizons. The structured progression from basic language skills to more complex literature studies suggests an approach that supports learners within their ZPD. Scaffolding at various educational levels in the curriculum helps learners move from their current abilities to higher levels of competence.

Figure 2 indicates the need for young learners to be taught oral and written communication skills. In the case of French language acquisition in the English Subsystem of Education, sub-disciplines such as comprehension, oral and written expression, grammar, vocabulary, conjugation, and spelling scaffold learning. Teachers prospectively provide structured activities and feedback to guide the learners through increasingly complex language tasks and gradually withdraw support as learners advance with time.

Figure 3 reveals how learners are equipped with the ability to speak their national language and engage with their cultural heritage. For instance, the curriculum outlines specific terminal learning objectives such as singing traditional songs, communicating appropriately in various contexts and performing cultural activities. These objectives act as milestones within the learners' ZPD, a technique which prepares young learners from guided practice to independent competence. The inclusion of at least one national language alongside English and French can foster a multilingual environment that promotes cultural diversity.

### **Conclusion**

Using a Vygotskian lens, the paper offers an integrative view of the existing literature in multilingual and curriculum studies. The input of multilingualism in the 2018 Reform Cameroon Primary School curriculum has been studied. This involved highlighting key parameters such as the allocation of instructional time to teach-learn languages, stated objectives, material/content taught and terminal expected outcomes. Such an account shows how Cameroon's Ministry of Basic Education prioritises young learners' acquisition of official languages and national languages. Results show that there is huge value discrepancy in the weekly and annual language learning hours in the curriculum, for instance, English occupies 56 per cent, French occupies 33 per cent and National languages only occupy 11 per cent. This suggests that official languages are used as active linguistic mechanisms for cognitive development and social interaction. While this effort can train young learners to travel the world void of language barriers, the paper suggests that there is a need for educational policymakers to balance the inclusion of official languages and national languages in the curriculum. Such balance can help to better prepare young learners for both international opportunities and national/community engagement.

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# Multilingualism and Its Cognitive Dynamics in India: A Neuro-Humanities Approach

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## Abstract

The paper highlights the nascent field of neurohumanities, as it seeks to bridge the gap between the sciences and the humanities by elucidating novel perspectives of the nexus between cerebral function and human phenomena, such as language and culture. Through an examination of the concepts of neuroplasticity and multilingualism, the paper showcases the profound impact of linguistic diversity on cognitive mechanisms and neural structure. Furthermore, it underscores the importance of embracing Indian multilingualism as a fertile ground for interdisciplinary exploration, facilitating deeper insights into the intricacies of human cognition.

**Keywords:** Neurohumanities, multilingualism, cognitive development, neuroplasticity, cultural neuroscience

## Introduction

With the emergence of neurobiological exploration in the nineteenth century and its explosive growth in the last 50 years, the diverse range of methodologies available to neuroscience has expanded. Research in humanities and neuroscience have proceeded in parallel, with certain significant points of convergence that have yielded major insights. Edwards (2008) contends that there is no difference between the two domains. Though they are distinct intellectual traditions and operate in isolation, yet the yearning persists in uncovering how neural processes underpin fundamental aspects of human experience. The paper by Carew and Ramaswami (2020) introduces the interdisciplinary field of

neurohumanities that amalgamates perspectives from both neuroscience and humanities and delves into the facets of human cognition, language, art, and culture. It seeks to connect biological processes in individual brains to phenomena of interest in the humanities and to examine how diverse, empathetic responses may arise from art, prose or discourse. The field of neurohumanities integrates hypothesis-based laboratory studies with human experiences, thus facilitating a deeper comprehension of social behaviour.

The former US President, George Bush officially declared the 1990s as the “Decade of the Brain” (Library of Congress, 2018) marking a significant milestone in the recognition of neuroscience research. The pace of progress has accelerated greatly in recent times marked by several pivotal developments. Neuroscientists are now forming productive interdisciplinary collaborations in the fields of psychology, linguistics, artificial intelligence and cultural studies. (Kemmerer, 2022). Within the realm of language, studying neurohumanities involves an examination of how language functions are represented, computed, and processed in the brain, alongside the interaction of language with cognitive and cultural phenomena. If we take the (relatively narrow and delineated) view that language, music, and emotion ‘belong’ to the domain of humanities, that can also be studied from the vantage points of psychology, computation and neuroscience, then, neurohumanities is simply the research that facilitates a deeper understanding of the concepts traditionally associated with humanities, using the perspectives and methods of scientific disciplines. For instance, a formal analysis of the meter in a poem, or to capture the ‘prose rhythm’ can closely be related to the domains of linguistics or psychology. Likewise, in the case of emotion, research programmes drawing from studies of animal behaviour and physiology lead to a study of different variables of emotion that can be connected to the subjective experience of emotion within the domain of humanities. Therefore, researchers engaged in the study of neurohumanities, explore intricate models of language and brain function that incorporates a nuanced understanding of neurological processes within cultural contexts (Massey, 2009).

In the realm of neurohumanities, a fascinating challenge arises in understanding the intricate correlation between neural activity and subjective human experiences. Observing neural activity patterns while individuals engage with films or recount episodes from their lives poses the question: How can we accurately interpret these neural flows without

direct insight into their thoughts and emotions? Although imaging techniques like fMRI or EEG allow us to discern patterns of neural activity, deciphering them to glean insights into cognition is complicated. Integrating cultural and neural perspectives is crucial for advancing our comprehension of human consciousness. This interdisciplinary pursuit of neurohumanities aims to bridge the study of human experiential structures, as explored by phenomenologists, Merleau-Ponty (1964), with investigations into brain dynamics. It provides a framework for understanding how our perceptions, emotions and cognition manifest in neural activity, thereby shedding light on the nature of consciousness itself.

### **Multilingualism, Neural Schemas and the Brain**

Neural schemas are organized patterns of neural connections or networks within the brain that encode knowledge, concepts or skills. These schemas are constructed through repeated experiences and learning processes. During language acquisition, the brain develops schemas to encode the sounds, meanings and structures of words or sentences. As individuals encounter new linguistic elements, their brains establish novel neural connections or adjust existing ones to assimilate this information. With continued exposure and practice, these schemas strengthen and streamline, facilitating fluent and proficient language usage over time.

Multilingualism, in simple words, can be defined as an individual's capacity to read, write and comprehend in two or more languages. In a multilingual individual, their various language systems tend to be active, and even compete with one another. Being multilingual brings about alterations in the neural pattern and changes in anatomical structure. These changes may involve increase grey matter and in cortical thickness in specific regions like the temporo-parietal cortex, along with changes in white matter integrity. (Pliatsikas, 2019)

The study conducted by Liedke and Nelson (1968) compared monolingual and multilingual samples based on age, socio-economic status, gender and IQ. It revealed that multilinguals possessed superior conceptual skills and also ranked higher in scholastic aptitude tests compared to their monolingual counterparts. Additionally, the multilinguals also excelled in tests measuring cognitive flexibility, encompassing both verbal and perceptual plasticity. Southworth's study (1980) conducted in India examined 1300 school children (grade

1-10) which included monolingual Malayalam speakers and other mother-tongue (MT) multilinguals such as Tamil or Konkani. The participants were organized into 5 different socio-economic levels. The findings revealed that multilingual children achieved better classroom performance.

Over the past decade, research on the multilingual brain and its mechanisms have garnered great attention, particularly concerning language representation, grey matter density, and the speed of lexical retrieval (Baker, 2011). Additionally, studies have explored various aspects such as working memory (Morales et al., 2013), inhibition and metacognitive skills, including cognitive flexibility (Bialystok et al., 2004, 2006, 2012), creativity (Kharkhurin, 2012 for adults; Leikin, 2013 for children), inferential skills in oral narrative comprehension (Tsimpli et al., 2016), and analytic thought process (Cummins, 2000).

### **Multilingualism in India**

Linguistic diversity is a 'Hallmark of India', and Indian multilingualism goes beyond mere numerical diversity and is quite overwhelming. There are 1652 mother tongues identified by the 1961 census, and these are further categorized into 300 to 400 distinct linguistic classifications across five language families, along with a much larger number of dialects. Moreover, there are 22 constitutionally recognized official languages (Constitution of India, VIIIth schedule, after the 100th constitutional amendment, December 2003) along with English (the associate official language). Of these, the Indo-Aryan and Dravidian families include the languages spoken by 95 per cent of the population. According to the 'People's Linguistic Survey of India' (<http://www.peopleslinguisticsurvey.org/>) launched by Ganesh Devy in 2010, there are 780 different languages in India, many of which are endangered. Most recently, *Ethnologue* (2018) suggests the number of different languages is lower, and stands at 462. This linguistic diversity and its endangerment has been a major concern to state and central governments in relation to education and national policies.

Languages are resources, not burdens, in multilingual societies. Multilingualism in India (and in other countries with similar social landscape), cannot be merely viewed as a transition from monolingualism to bilingualism or as a linear extension to bilingualism by the addition of a third or fourth or nth language. The co-presence of multiple languages creates intricate independencies and networking between the languages

and their speakers. This makes it difficult to isolate languages or their speakers as autonomous entities. Children raised in multilingual societies are exposed to a layered structure of linguistic diversity from an early age, which Mohanty (2006) calls “concentric layers of societal multilingualism”. As children navigate various social settings, from familial neighbourhoods to broader local and regional communities, and even more complex environments like the marketplaces, they encounter overlapping linguistic domains. This multilayered landscape challenges the notion of rigid language boundaries. “Multilinguality implies that the boundaries we construct between different languages are artificial and often socio-politically motivated, but in practice, language boundaries are porous and languages flow effortlessly into each other” (Agnihotri, 2014).

Schools that exclusively teach in dominant languages can be seen as a hindrance to ensuring equal educational opportunities. Such an approach undermines the natural multilingualism of children, with negative repercussions for the preservation of their mother tongues (Mohanty & Skutnabb-Kangas, 2022). Multilingual Education (MLE) based on mother tongue education is widely acknowledged as an effective educational approach. MLE entails providing quality education using two or more languages (including sign language) as mediums of instruction with the aim of fostering high levels of multilingualism in Indian classrooms, and ideally, multiliteracy by the end of formal schooling (Mohanty et al., 2009). MLE programmes when implemented globally are based on the principles and theoretical foundations of psycho-linguistic principles of Bilingual Education (BE), with adaptations to suit diverse cultural and contextual settings. (Cummins, 2000). In 2004, Andhra Pradesh initiated MT-based MLE for primary grades across 1000 schools in eight tribal languages. The programme was successful in improving classroom participation when compared to schools using the dominant language (Telugu) as the medium of instruction (Mohanty et al., 2009).

Multilingual socialization research indicates that 3-4 year-old children in India exhibit a remarkable pattern of abstract language awareness. They can discern similarities and differences among multiple languages, accompanied by awareness of linguistic accommodation, mutual acceptance attitudes and a genuine multilingual perspective, all of which are characteristic features of Indian multilingualism. Moreover, in multilingual environments, the phenomenon of cross-linguistic transfer can manifest even in the absence of formal schooling experiences; studies

in neurolinguistics have observed such transfer in illiterate adults. This exchange of knowledge occurs spontaneously and naturally as languages are not isolated entities, but interconnected elements (Mohanty et al., 2009).

English continues to hold an unparalleled position as the predominant language for teaching and research. In the midst of this linguistic dominance, students hailing from non-metropolitan areas often find themselves at a disadvantage. With less than 15 per cent of the eligible age group being able to access higher education, and only a fraction proceeding to attain postgraduate qualifications. This linguistic disparity bears profound implications on the prospects of occupational, economic and social advancement (Niranjana, 2013). Social class, particularly, socio-economic status (SES), stands out as a significant determinant of learning outcomes. Children hailing from low SES backgrounds tend to face more challenges in cognitive performance compared to their affluent middle-class counterparts. Various elements contribute to SES, including parental education, income, occupation, household and neighbourhood amenities, sanitation, lack of cognitive stimulation at home as well as nutritional and psychological well-being. These factors affect these children in school-related skills, language acquisition and cognitive development. Research has revealed that children aged 8-11 from high or middle SES backgrounds exhibit superior performance in language comprehension, memory retention and executive functions, like working memory and cognitive flexibility when compared to their peers from low SES backgrounds (Alcott & Rose, 2017).

The multilingual context in India presents a promising avenue for potentially enhancing the learning outcomes of children from low SES backgrounds. Numerous studies have analysed the potential advantages it would lead to in terms of cognitive performance. The Kond Studies (Mohanty, 1982) involved a comparison between Kui-Odia bilinguals and Odia monolinguals in terms of metalinguistic and cognitive development. The participants included individuals aged 10-12 in grade 6, 12-14 in grade 8, and 14-16 in grade 10. Cognitive assessments were based on an early iteration of the PASS theory of intelligence developed by (Das et al., 1975). Results from the study revealed that Kui-Odia bilingual children outperformed the monolingual children across all measures of simultaneous and successive processing.

In the ongoing trajectory post-1960, the foundational perspective regarding multilingualism as an asset has flourished, and further studies have enriched our understanding of this domain. For instance, in an fMRI study (Kumar et al., 2010) focusing on phrase reading in Hindi-English speakers, a distinct pattern of cortical activation was observed when reading texts in Hindi. Additionally, research indicates that multilingual children exhibit positive transfer across languages, concerning their proficiency in literacy-related discourse, such as storytelling. This cross-linguistic transfer manifests across a broad spectrum of literacy skills, particularly evident in tasks involving abstract and decontextualized contexts (Cummins, 2009). Studies have shown that multilingual children demonstrate comparable performance levels in tasks like picture description and providing definitions (Snow et al., 1991).

To bridge the disparity between learning and accessing multilingual education, it is imperative to strengthen Indian language resources rather than marginalizing local languages in favour of English. Addressing the challenge of resource material inadequacy and ensuring its widespread availability necessitates the generation of new materials in regional languages. This can be achieved through the development of model curricula, field testing them, and integrating digital resources with experimental initiatives in Indian regional languages. Aligned with the objectives outlined in the New Education Policy (NEP) 2020, the Union Education Ministry has mandated all educational institutions, including universities, colleges and schools to furnish textbooks and study materials in regional languages within three years. This directive encompasses regulatory bodies such as the University Grants Commission (UGC), the NCERT, as well as esteemed educational institutions like IIT and Central Universities. The Ministry remarked that “studying in one’s own language can provide a student the natural space to think innovatively without any language barrier.” The government has also introduced the Anuvadini AI-based App for translating a wide array of engineering, medical, law, undergraduate, postgraduate and skill-based books. These translated resources are made available through the e-Kumbh portal. Additionally, the Ministry has highlighted that competitive exams such as NEET, JEE and CUET are already being administered in 13 Indian languages. Thus, this generation of new materials into mainstream education is creating a new generation of interdisciplinary readers (The Hindu, 2024).

## Multilingualism and Neuroplasticity

The term 'neuroplasticity' was initially introduced by Polish neuroscientist Jerzy Konorski during the mid-twentieth century. Since its inception, the concept has been widely explored in the fields of neuroscience, psychology and their related disciplines. Neuroplasticity, also referred to as neural plasticity or brain plasticity, denotes the remarkable capacity of neural networks within the brain to undergo changes in structure and function. This dynamic phenomenon enables the brain to adapt and reorganize in response to various experiences and environmental stimuli. It serves as a fundamental mechanism underpinning various cognitive processes and contributes to the recovery of the brain after an injury or neurological disorders. The study (Mechelli et al., 2004) that catalyzed research in this field employed a technique known as Voxel-Based Morphometry to examine the brain structure of individuals proficient in multiple languages as compared to a monolingual individual. The study revealed heightened gray matter density in distinct brain regions associated with verbal fluency in the left posterior supramarginal gyrus (SMG) of the multilingual counterparts. This pioneering investigation provided initial evidence suggesting that multilingualism could induce physical alterations in the brain, subsequently inspiring various other studies on multilingualism and brain morphology.

The need to manage multiple language systems and to select the appropriate lexicon during language production confers greater cognitive control and mental flexibility upon multilingual individuals (Kroll et al., 2012). Moreover, multilingualism is said to protect against cognitive decline and attention control deficits associated with aging, while also promoting the maintenance of white matter structures in the brain (Bialystok et al., 2012). Bialystok views the multilingual experience as "one of the environmental factors that contribute to cognitive reserve or brain reserve." Navigating the complexities of multiple language systems engages mental activities that mitigate age-related cognitive decline, and delay the onset of dementia. Bialystok examined the age of onset of Alzheimer's disease in 91 monolingual and 93 bilingual patients and found a four-year delay for the bilingual patients despite their lower level of education than that of the monolinguals.

A study by Menon et al., (2023) investigated the correlation between multilingualism and cognitive performance among elderly individuals residing in rural southern India. This study used cross-sectional

(baseline) data from Srinivasapura Aging, Neuro Senescence and COGNition study, which is an ongoing community-based, longitudinal aging cohort study conducted in a rural setting in southern India, the study encompassed a total of 3725 participants. The participants were categorized into two groups based on their linguistic proficiency—monolinguals and multilinguals. The cognitive performance of the participants was assessed using the Clinical Dementia Rating (CDR) Scale. The analysis of Clinical Dementia Rating (CDR) scores concerning language categories revealed that among monolingual participants, 86.5 per cent exhibited healthy cognitive functioning, while 13.5 per cent showed signs of mild cognitive impairment (MCI). Conversely, among multilingual participants, 94.3 per cent displayed healthy cognitive status, with only 5.7 per cent demonstrating MCI. Logistic regression yielded an odds ratio value of 0.69 (95 per cent CI: 0.5-0.9), indicating that monolingual individuals were more likely to develop cognitive impairment compared to their multilingual counterparts.

Neuroplasticity plays a crucial role in allowing culture to leave an imprint on the brain, thereby sustaining cross-cultural differences in neural specialization as these neural bases also influence second language learning. While language processing engages the entire brain, the specific regions involved vary depending on the task, with certain areas being more critical than others. Damage to focal language areas, such as Broca's and Wernicke's areas due to brain injury can lead to aphasia—a language disorder affecting communication abilities, including speaking, understanding speech, reading and writing, depending on the severity of the injury (Ziegler & Goswami, 2005).

## **Conclusion**

To embark on a journey of transformative education as well as the emergence of cognitive perspectives, it is important to develop a praxis that opens the spaces necessary for the creation of new thought. For this to happen, there must be a new commitment to intelligence, a new fidelity in communication, and a deeper appreciation for imagination. Humans transcend mere biological existence. Though the brain does offer necessary biophysical reality for individual cognition and action, it alone does not suffice to shape the mind or behaviour. On the mind-brain continuum, the individual mind is the expression emerging from the personalized brain (Greenfield, 2000). This process of personalization occurs throughout life within environmental and socio-cultural milieus,

characterized by intricate interactions between ‘nature’ and ‘nurture’ (Massey, 2009).

In the realm of neurohumanities, diverse disciplines have begun to converge, albeit slowly. Cognitive scientists, linguists, and neurologists have laid the groundwork for understanding how storytelling and visual arts intersect with human experiences. However, as this is a nascent field, there’s vast potential in exploring the rich complexity and creativity inherent in historical, philosophical, and artistic texts. These texts, integral to the training of historians, philosophers, cultural studies and art critics, offer unique insights that are ripe for exploration within the neuroscientific framework. In this journey of interdisciplinary exploration, Indian multilingualism stands as a testament to the complex interplay of language, culture, and cognition. With its myriad languages and dialects, India offers a rich ground for further analysis into the tapestries of neural plasticity and linguistic diversity. As we delve deeper into the neurohumanities, embracing the diverse linguistic landscape of India promises to illuminate new pathways toward a deeper understanding of the human experience.

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## Strategic Handling: Language Teaching in an Undergraduate Multilingual Classroom

*Minakshi Lahkar*

### Abstract

The English teacher faces the challenge of engaging with and adding value to students of varying language proficiency in the Undergraduate Indian classroom. Her literature background has not trained her in the pedagogy of teaching language, and that too in a multilingual classroom. She must depend on her own reflective knowledge based on experience and modify her praxis according to the needs of each batch of students. A flexible curriculum which allows her a fair amount of autonomy and mentored, group-based, in-class project work can help her to improve literacy outcomes. For her, the multilingual classroom is both a challenge to be overcome as well as a resource to be cherished.

**Keywords:** Multilingual classroom, multilingualism as resource, literacy, teacher autonomy

“The teaching of English ... requires strategic handling to achieve the aims of a language classroom that strengthens critical literacy in a globalised world.” (Position Paper on Teaching of English, 2006, p.37)

“Teaching English in Difficult Circumstances”—the title of Michael West’s 1960 publication, based on his experience as a teacher and teacher-educator in Eastern India, still resonates for the English language teacher in an undergraduate multilingual and multicultural classroom. Large class sizes, students of varying levels of proficiency—“ill-graded” in West’s words (p. 7), and teachers with a literature background who are not trained in the pedagogy of language teaching—some of West’s

definitive characteristics of the problems still persist. Dare we hope that the challenges can be translated into opportunities? This paper will try to show how a reflective teaching practice can leverage classroom conditions to reach certain literacy outcomes.

It is pertinent to note that the term literacy itself has evolved to widen its ambit far beyond competence in the four micro-skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening. It also involves the learning of social and intercultural competencies and a critical consciousness of the world in which we live (Jayendran et al., 2022, pp. 84, 87). Thus the language teacher's mandate is to support language skills and promote critical thinking, cultural sensitivity, social responsibility and self-expression.

Her workspace has students belonging to a variety of backgrounds—linguistic, regional, cultural and socio-economic, among others. This classroom diversity can offer her students the valuable experience of being in a community that is reflective of the larger society. It can provide an exposure to multiple perspectives and can help to build empathy, tolerance and an openness to accept difference. Thus the language teacher can work towards her larger duty of building cultural and critical literacy which will lead to better outcomes in functional literacy (Jayendran et al, 2022, p.128). A simple activity like asking students to list the languages they know can begin the process of generating awareness of the rich linguistic resources that they have.

It is imperative for the teacher to create a classroom environment which can “liberate and organise” the capabilities of the students (Dewey, 2012, p.150). Students are accustomed to being passive receptacles of examination-oriented knowledge, irrespective of the source from where they get it—online or offline. In a system where rote learning is rewarded, they are not accustomed to speak up—to question, discuss or debate. Few realise the validity of their own experiential knowledge and fewer still have the confidence to speak about it to their peers in the classroom.

The language teacher can encourage her students to speak in class. It can begin with a simple Yes or No answer. She can make use of simple activities to break the ice and get them to feel comfortable about being in her class. She can also allow translanguaging and code switching so that affective filters go down (Krashen, 1982). This would help all students, irrespective of their English language proficiency. Thus the

classroom becomes a safe space where students feel that they will be heard without being judged for what they say or how they say it. This builds self-confidence, boosts positive identity construction and creates a conducive climate in which learning can take place. The teacher is a key enabler in this context.

She would need to make special efforts to include students with poor English language skills. They are often from vernacular medium and government schools. These are the English Language Learners (ELLs) who feel doubly disadvantaged in college as they need to handle higher level content in a language which they are still learning to use. Forced to share their learning space with students from privileged backgrounds with high levels of language proficiency, they feel deficient. Hence, at least at the beginning of the term, they need more attention and confidence-building measures.

The language teacher therefore consciously needs to plan and use various strategies to work effectively in a diverse, multilingual classroom. Since her disciplinary background has not included training in pedagogy for a language class, she must build her praxis by reflecting on her experience, talking to fellow teachers and taking feedback from her students. This is always work in process and is facilitated by the degree of autonomy which is allowed to her by the curriculum and institutional requirements. It is worth examining how this aligns with the principles put forth by Kumaravadivelu (2001) and Hooks (1984).

Teacher autonomy is at the heart of Kumaravadivelu's post-method pedagogy (2001, p. 548). Eschewing methods laid down by theorists, it calls for a focus on the experience, understanding and reflective practice of the teacher who is the best judge of the conditions in which she teaches. He calls this the principle of particularity. Hooks (1994) too uses the term 'particularity' to speak of the differences between individual students (p. 13) and the subsequent need for a flexible pedagogy which must be adapted to meet the needs of each classroom (p. 16).

Noting that teachers are capable of constructing their own theory based on their knowledge and experience, Kumaravadivelu (2001) comments that this kind of theory can be constantly modified on the basis of seeing what works in the classroom, why and how it does so and what needs to be changed for better outcomes. He calls this the principle of practicality and offers it as a solution to the disjunction between theory

as propagated by experts and the actual practice of classroom teaching. His third principle of possibility (2001), draws upon Freire's vision of the emancipatory quality of education which empowers teachers and learners by generating a critical awareness of their reality through lively classroom discussions. Hence Hooks, another proponent of Freirean pedagogy, writes: "As a classroom community, our capacity to generate excitement is deeply affected by our interest in one another, in hearing one another's voices, in recognising one another's presence" (1994, p. 13). The diverse multilingual undergraduate classroom offers great potential for building this kind of engagement and bonding.

Hence every student needs to be encouraged to speak and bring in her own funds of knowledge (Moll et al., p. 133 ). Since "knowledge is cognitively constructed and socially mediated" (Windschnitl, 2002, quoted in Reyes and Vallone, 2007, p. 43), this helps all students to construct new knowledge schemas, far more powerfully than through book learning and lectures. In-class activities expand in relevance as students bring in their real, lived experiences. By making ELLs active classroom participants, the learning space is enriched and deepened. Furthermore, in some complex way, well beyond the purview of this paper, this makes other students conscious of how their own L1 gives them access to their culture and forms their identity. Thus both critical and cultural literacy are improved.

Kumaravadivelu's principles of particularity and practicality, explained above, make it clear that each teacher has to find her own route into the heart of a multilingual classroom. This researcher will now go on to speak about what worked for her, what did not and what she learned in the process of teaching different batches of students in multilingual undergraduate classrooms in a public university.

### **Importance of Building Rapport and Comfort**

This is crucial as it sets the stage for teaching and learning. Introductory ice-breaker activities and conversation can help build trust in the teacher and an understanding of the value-addition that is intended. The latter is important given that the English class is sometimes seen as a time-pass. Simultaneously, a few of these activities can function as a kind of formative assessment for learning.

Short activities which call on students to give one-word or one-line

answers orally or on the blackboard, one after the other, are useful to elicit 100 per cent participation. A strategic use of such activities—which can be done impromptu—energises the class and gathers wandering attention. When used judiciously as fillers, they create a sense of belonging to the class and a feeling of ease and comfort whereby inhibitions about speaking and participating are lowered. Thereafter they feel more confident about speaking in the class, even out of turn, by responding to a question or a prompt.

### **Monolinguality, Bilinguality and Multilinguality**

Compulsory monolinguality—an English-only policy—effectively silences the ELLs, thereby denying the entire class the benefit of their active presence. Their lack of engagement manifests in irregular attendance patterns. This contributes to a vicious cycle as teachers assume a lack of interest on their part and make little effort to involve them in classroom activities. During online classes in the pandemic, ELL students in a language class spoke of how they remained silent throughout the previous semester in a compulsory Communicative English class in which a strict English-only policy was imposed. The same students quickly dropped out of the Personality Development classes organised by the institution as they felt left out when other students used English to bring up their concerns.

A bilingual classroom is naturally more inclusive than a monolingual one. Hakuta's study (1986, quoted in Position Paper...Indian Languages, 2006, p. 29) shows that bilingualism improves academic outcomes, reduces absenteeism and drop-out rates and improves students' self-esteem. However bilingualism excludes those ELLs whose L1 is different from the dominant regional language. A public university undergraduate classroom in NCR, with students from different corners of the country, invariably has ELLs whose L1 is not Hindi. A classroom policy of bilinguality giving equal space to Hindi and English would largely leave them straggling and struggling to keep up. This would promote neither equity nor inclusion, the cornerstones of SDG 4.

How can multilinguality be addressed in a language classroom? The teacher can herself model an attitude of respect for all languages and cultures. A simple exercise of getting students to reflect on the languages they understand and use makes them understand that all languages have value, not just English. Further reflection would suggest different

ways of making all ELLs feel included in the class in a manner in which their cultural identities are also validated. This researcher found one such opportunity in a language project which required students to work on their cultural heritage.

### **Project-Based Learning Using Multilingualism as a Resource**

For many years, projects have been a regular part of summative Internal Assessment practices. Students often cobble together project work using online resources of dubious quality. The challenge before the teacher is to promote real learning along with quality output.

This paper will now focus on the researcher's experience with administering projects in two Generic Elective (GE) language classes which offered her varying degrees of autonomy. One class (2nd semester) was offered the option of English Language through Literature (ELTL I) and the other (fourth semester) was allocated English Fluency (Fluency II). Both classes were large in size and included a significant number of ELLs. ELTL I required a familiarity with newspaper reports, articles, drama and poetry. Hence students needed support to help them understand these genres to score well in the end-term examination. Fluency II allowed for greater flexibility as literary genres were not specified for study. Furthermore, while the Fluency II students were naturally more mature and accustomed to the teacher, having met her in their 2nd semester as well, the ELTL I students were younger and needed more time to build a rapport with the teacher.

For Internal Assessment purposes, both batches were assigned a project keeping syllabus and end-term examination requirements in mind. The ELTL students were asked to pick a poem in their mother tongue, find or prepare an English translation of it, read two papers that spoke about the culture of their community and then think about how the selected poem reflected their culture. Finally they had to make an oral presentation. Though they were given the option of working in pairs if they shared a common language, most of them worked individually. The Fluency students were asked to choose a research topic of their choice, read some literature on it, collect primary data, prepare a report using proper academic writing protocols and then make an oral presentation in class. The work was to be done in groups in class under the teacher's supervision. Deadlines for each part of the work were reinforced through WhatsApp reminders before every class.

## **General Outcomes**

### **Class Attendance**

In the Fluency Class, students took time to form their groups and then to brainstorm and find a topic of interest. They used Google Scholar to find some literature on their topic and prepared questionnaires which they sent out among their target groups. Attendance shot up dramatically as students came to class to work on each part of the task.

In the ELTL class, students worked on their own, outside class hours. There was no improvement in class attendance except on the days of the presentations.

### **Quality of Work and Effort**

The Fluency class did work of very high quality, showing great engagement with their topics, their data analysis and then in completing each part of their written work. The planning, regular scheduling reinforced by reminders and active in-class supervision by the teacher provided the necessary scaffolding. Reyes and Vallone use Vygotsky's concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) to explain how under guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers, students cover the distance between their actual developmental level and the level they are capable of. (2007, p. 9). Peer group influence was very positive in maintaining engagement and standards. Even irregular students were impacted when they sat through presentations and saw the effort put in.

The ELTL project, on the other hand, was assigned as homework. This was due to the requirements of the syllabus which demanded valuable class time for exam preparation. Quality control was therefore absent as there was no regular monitoring. Hence there was great variation in their output.

## **Literacy Outcomes**

### **Critical Literacy**

Fluency students devoted time to select topics which interested them and about which they had some idea. They chose relevant and contemporary topics dealing with mental health and other psychological issues, deep fakes, OTT platforms, relationship with teachers, Value Added Courses (VAC) under NEP 2020, the impact of AI, rape, etc. As they engaged with

meaningful content and tried to build their knowledge of that subject, they clearly took ownership of their learning (Biggs and Tang, 2007, pp. 53-54). They built upon their ability to discourse quite knowledgeably about their topics.

### **Cultural Literacy**

ELTL students spoke of the joy they found in talking about their language and their culture. One student from Telangana sang his poem in Lambada and explained to the mesmerised listeners how it was used parallel to Telugu in his state. An ELL who had barely spoken throughout the semester, spoke fluently, in Hindi, about how her poem reflected the tenets of Sikhism.

This anecdotal evidence is complemented by the results of a survey conducted by this researcher among the ELTL students (Annexure A). 53 out of the 72 students submitted their responses. Some of the salient points thrown up were as follows:

- a. 94 per cent students agreed that the project increased their awareness of the multicultural and multilingual nature of the classroom.
- b. 94 per cent found it interesting or very interesting to listen to other students talk about their culture.
- c. 98 per cent found it very interesting to read up about their culture.

### **Multilinguality as a Resource**

One group of three in the Fluency class chose the topic “The Effect of Climate Change on Agriculture.” They were from a rural agricultural background and were very knowledgeable about farming which they said they loved. They made their Google form questionnaire in Hindi and sent it to people in their villages. Prior to the assignment of the project, they had been very irregular in class barring one who would sometimes sit through an activity and barely talk. After starting their project, they began to share their experiences, speaking about how they went home to take part in farming operations and how even urban relatives kept their ties to agriculture by growing vegetables on their balconies and terraces. This is an example of how ELLs engage in class activities when they feel that their cognitive competence is acknowledged and their experience is validated. It also showcases how multilingual resources can very organically become part of the classroom.

The entire ELTL project, as explained earlier, was focused on using multilinguality as a classroom resource. A few interesting points were thrown up regarding students' attitudes to their linguistic heritage:

**Consciousness of language loss:** A few expressed their sadness at not knowing their L1 well. Speaking of how Bangla is a very sweet language, the lone Bengali student regretted her inability to speak the tongue and requested extra time to work with her mother on the task. Another regretted that though he was Kannada, he was forced to select a poem in Hindi due to his weak grasp of his mother tongue. Both were highly proficient in English.

**Unconscious language loss:** In the survey, 90.5 per cent of the student respondents said that they could read out their chosen poems in their mother tongue. The inability of the others to read their own languages implies some language loss on their part.

**Use of other languages in the classroom:** 98 per cent felt that it was acceptable to encourage other languages in an English classroom.

**Identification with language communities:** Interestingly seven students who reported Hindi as their mother tongue and language of maximum comfort, picked up poems in cognate languages like Pahari, Kumaoni, Awadhi, Rajasthani and Mewati and spoke about those cultures. This implies that though they speak Hindi at home, they are aware that they belong to these communities whose languages were taken under the umbrella of Hindi. This corroborates this researcher's experience in other classes where students identify with different language communities, though they use Hindi at home.

### **Operational Literacy**

Following Palincsar and Ladewski, Jayendran et al define operational literacy as "gaining competence in technologies, tools and procedures required to handle language proficiently" (2022, 85). Under this head we may look at students' language competencies, their use of technology and their oral presentations.

In the Fluency class, by getting students to speak on what they had done for the day vis a vis the project, the teacher could elicit their opinions on their chosen topics and related matters. This improved their conversational skills and gave them the confidence to articulate their thoughts and opinions. Moreover, they learnt to use academic writing

conventions to organize their written work. Thus they improved their language competence by engaging in meaningful activities (Kumar & Agnihotri 2022, p. 299).

### **Oral Presentations**

In both the classes, when prompts were disallowed, their oral presentations took on natural speech rhythms which attracted the attention of the listeners in a positive way. Furthermore, in the ELTL class, their content also became more reflective of their lived experiences of their culture.

ELLs had been encouraged to speak up and participate in all classroom activities throughout the term. This actually laid the groundwork for the final presentations making them less stressful for the students.

### **Presentation Rubric**

Midway through the ELTL presentations, students were asked to come to the board one-by-one and note down what they regarded as most important in a presentation. Though repetition was allowed, students carefully noted what their peers were writing in order to add something which they felt had been missed. At the end, related points were connected with coloured markers and the category headings were put on the board. Thus a rubric was created. After the double period was over, a group of students stayed back to discuss this rubric. One related it to his performance in a speech competition. Thus students used their metacognitive abilities.

This exercise was not done with the Fluency class due to time constraints.

### **Quality of Powerpoints**

Power-points invariably had to be redone as the written work had simply been transcribed on the slides.

### **Conclusion**

For this researcher, project-based learning proved to be a powerful tool to improve literacy outcomes in multilingual undergraduate classrooms. The key generic takeaways may be listed as follows:

- Projects need to be carefully designed and scheduled
- Regular reminders must be put in for key tasks and deadlines

- Projects need to be done in class, in groups under the teacher's active supervision.
- Students need to comprehend the tangible outcomes and how they are benefiting

The learnings are neither final nor complete. No two classes are ever the same and the conditions in which teaching-learning occur are constantly changing. The evolving nature of the challenges demands an ongoing search for answers. This reinvigorates our classroom practice and sustains our interest in it.

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### Annexure A

#### Feedback on Poetry Project - GE: English Language through Literature

<iframe src="https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeAcRAHdXQLR2JjaFI3MdoUmrwK6dw66AHk4oL3C4a7Pn-8Mw/viewform?embedded=true" width="640" height="2423" frameborder="0" marginheight="0" marginwidth="0">Loading...</iframe>

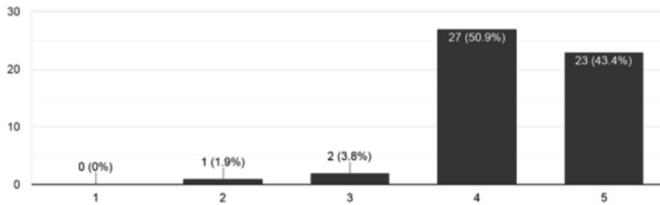
a

Did this project make you aware about the multicultural and multilingual nature of your classroom?  
53 responses



b.

How did you feel upon listening to other students talk about their cultures in their presentations?  
Rate your response according to the scale below.  
53 responses



c.

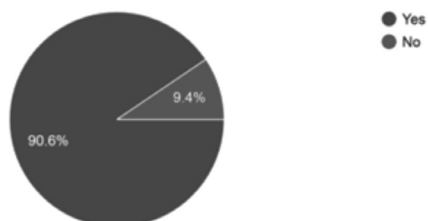
You were required to read up 2 articles about your culture. How did you feel about this requirement?  
53 responses



d.

Could you read it out in the original language?

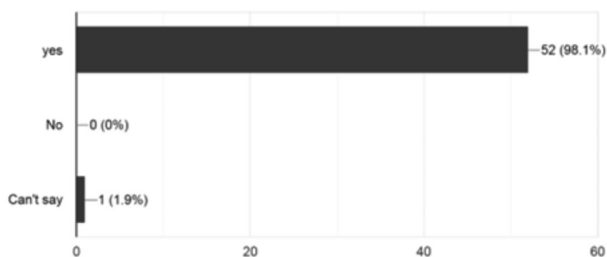
53 responses



e.

Do you feel that it is acceptable to encourage other languages in an English classroom?

53 responses



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## Designment: A Modern Strategy for the Children of Military Personnel in Multilingual Classrooms

*L. Grashya & M. John Suganya*

### Abstract

Traditional methods of teaching often fail to fully engage students from varied backgrounds, limiting their creativity and innovation whereas, multilingual classrooms, characterized by linguistic and cultural diversity, offer both challenges and opportunities. In particular, the children of military personnel face unique hurdles in such settings due to frequent relocations of their parents' deployment and this disrupts their academic continuity. Every time when these children move to a different school, they struggle when they are given assignments and face challenges in adjusting to different educational standards and languages, making it difficult to identify the expectations of their teachers for a particular assignment. The stress of adapting to new environments can impact their ability to focus and complete assignments effectively. The paper provides a modern strategy designed to optimize outcomes in multilingual classrooms. Traditionally, teachers assign specific tasks, dictating what and how children should learn. These assignments often constrain their creative and innovative capabilities within predefined parameters. In order to address this, the study proposes the concept of designment as an alternative to assignments. This strategy fosters personal choice and autonomy, encouraging students to go beyond mere task completion and engage in meaningful, self-directed learning. This approach is particularly beneficial for the children of military personnel in multilingual settings, where diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds help in acquiring diverse knowledge.

**Keywords:** Designment, diverse knowledge, military children, multilingual classroom, self-directed learning

## **Introduction**

In today's increasingly interconnected world, education must adapt to meet the diverse needs of students from various cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Traditional teaching methods, while established, often fall short in engaging these students, leading to challenges in creativity and innovation. This is particularly evident in multilingual classrooms, where the interplay of different languages and cultural perspectives can enrich the learning experience but also complicate academic continuity.

Focusing on the children of military personnel is crucial because these students frequently face unique challenges that arise from their families' transient lifestyles. Due to their parents' deployments and frequent relocations, children of military personnel experience disruptions in their academic journeys, which can impact their educational outcomes. As they move to new schools, they must navigate varying educational standards, expectations, and languages, making it difficult to identify what are required of them academically. This paper explicitly focuses on the objectives, existing background studies and the new contribution.

The objectives are

- To analyze the challenges faced by children of military personnel in multilingual classrooms.
- To explore the limitations of traditional assignment-based education for these children.
- To propose the concept of "designment" as an alternative strategy that leads to creativity, personal choice and self-directed learning.

## **Literature Review**

The educational landscape has increasingly shifted towards student-centred learning approaches that empower learners to take an active role in their education. In the paper "Students Rule With 'Design Your Own Homework'", Valerie Grimes illustrates how allowing students to create their own homework assignments can enhance engagement and motivation. By empowering students to design projects that resonate with their interests, educators foster a sense of ownership over their learning. This aligns with the growing body of research that highlights the positive impact of student autonomy on educational outcomes (Grimes). Similarly, Mark Creasy's concept of "unhomework" builds

on this idea by encouraging students to take responsibility for setting, checking, and assessing their own work (Creasy). Creasy posits that traditional homework often fails to meet the individual needs of learners and advocates for a more personalized approach that allows students to determine their own learning objectives.

Both Grimes and Creasy accentuate the importance of making homework meaningful. Grimes finds that students perceive self-generated assignments as more relevant, enhancing their connection to learning. Creasy echoes this sentiment by advocating for a framework where students are involved in determining the focus, purpose, and success criteria for their assignments. By engaging students in discussions about the relevance of their work, educators can facilitate deeper learning experiences that extend beyond rote memorization and compliance. This approach aligns with contemporary educational theories that advocate for meaningful learning through connection to personal interests and real-world applications.

These frameworks promote the development of essential skills such as critical thinking, creativity, and collaboration. Grimes requires students to articulate their learning through written statements and project presentations, fostering metacognitive awareness. This reflective practice is critical for developing self-assessment skills. Creasy's emphasis on the 5 Rs respect, relationships, resilience, responsibilities, and rights provides a foundation for students to work collaboratively on projects, developing teamwork and communication skills. By allowing students to determine how they wish to present their work, both frameworks encourage innovative thinking and personal expression.

While these highlights the benefits of student autonomy in learning, there is limited research on how these concepts can be specifically tailored to meet the needs of children of military personnel in multilingual classrooms. These students face unique challenges due to frequent relocations, disruptions in academic continuity, and language barriers, making it difficult to apply uniform educational strategies. The current studies, such as those on designment and unhomework, do not address how these approaches can be adapted to support students dealing with transitions and varying educational standards.

This paper seeks to fill this gap by introducing the concept of "designment" as a modern strategy specifically tailored for children

of military personnel in multilingual classrooms. Designment, unlike traditional homework, fosters personal choice and autonomy, encouraging students to go beyond task completion and engage in meaningful, self-directed learning. The study proposes that by allowing these students to design their own tasks, they can better integrate their diverse cultural and linguistic experiences into their education. This strategy offers a flexible and adaptive approach, which can help the children of military personnel overcome the challenges of adjusting to new environments and educational standards. In doing so, designment could provide a more inclusive and effective learning framework for students in multilingual settings.

The strategy introduced in this paper to approach education in a better way is designment. This strategy is obtained by reversing the existing method followed in colleges, which is assignment. At present, assignment is the exercise task given in educational institutions. The downsides of assignments have been researched by many. Ms. Harshitha in her blog "Pros and Cons of Assignments" clearly explains the negative aspects of assignments. Harshitha says that there is often a lack of personalization, which may not cater to individual learning styles or paces in assignments. Creative assignments might not align with all the school students' interests or strengths, potentially leaving some at a disadvantage. Assignments can inadvertently encourage cheating or plagiarism due to time constraints or a lack of understanding (Harshitha, 2023).

Another paper "Is Homework Important? What Are Its Advantages and Disadvantages" shares a similar idea on the disadvantages of assignments. It delivers a fact that assignments increase the focus of students on completing the task rather than focusing on creativity and innovations (2023).

In order to awaken one's understanding on the new strategy of the study, designment, one must know the disadvantages of traditional assignments given in schools.

### **Downfall of Traditional Assignments**

Traditional assignments, while long-standing in educational institutions, often suffer from several significant drawbacks. One major issue is the lack of personalization. Assignments are typically standardized, which means they are designed to be completed by all students in the same

manner. This approach does not account for individual learning styles, paces, or interests. As a result, some students may find assignments too challenging, while others may find them unengaging and repetitive. The one-size-fits-all nature of assignments can lead to a disengagement from learning, as students are unable to explore topics in ways that align with their personal strengths and curiosities. Harshitha's blog "Pros and Cons of Assignments" highlights these issues, noting that assignments often fail to cater to individual learning needs and can stifle creativity and enthusiasm (Harshitha, 2023).

Another significant drawback of traditional assignments is their potential to encourage negative academic behaviours. Due to time constraints and a lack of understanding, students might resort to cheating or plagiarism to complete their tasks. Assignments often prioritize the completion of tasks over the learning process, pushing students to focus on meeting deadlines rather than truly engaging with the material. This can result in superficial learning, where students do the bare minimum to complete the task without gaining a deep understanding of the subject matter. Moreover, as pointed out in the paper "Is Homework Important? What Are Its Advantages and Disadvantages", traditional assignments can stifle creativity and innovation, as students are more focused on fulfilling specific requirements than exploring new ideas (2023). This environment can limit the development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills, which are essential for success in the modern world.

### **The Modern Approach in Multilingual Classrooms - Designment**

The study aims to propose a strategy opposite to assignment. The term designment means a plan or a purpose in Merriam Webster's *English Dictionary* (Webster). Considering this meaning, the study implies the idea of designing or planning one's own task called designment wherein assignments do not allow the students to plan on what work is to be done. It simply pushes the individual to identify what plan is given by the instructor and work on it. This leads to monotonous activity and repetition of work as well. Designments allow students to leverage their creative skills and thought processes independently. In this approach, teachers provide only the topic or area of focus, leaving students to determine their methods and pathways of exploration.

In this study, multilingual classrooms refer to educational environments

where students from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds come together to learn. Such classrooms often include students who speak multiple languages at home or who have relocated frequently due to circumstances such as military family life. The children of military personnel, in particular, experience constant transitions between schools in different regions or even countries, which exposes them to various languages and educational systems. These multilingual settings are rich with cultural diversity, yet they also present challenges such as language barriers, inconsistent academic standards, and a need for students to quickly adapt to new environments.

This approach is particularly advantageous for the children of military personnel in multilingual settings, where the diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds can enrich their learning experiences. Designment allows students to decide and plan their learning activities, giving them the freedom to choose the areas they wish to explore and the methods they prefer to use, rather than strictly following the teacher's instructions. By enabling personal choice, designment helps children of military personnel and others in multilingual classrooms to learn more effectively and creatively. It also helps them to avoid mood fluctuations which is common for children of military personnel (Suganya et al., 2023).

The study suggests that designment is a superior strategy to traditional assignments, as it promotes engagement, creativity, and autonomy. This method effectively addresses the unique educational challenges faced by the children of military personnel in multilingual environments. Designment not only supports better learning outcomes but also fosters a more inclusive and dynamic educational experience. This approach holds promise for broader application in diverse educational settings, potentially transforming how educators engage with students from varied backgrounds and enhancing the overall quality of education.

Designments offer several distinct advantages, particularly in multilingual classrooms. By allowing students to choose their own projects and methods of learning, designment accommodates the diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds present in these classrooms. Students can integrate their cultural experiences and linguistic strengths into their projects, enriching both their own learning and promoting cultural exchange among their peers.

Students are more engaged and motivated when they have control over their learning. Designment gives them the freedom to select topics that interest them and methods that suit their learning styles. This is particularly important in keeping students from varied backgrounds invested in their education. The autonomy provided by designment sparks intrinsic motivation, as students tend to pursue subjects, they are passionate about, leading to deeper engagement and sustained interest in learning.

### **Why Designment Works Best for Military Children?**

The frequent moves and transfers of military families create significant educational challenges for children of military personnel, who must constantly adapt to new schools, curricula, and teaching methods. Unlike civilian students, these children experience frequent disruptions in their academic continuity, which can affect their learning outcomes. Given these unique circumstances, it is critical to implement an educational strategy that addresses their specific needs, rather than relying solely on traditional methods that assume educational stability. Designment offers a flexible and adaptable learning approach designed to mitigate these challenges by empowering these children to take ownership of their education, no matter where they are stationed.

By allowing students to design their own tasks and projects, designment enables military children to integrate their personal experiences and cultural backgrounds into their learning. This personalized approach is particularly suited to military children, as it provides them with the continuity and relevance, they often lack due to frequent relocations. With each move, military children encounter different academic standards and classroom expectations, which can be disorienting. Designment addresses this issue by giving students the autonomy to choose their own learning pathways, enabling them to maintain control and consistency in their education across different settings.

Designing their own learning tasks fosters a sense of autonomy and ownership, which is essential for children of military personnel who might feel disconnected due to constant transitions. This approach is particularly effective for students from military families because it gives them the opportunity to integrate familiar aspects of their life such as cultural experiences from different regions and linguistic diversity

into their schoolwork, making their education more relevant and engaging. When these children are given the freedom to choose their own topics and methods of exploration, they are more likely to engage deeply with the material, thus improving their learning outcomes. This intrinsic motivation not only enhances their educational experience but also helps them develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills. In a multilingual setting, this approach allows the children of military personnel to incorporate their linguistic strengths and cultural experiences into their projects, promoting a richer and more inclusive learning environment.

Furthermore, these children often face emotional and social challenges, such as mood fluctuations and difficulties in forming stable peer relationships. These challenges stem from their transient lifestyle, making it difficult for them to establish long-term friendships or feel rooted in a particular community. Designment offers a consistent and engaging framework that can provide much-needed stability and purpose. By focusing on projects that interest them, children can develop a sense of control over their learning, which helps mitigate feelings of instability and anxiety. The collaborative aspect of designment also encourages students to work together, share ideas, and support each other, fostering a sense of community and belonging that is especially important for children who experience frequent relocations.

In multilingual classrooms, where the children of military personnel often find themselves, designment leverages the diversity of cultural and linguistic backgrounds to create a supportive and dynamic learning environment. This approach allows them to build resilience, adaptability, and a positive attitude towards learning qualities essential for their academic success and overall well-being. These traits are critical not only in managing their frequent transitions but also in helping them thrive in their unique, ever-changing environments. By addressing both the academic and emotional challenges faced by the children of military personnel, designment provides a holistic and effective solution tailored to their specific needs.

### **Practical Implementations**

Implementing the designment strategy in educational settings involves several practical steps to ensure its effectiveness and integration into

the curriculum. Teachers must shift their role from being the primary source of information to becoming facilitators of learning. This requires comprehensive training and professional development to help educators understand how to guide students in designing their own tasks. Teachers should learn to provide broad topics or areas of focus and support students in developing their own projects. They must be equipped with the skills to mentor and provide feedback throughout the process, encouraging students to think critically and creatively.

The curriculum must be adapted to accommodate designment. Traditional rigid structures and standardized tests need to be reconsidered to allow for more flexible and personalized learning pathways. Schools can develop frameworks that outline the essential skills and knowledge students need to acquire while giving them the freedom to explore these areas in ways that interest them. This could involve project-based learning, interdisciplinary approaches and the integration of real-world problems that students can address through their projects. Assessments should also be redesigned to evaluate not just the end product, but the process, creativity and effort put into the designment.

In addition to these, the classroom environment must be supportive of this strategy. This includes providing access to a variety of resources such as libraries, online databases, laboratories and other materials that can help students explore their chosen topics. Schools should foster a culture of collaboration, where students can work together, share ideas and learn from one another. Time management strategies should be taught and emphasized, helping students plan their projects effectively and meet deadlines without feeling overwhelmed. Creating a classroom atmosphere that values creativity, curiosity and independent thinking is crucial for the success of designment.

Involving parents and the broader community can enhance the effectiveness of the designment strategy. Schools can organize workshops and informational sessions for parents to understand the benefits of designment and how they can support their children's learning at home. Community partnerships with local businesses, organizations and experts can provide students with opportunities for mentorship, real-world experiences, and resources that enrich their projects. Engaging the community not only broadens the scope of resources available to students but also helps to create a supportive network that values and contributes to the students' educational journey.

## **Challenges in Implementing Designment**

Implementing designment in educational settings comes with few challenges. One significant challenge is the shift in teaching methodology required for educators. Teachers accustomed to traditional assignment-based approaches may find it difficult to adapt to the role of facilitators rather than direct instructors. This shift requires extensive professional development and training to equip teachers with the skills necessary to guide students in designing their own learning projects. Additionally, educators must be adept at providing individualized feedback and support, which can be time-consuming and demanding.

Another challenge lies in balancing structure and flexibility within the curriculum. While designment promotes autonomy and creativity, it still needs to ensure that students meet essential learning outcomes and standards. Developing a curriculum that allows for personalized learning paths while maintaining academic rigor can be complex. Schools must create frameworks that provide clear objectives and expectations without constraining students' creative freedom. This involves careful planning and ongoing assessment to ensure that all students are progressing appropriately and acquiring the necessary knowledge and skills.

Ensuring equity and access to resources is also a crucial consideration in implementing designment. Students from diverse backgrounds, particularly those in under-resourced schools, may face challenges in accessing the materials and support needed to successfully engage in designment projects. Schools must address these disparities by providing adequate resources, such as access to technology, libraries, and learning materials. Additionally, there needs to be a focus on supporting students who may struggle with self-directed learning due to varying levels of prior knowledge or learning difficulties. Providing additional guidance and scaffolding can help ensure that all students benefit from the designment approach, regardless of their starting point.

## **Positive Future Outcomes for Students with Designment**

Two children of military personnels were introduced to designment strategy and positive responses were received. A 16-year-old boy named J. S. Blesson Paul from Kanyakumari, Tamil Nadu was interviewed via phone. His father is a retired military personnel and he agreed that it was indeed a challenging environment in school to cope with regular

assignments when his father was away. When the idea of designment was introduced to him, he said that he had a interest to learn his subjects and do his homework rather than forcing himself to do it when the traditional method of assignments were given (B. Paul, personal communication, October 10, 2024).

Similarly, an eighteen-year-old girl named L. Jinsha, daughter of a retired military personnel was also interviewed via phone. She resides in Chennai, Tamil Nadu. She says that moving to different places pushes her into a shell, wherein it feels like forcing herself to cope up with the tasks given in school. When she was introduced to the strategy of designment, Jinsha confidently argues that designment makes her to develop her creativity and is a burden-free learning process (Jinsha, personal communication, October 10, 2024).

Thus, these case reports provide a vivid idea that the implementation of designment in education promises a future where students are better equipped with essential skills for the twenty-first century. By fostering creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving abilities, designment prepares students to tackle complex real-world challenges. As students take ownership of their learning, they develop a sense of agency and confidence that extends beyond the classroom. This empowerment can lead to a generation of innovative thinkers and leaders who are adept at navigating an ever-changing global landscape.

Students engaged in designment are more likely to develop a love for learning that persists throughout their lives. The freedom to explore topics that interest them cultivates intrinsic motivation and a passion for discovery. This sustained engagement can result in higher academic achievement and a deeper understanding of subjects. Furthermore, the skills acquired through designment such as research, project management, and collaboration—are directly transferable to higher education and professional environments, ensuring that students are well-prepared for future academic and career pursuits.

Designment also promotes inclusivity by allowing students to incorporate their diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds into their learning projects. This approach not only enriches the educational experience but also fosters a greater appreciation for diversity and multiculturalism. As students work on projects that reflect their unique perspectives, they develop a stronger sense of identity and self-awareness. Additionally,

the collaborative nature of designment encourages students to build social skills and empathy, preparing them to become compassionate and effective communicators in a globalized world.

On the whole, designment offers a transformative educational experience that equips students with the skills, motivation, and confidence needed for future success (Jinsha, personal communication, October 10, 2024). By emphasizing creativity, autonomy, and inclusivity, designment prepares students to thrive in both their personal and professional lives, contributing positively to society.

### **Conclusion**

Children of military personnel, who often face frequent relocations, benefit from the flexibility of designment. This approach allows them to continue their learning seamlessly, adapting their projects to new environments and educational standards without the disruption typical of traditional assignments. Designments inculcate self-reliance and adaptability, skills that are particularly valuable for the children of military personnel who must frequently adjust to new schools and curriculum.

Teachers can act as facilitators and mentors in a designment framework, providing guidance tailored to each student's project and needs. This personalized support can be especially helpful for students who might struggle with language barriers. Designment also encourages collaboration among students, allowing them to learn from each other's diverse backgrounds and perspectives, which can be particularly enriching in a multilingual setting. This approach not only supports military children facing frequent relocations but also enriches the learning environment for all students, making education a more dynamic and inclusive process. By this commendable process of education, the thought of the study intends for a better universe with an education of high imbue.

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# Multilingual Classroom in Indian Context: Expectations, Opportunities and Challenges

*Venkanna K.*

## Abstract

India, renowned for its linguistic diversity, faces unique challenges and opportunities in fostering inclusive education. The traditional monolingual approach to Education often marginalizes students whose mother tongues differ from the language of instruction. This research paper delves into the complexities of multilingual classrooms in the Indian context, examining the expectations, opportunities, and challenges they present. The study investigates existing policies, pedagogical approaches, and empirical evidence related to multilingual Education in India by analyzing relevant literature. The paper argues that embracing multilingualism as a resource, rather than a deficit, is crucial for achieving educational equity and unlocking the full potential of India's diverse student population.

**Keywords:** Multilingualism, India, education, classroom, challenges, opportunities, language policy

## Introduction

India's linguistic landscape is a testament to its rich cultural heritage, boasting over 19,500 mother tongues (Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India, 2011). While integral to the nation's identity, this linguistic tapestry presents unique challenges to its education system. In recent years, Multilingual Education has garnered significant attention, driven by the growing recognition of language's crucial role in cognitive development, cultural preservation, and academic achievement (Cummins, 2000).

The importance of addressing linguistic diversity in Education cannot be overstated. Recent studies have illuminated the detrimental effects of linguistic marginalization, including academic underachievement, low self-esteem, and limited access to higher education and employment opportunities (Canagarajah & Liyanage, 2012). A particularly alarming study by Jhingran (2019) revealed that a mere 16 per cent of Indian children in Grade 3 could read Grade 2-level text in their regional language, underscoring the urgent need for more effective language policies in Education.

As multilingual education gains traction in global pedagogical discussions, theoretical frameworks provided by scholars such as Cummins (2000) and Garcia (2009) offer valuable insights into multilingualism's cognitive and social benefits. In the Indian context, the Three-Language Formula, a central policy since 1968, has aimed to promote multilingual competencies (NCERT, 2006). However, the persistence of a predominantly monolingual approach, often prioritizing English or Hindi, marginalizes students whose mother tongues are excluded from the educational mainstream (Mohanty, 2019).

This paper examines the multifaceted reality of multilingual classrooms in the Indian context, recognizing the critical need to address the disparities arising from linguistic diversity. By exploring the current linguistic landscape in Indian Education, we can better understand the challenges and opportunities presented by this diversity.

### **Current Linguistic Landscape in Indian Education**

The linguistic terrain of India profoundly influences its education system, presenting benefits and challenges for educators, legislators, and students alike. India's linguistic diversity is unparalleled, with 22 officially recognized languages and hundreds of other languages and dialects spoken nationwide. This diversity is reflected in classrooms nationwide, where students from various linguistic backgrounds converge.

To illustrate the extent of this diversity, let us examine some key statistics:

**Table 1:** Linguistic Diversity in India

<i>Language</i>	<i>Number of Speakers (in millions)</i>	<i>Percentage of Population*</i>
Hindi	528.3	43.63
Bengali	97.2	8.03
Telugu	81.1	6.7
Marathi	83.0	7.09
Tamil	69.0	5.70
Urdu	50.8	4.19
Gujarati	55.5	4.58
Kannada	43.7	3.61
Odia	37.5	3.10
Punjabi	33.1	2.74

*Source:* Census of India (2011), Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India.

**Table 2:** Distribution of Students by Medium of Instruction in Indian Schools (2019-2020)

<i>Medium of Instruction</i>	<i>Percentage of Students</i>
Hindi	49.6%
English	26.1%
Bengali	7.2%
Marathi	4.8%
Telugu	3.5%
Tamil	3.3%
Gujarati	2.2%
Other languages	3.3%

*Source:* Unified District Information System for Education Plus (UDISE+) 2019-20 (Ministry of Education, 2021)

The data presented in Table 1 showcases the dominance of Hindi, spoken by 43.63 per cent of the population, followed by other major languages such as Bengali, Telugu, and Marathi. However, it is crucial to note that even languages spoken by a smaller percentage of the population represent millions of speakers, highlighting the need for inclusive language policies in Education.

Table 2 further illustrates the linguistic complexity in Indian schools, with Hindi and English serving as the primary mediums of instruction for 49.6 per cent and 26.1 per cent of students, respectively. While this data underscores the prevalence of these two languages in the education system, it also reveals the significant presence of various regional languages as mediums of instruction.

Linguistic diversity in Indian classrooms is a challenge not only for students but also for teachers. The effectiveness of multilingual Education largely depends on the preparedness of educators to navigate this linguistic complexity:

**Table 3:** Teacher Proficiency in Multilingual Instruction

<i>Region</i>	<i>Percentage of Teachers with Multilingual Training**</i>	<i>Availability of Instructional Materials (%)</i>
North India	45.6	65.4
South India	50.2	70.1
East India	40.1	60.3
West India	48.5	67.8
Rural Areas	30.4	50.6
Urban Areas	55.3	75.2

*Source:* National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT, 2018).

Table 3 reveals teacher training and resource availability disparities across different regions and between rural and urban areas. These disparities highlight the need for comprehensive teacher training programmes and equitable distribution of resources to implement multilingual education strategies effectively.

The data presented in these tables collectively paints a picture of India's linguistic richness and the complexities it introduces into the education system. This diversity necessitates a nuanced approach to education that can accommodate and leverage the multilingual abilities of students and teachers alike.

As we delve deeper into the challenges and opportunities presented by India's linguistic landscape in education, it becomes evident that a one-size-fits-all approach is inadequate. Tailored, culturally sensitive, and linguistically inclusive educational strategies are paramount. By

recognizing and addressing the linguistic diversity in Indian classrooms, we can work towards an education system that accommodates, celebrates, and utilizes this diversity as a strength, fostering improved learning outcomes and preserving India's rich cultural heritage.

### **The Three-Language Formula in India: A Persistent Challenge in Educational Policy**

The Three-Language Formula has been a recurring theme in Indian education policy since the mid-twentieth century, aimed at balancing the needs of linguistic diversity, national integration, and access to global knowledge. While envisioned as a framework for fostering intellectual and emotional unity rather than a rigid constraint on language acquisition, its implementation has been fraught with challenges and remains a subject of ongoing debate. The 1961 meeting of Chief Ministers, culminating in an agreement that laid the groundwork for the formula, highlights the early attempts to grapple with this complex issue. This early conceptualization underscores the policy's intention as a tool for national cohesion rather than linguistic limitation.

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 reaffirmed the importance of the Three-Language Formula in promoting multilingualism and strengthening national unity. However, this renewed emphasis also reignited long-standing controversies, exemplified by the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister's rejection of the policy, reflecting the state's enduring stance on this sensitive and politically charged matter. This underscores the inherent tension between national policy and regional linguistic identities, a challenge that has plagued the Three-Language Formula since its inception.

Formally introduced in 1968, the Three-Language Formula aims to ensure that students acquire proficiency in three languages: their regional language or mother tongue, Hindi (in non-Hindi-speaking states) or another Indian language (in Hindi-speaking states), and English or another modern Indian language. This structure seeks to give students a firm foundation in their local language, access to a wider communication network within India, and a connection to the global community through English. The policy applies to both public and private educational institutions, allowing flexibility in teaching medium among the three designated languages.

However, the implementation of this seemingly straightforward framework has been far from uniform. As documented in Erling et al.'s 2018 study, *Language in Education Policy in South Asia*, the degree of implementation varies considerably across states. Table 4 from their research reveals a mixed picture:

**Table 4:** Implementation of Three-Language Formula Across Indian States (2018)

<i>Level of Implementation</i>	<i>Number of States/UTs</i>
Full Implementation	18
Partial Implementation	14
No Implementation	4

*Source:* Language in Education Policy in South Asia (Erling et al., 2018)

These data demonstrate that while many states have embraced the Three-Language Formula, achieving consistent and comprehensive implementation nationwide remains a considerable hurdle. The reasons for this uneven implementation are complex and multifaceted, often rooted in regional linguistic politics, resource constraints, and differing interpretations of the policy's objectives.

The 1968 national education policy operationalized the Three-Language Formula, mandating the inclusion of a third language—in addition to Hindi and English—in the curricula of Hindi-speaking states. This third language is intended to reflect the diverse linguistic landscape of contemporary India, promoting exposure to languages beyond the dominant Hindi-English binary. This provision acknowledges the importance of preserving and promoting the many languages spoken nationwide.

At its core, the Three-Language Formula strives to cultivate multilingualism, facilitating effective communication among students from different linguistic backgrounds and contributing to national cohesion. Students develop an appreciation for linguistic diversity and a deeper understanding of the nation's rich cultural tapestry by engaging with multiple languages and cultures. The formula also aims to equip students with the linguistic tools necessary to navigate an increasingly interconnected world, with English as a crucial link to global communication and knowledge. However, the persistent challenges in its implementation necessitate ongoing dialogue and adaptation to ensure

that the policy effectively serves the diverse linguistic needs of India's population while simultaneously fostering national unity. Finding the optimal balance between these sometimes-competing goals remains a central challenge for Indian education policy.

## ***2.2. Enforcement of the Three Language Formula in the National Education Policy (NEP) of 2020***

The National Education Policy (NEP) of 2020 provides a comprehensive framework for implementing the Three-Language Formula in Indian schools, addressing various aspects of language education from early childhood to higher education. This policy promotes multilingualism and cultural diversity while ensuring students develop proficiency in multiple languages.

One of the key aspects of the NEP 2020 is its emphasis on early childhood education as a foundation for language acquisition. The policy recommends that children aged 3 to 8 receive instruction in their mother tongue or a local dialect, recognizing the importance of building a strong linguistic foundation in the early years. This approach is supported by research indicating that children learn most effectively when taught in their native language during their formative years.

Flexibility is another crucial feature of the NEP 2020's approach to language education. While mandating that the first two languages studied must be indigenous Indian languages from the student's state or region, the policy allows for greater choice in the selection of the third language. This third language can be English or any other language of the student's choice. This provision is expected to alleviate concerns about the forced adoption of Hindi in non-Hindi-speaking regions, promoting a more inclusive and diverse linguistic landscape in Indian Education.

The NEP 2020 also recognizes the critical role of teachers in successfully implementing the Three-Language Formula. To this end, the policy proposes comprehensive training programs for educators, focusing on multilingualism and language pedagogy. Additionally, it emphasizes the importance of recruiting teachers proficient in local languages, ensuring that students receive high-quality instruction in their mother tongues and regional languages.

The examination system outlined in the NEP 2020 reflects the policy's commitment to multilingualism. Students will be assessed on proficiency in all three languages, including English, ensuring they develop

comprehensive language skills across multiple tongues. This approach aims to create a more balanced and equitable evaluation system that values proficiency in Indigenous languages alongside English.

Finally, the NEP 2020 recognizes the potential of technology in supporting language education. The policy promotes the development of online resources and instructional materials in native Indian languages, facilitating students' learning in their mother tongues. This initiative aims to bridge the gap in available resources for Indigenous languages and support the implementation of the Three-Language Formula across diverse linguistic regions.

### *2.3. Concerns Regarding the Three-Language Formula:*

The Three Language Formula, a cornerstone of India's language education policy, has been controversial in recent years. While designed to promote linguistic diversity and national unity, its implementation has faced numerous challenges and criticisms.

One of the primary concerns is the inconsistent application of the formula across different states, leading to undermining mother tongue languages. Despite its intention to protect the political rights of major ethnic groups, the policy has inadvertently contributed to the decline of various indigenous languages. In some regions, adding Sanskrit as a mandatory subject has further complicated the language learning landscape.

Another significant issue is the increased academic burden on students resulting from the three-language formula. This additional workload may potentially impact the overall quality of education and student well-being.

The draft policy's reliance on the premise that 54 per cent of Indians are proficient in Hindi has been called into question. According to the 2011 Census, only 52 crores out of 121 crore people reported Hindi as their spoken language, with approximately 32 crores claiming it as their native tongue. These figures suggest that Hindi is spoken by less than 44 per cent of the Indian population, with only about 25 per cent considering it their mother tongue. Despite these statistics, there has been growing pressure to establish Hindi as India's official language. This move has met resistance from several states, particularly in the South, who view it as an imposition.

Implementing the Three-Language Formula has been further hindered

by practical constraints. States like Tripura, Tamil Nadu, and Puducherry have struggled to provide Hindi education, while Hindi-speaking states have not reciprocated by including South Indian languages in their curricula. Additionally, state governments often face financial limitations when implementing the formula effectively.

The scarcity of resources presents a significant challenge, particularly in hiring an adequate number of language instructors within a limited timeframe. This shortage of qualified teachers and financial constraints pose substantial obstacles for state governments in successfully executing the policy.

In response to these concerns, the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 has attempted to address some issues surrounding the Three Language Formula. The NEP emphasizes the importance of using the mother tongue or local language as the medium of instruction till at least Grade 5 and preferably till Grade 8 and beyond. It also reaffirms the commitment to the three-language formula, focusing on promoting national unity and multilingualism.

The NEP aims to provide greater flexibility and autonomy to states when implementing the language policy. It stipulates that as long as two of the three languages chosen are native to India, students can select the languages they wish to study. This approach is intended to mitigate concerns about language imposition and promote a more inclusive and diverse linguistic landscape in Indian Education.

The Three-Language Formula is still a key component of India's language education strategy; however, its application still has issues. By providing more flexibility and highlighting the value of mother language instruction, the NEP 2020 approach aims to alleviate some of these worries. However, successful execution, sufficient funding, and a well-rounded strategy that upholds linguistic variety while fostering national cohesion will ultimately determine the policy's success.

### **Expectations and the Ideal Multilingual Classroom in India**

The concept of a multilingual classroom in India carries significant expectations, primarily focused on achieving equitable and quality education for all learners. These expectations, held by parents, educators, and policymakers, coalesce around the shared goal of improved educational outcomes but also diverge in their priorities.

While advocates of multilingual education champion bilingual or multilingual competency as a crucial objective, the perceived benefits extend beyond language acquisition. Cummins (2000) highlights the argument that students receiving instruction in their native language alongside national and international languages demonstrate enhanced cognitive abilities and improved academic achievement. This aligns with the various expectations outlined in Table 5, adapted from Cummins (2000).

**Table 5:** Expectations from Multilingual Education

Category	Expected Outcome
Parents	Academic excellence, job readiness
Educators	Enhanced cognitive abilities, student engagement
Policymakers	Inclusive Education, national unity

Source: Cummins, J. (2000). *Language, power, and pedagogy*. Multilingual matters.

Improved learning outcomes are a central expectation of multilingual classrooms. Research, such as UNESCO's 2016 report, indicates that children learn most effectively in their mother tongue, particularly in their formative years. By incorporating multiple languages into the classroom, educators aim to create a more inclusive and effective learning environment, directly addressing this fundamental principle. This links directly to preserving India's rich linguistic and cultural heritage. Multilingual Education is viewed as a key mechanism for maintaining this heritage. Providing space for regional languages within the curriculum fosters a connection to cultural roots while facilitating proficiency in widely used languages like Hindi and English.

Beyond academic and cultural benefits, enhanced cognitive development is another key expectation. Bialystok (2011) and other research demonstrate that multilingualism can positively impact cognitive abilities, improving problem-solving skills, creativity, and mental flexibility. Multilingual classrooms are expected to nurture these cognitive benefits in Indian students.

These expectations are reflected and reinforced within policy frameworks and pedagogical goals. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 (Government of India, 2020) underscores the importance of mother tongue and regional languages in early education, advocating a multilingual approach to promote inclusivity and improved learning

outcomes. This policy envisions cognitive development, cultural inclusivity, and reduced dropout rates, particularly in rural and tribal areas, as achievable outcomes of this approach.

Finally, parental and community expectations play a significant role in shaping the ideal multilingual classroom. Annamalai (2004) notes that parents in multilingual communities often hold the dual expectation of preserving their linguistic heritage while ensuring their children achieve proficiency in English, recognizing its status as a global lingua franca and a pathway to upward mobility. This dual expectation necessitates a balanced curriculum that effectively caters to both local languages and the development of global competencies.

#### **4. Opportunities Presented by Multilingual Classrooms**

Multilingual classrooms present significant opportunities for enriching the educational landscape. These opportunities span inclusive education, global competitiveness, cultural exchange, cognitive enhancement, cultural preservation, and impactful policy implementation. Creating inclusive learning environments for students from diverse linguistic backgrounds is a key benefit, as it ensures equitable access to Education by removing language barriers. Furthermore, Multilingual Education fosters global competitiveness by equipping students with valuable language skills for an increasingly interconnected world. Within these classrooms, cross-cultural exchange and understanding opportunities emerge, nurturing a sense of national unity while respecting regional diversity. Multilingualism's cognitive and academic benefits further strengthen this intercultural dialogue, as research suggests it enhances cognitive flexibility, problem-solving, and academic performance (Bialystok, 2011). Leveraging these advantages, particularly in the Indian context, incorporating local languages alongside Hindi and English can lead to higher intellectual engagement and academic success. Crucially, Multilingual Education plays a vital role in preserving linguistic diversity, promoting social cohesion (Mohanty, 2019), and fostering cultural identity and inclusion among students. Finally, policy frameworks like the NEP 2020, which emphasizes mother tongue instruction in foundational years and mandates the development of multilingual resources (Government of India, 2020), provide a concrete pathway for realizing these benefits. This approach aligns with UNESCO's recommendations on multilingual Education (UNESCO, 2017), providing a globally recognized framework for promoting inclusive and effective educational practices.

## Challenges in Implementing Multilingual Education in India

Implementing multilingual Education within India's diverse linguistic landscape presents a complex array of challenges. While the Three-Language Formula and the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 (National Education Policy, 2020) advocate multilingualism, translating these progressive ideals into effective practice faces significant hurdles. These challenges span teacher training, curriculum development, resource allocation, and socio-cultural perceptions.

A critical challenge lies in teacher training and professional development. Teachers, the pivotal agents of Multilingual Education, often lack adequate preparation and support. A Ministry of Education study (Ministry of Education, 2021) reveals that many educators feel ill-equipped to address the multilingual needs of their students. This underscores the urgent need for comprehensive teacher training programmes focused on multilingual pedagogies. While UDISE+ 2019-20 data (Ministry of Education, 2021) presented in Table 6 indicates that 89.3 per cent of teachers are professionally trained and 78.6 per cent are graduates, this training often lacks a specific focus on multilingual teaching methodologies. Furthermore, finding teachers proficient in multiple languages, especially in rural areas, continues to be a significant obstacle.

**Table 6:** Teacher Qualification and Training Status (2019-2020)

<i>Qualification/Training</i>	<i>Percentage of Teachers</i>
Graduate	78.6%
Postgraduate	14.3%
M.Phil/Ph.D	0.7%
Professionally Trained	89.3%

*Source:* UDISE+ 2019-20 (Ministry of Education, 2021)

The standardization of curriculum and assessment across multiple languages presents another significant hurdle. Ensuring equivalence in content and evaluation across different language mediums is complex and requires careful consideration. This complexity is further compounded by resource constraints and infrastructural limitations, particularly in rural schools (MHRD, 2018). Developing and distributing quality learning materials in multiple languages necessitates substantial financial and human resources, a challenge in a country as diverse as India, often operating with limited educational budgets.

Beyond logistical challenges, striking a balance between promoting regional languages and ensuring proficiency in widely used languages like English creates ongoing tension. The desire to preserve linguistic heritage often clashes with the practical need for languages that offer broader opportunities. Policy-practice discrepancies further complicate this tension. While policies like the Three-Language Formula and NEP 2020 are well-intentioned (Jhingran, 2009), their implementation is often hampered by regional disparities, lack of political will, and administrative bottlenecks.

Further pedagogical challenges arise in adapting curricula and instructional practices to a linguistically diverse student body (NCERT, 2014). Psychological barriers also play a significant role, as students and parents may perceive regional languages as less prestigious than English (Kumar, 2018), creating resistance to full multilingualism. Finally, inconsistent and fragmented educational policies across different states contribute to disparities in implementation and outcomes, hindering the effective realization of Multilingual Education's potential (National Education Policy, 2020).

### **Policy Implications and Recommendations**

The diverse linguistic fabric of Indian society offers a distinct educational environment, presenting both opportunities and obstacles. Properly leveraging multilingualism in classrooms may lead to better cognitive results, cultural preservation, and social cohesion. However, achieving these benefits requires overcoming significant challenges in resource allocation, teacher training, and policy execution. As India moves towards educational reform through the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, policymakers, educators, and communities must collaborate effectively to integrate multilingualism in Education.

According to the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2018, 52.2 per cent of rural children in Class V could not read a Class II level text in their own language, emphasizing the literacy difficulties in multilingual rural settings (ASER, 2018). To enhance Indian linguistic policy in both theory and practice, several key recommendations are proposed:

***Enhanced Teacher Training Programmes:*** There is a need to develop extensive teacher training programmes focusing on multilingual teaching methods. These should encompass pre-service and in-service training, equipping teachers with the necessary skills for effective multilingual instruction.

**Curriculum Development:** Investing in curriculum development that effectively incorporates multiple languages is crucial. This effort should be cooperative among linguists, educators, and cultural specialists to ensure linguistic precision and cultural relevance.

**Technology Integration:** Utilizing technology can significantly benefit multilingual education. This could involve creating digital learning resources in various languages and employing AI-powered translation tools to facilitate instruction.

**Community Engagement:** Local community involvement in the educational process should be strengthened. Engaging communities can help integrate local linguistic and cultural elements into the curriculum, ensuring its relevance and resonance with students.

**Research and Monitoring:** Continuous research is necessary to evaluate the effectiveness of multilingual education strategies. Regular monitoring and assessment are vital for identifying best practices and pinpointing improvement areas.

## Conclusion

The multilingual classroom setup in India represents a challenging yet potentially rewarding educational strategy. Despite notable implementation hurdles, the potential for improved learning outcomes, cultural preservation, and cognitive enhancement merits pursuit. As India navigates its linguistic diversity within the educational domain, it is essential to employ a balanced, research-based approach that addresses local needs while considering global contexts.

The success of Multilingual Education in India hinges on thorough policy implementation, sufficient resource distribution, and a commitment to ongoing research and refinements. By addressing challenges and exploiting opportunities, India can create an educational system that honours its linguistic diversity and equips its students to thrive in a multilingual world.

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# The Post-Covid-19 Landscape: A New Vision for Multilingual Education

*Peerzada Owais Adil & Neelofar Shafi*

## Abstract

The Covid-19 pandemic revealed significant gaps in traditional educational systems, especially in multilingual education. The rapid shift to online learning highlighted disparities in access to technology, non-dominant language content, and educator preparedness for addressing multilingual needs. This paper examines the future of multilingual education by applying Linguistic Relativity Theory (LRT) and Multiliteracies Theory to understand how language structures shape cognition and how diverse communication modes can enhance learning. Based on these insights, the paper proposes a comprehensive model for post-pandemic multilingual education, emphasizing technological accessibility, cognitive inclusivity, and multimodal learning environments. This model addresses the specific challenges revealed by the pandemic and offers a forward-looking framework for educational equity in a globalized world.

**Keywords:** Multilingual education, post-Covid, linguistic relativity theory, multiliteracies theory, digital divide, online learning

## Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic caused an unprecedented shift in education worldwide, reshaping learning at all levels and exposing deep-rooted inequalities. As schools, colleges, and universities transitioned to online learning, the already existing disparities in education systems were starkly magnified. Multilingual learners, who make up a significant portion of students globally, were among the most affected. These

students often belong to marginalized communities where more than one language is spoken, and many struggled to navigate digital educational platforms not designed to meet their specific linguistic and cognitive needs (World Economic Forum, 2020).

For multilingual learners, the shift to digital platforms came with unique challenges. Many of these students come from homes where non-dominant languages are spoken, and in the scramble to adapt to online education, the availability of educational resources in these languages was severely limited. Moreover, many digital learning platforms, particularly in less technologically advanced regions, were designed primarily for monolingual students and centered on dominant languages like English. This left multilingual learners at a disadvantage, unable to access learning materials in their native languages and forced to engage with content that did not align with their linguistic and cognitive proficiencies (García & Li Wei, 2014).

The rapid transition to online learning also revealed a significant digital divide, both globally and within nations. For students from multilingual backgrounds, this divide was particularly debilitating. Without access to reliable technology or internet services, and without resources in their native languages, these students were further isolated from the educational process. Even in regions with greater internet accessibility, the lack of platforms designed with linguistic diversity in mind limited multilingual learners' ability to meaningfully engage with learning material (World Economic Forum, 2020). The pandemic, therefore, not only exposed existing inequalities in educational systems but also highlighted the urgent need for a reimagined approach to multilingual education.

The adaptation of multilingual education post-pandemic requires understanding the intricate relationships between language, cognition, and communication. Linguistic Relativity Theory (LRT) explores how language influences thought, while Multiliteracies Theory highlights the importance of diverse literacy forms, such as digital and visual literacies, in modern education. Together, these frameworks provide a foundation for rethinking multilingual education to be more inclusive and adaptive to the digital age.

This paper proposes a model based on these theories, focusing on technological accessibility, cognitive inclusivity, and multimodal

learning environments. This model aims to address the challenges exposed during the pandemic and to create a more equitable, adaptable system for multilingual learners in a globalized and increasingly digital world.

### **Linguistic Relativity and Multiliteracies: Theoretical Foundations**

Linguistic Relativity Theory (LRT), often referred to as the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis, posits that the structure of a language shapes its speakers' cognitive processes and perceptions of the world. According to LRT, individuals' linguistic systems influence how they interpret and interact with their surroundings, affecting their worldview and cognitive functions (Kramsch, 2009). This theory holds particular relevance in multilingual educational contexts, where students are required to engage with content in languages that differ structurally from their native tongues.

For instance, tonal languages such as Mandarin or Vietnamese rely on pitch to convey meaning, which influences how speakers interpret auditory information. In contrast, non-tonal languages like English do not employ pitch in the same way. As a result, students from tonal language backgrounds may process spoken content in online lessons differently from their non-tonal counterparts (Gee, 2004). Additionally, students whose native languages possess complex grammatical structures, such as Arabic or Russian, may face cognitive challenges when engaging with educational materials that assume simpler grammatical frameworks, as is often the case in English-based platforms.

The pandemic-induced shift to digital learning further complicated these dynamics, as many online educational platforms were not designed to accommodate the cognitive diversity arising from linguistic variation. The one-size-fits-all approach to language learning overlooks the unique cognitive processes shaped by different languages, creating significant barriers for multilingual learners. These cognitive disparities underscore the need for educational systems that recognize and adapt to linguistic diversity.

Multiliteracies Theory, developed by the New London Group (1996), expands the definition of literacy to include multiple modes of communication, including visual, auditory, and digital literacies. In a post-pandemic world, where education increasingly relies on digital

platforms, this theory becomes especially relevant, as students are required to navigate multimodal environments that extend beyond traditional text-based instruction. During the pandemic, students were exposed to various forms of digital communication—such as video lessons, interactive learning tools, and multimedia resources—that integrated multiple forms of literacy.

For multilingual learners, the ability to engage with these multimodal literacies is critical to their success in digital learning environments. They must not only navigate different languages but also engage with multiple forms of media simultaneously. The integration of visual, auditory, and interactive learning materials caters to diverse learning styles and helps bridge the gaps that arise from linguistic differences (Kalantzis & Cope, 2012).

Together, Linguistic Relativity Theory and Multiliteracies Theory provide a comprehensive framework for understanding the cognitive and communicative challenges faced by multilingual learners in the post-pandemic world. These frameworks offer valuable insights into how educational systems can be restructured to accommodate linguistic diversity while embracing evolving literacy practices.

### **A Comprehensive Model for Post-Pandemic Multilingual Education**

Building on the theoretical insights of Linguistic Relativity Theory and Multiliteracies Theory, this paper proposes a new model for multilingual education in the post-pandemic context. The model is structured around three core components: technological accessibility, cognitive inclusivity, and multimodal learning environments. Each of these components addresses specific challenges highlighted by the pandemic and provides a foundation for a more equitable and sustainable multilingual education system.

#### ***1. Technological Accessibility: Bridging the Digital Divide***

The Covid-19 pandemic exposed the stark disparities in access to technology, particularly for multilingual learners in rural or low-income communities. According to the World Economic Forum (2020), fewer than 15 per cent of rural households in India had access to the internet during the pandemic, compared to 42 per cent in urban areas. This digital divide disproportionately affected multilingual learners, many of whom speak non-dominant languages. Without reliable access to digital tools

and internet connectivity, these students were excluded from online learning opportunities, further deepening existing inequalities.

**Figure 1:** Internet Access and Multilingual Learning Opportunities During Covid-19 (Source: World Economic Forum, 2020)

<i>Category</i>	<i>Urban India (%)</i>	<i>Rural India (%)</i>
Households with Internet Access	42%	15%
Access to Multilingual Learning Platforms	75%	25%

To create an inclusive multilingual education system, technological accessibility must be prioritized. This means ensuring that all students have access to the necessary digital tools—such as internet connectivity, computers, and mobile devices—to participate fully in online learning. Governments and educational institutions must invest in the infrastructure required to bridge the digital divide, particularly in underserved areas. Additionally, online educational platforms must be designed to support a wide range of languages and dialects, allowing students to engage with content in their native language (Shohamy, 2001).

However, technological accessibility is not only about providing devices or internet access. It also involves ensuring that digital tools and platforms are linguistically inclusive. Current educational platforms often default to dominant languages, such as English, which limits multilingual learners' ability to fully engage with the content. In a post-pandemic world, platforms must be designed with linguistic diversity in mind, offering multilingual options and interfaces that accommodate non-dominant languages (Tandem, n.d.). This approach will ensure that students from diverse linguistic backgrounds are not left behind in the digital age.

The rationale behind technological accessibility is straightforward: without access to technology and linguistically inclusive platforms, multilingual learners will continue to be marginalized. By investing in digital infrastructure and designing platforms that are accessible to all, educational systems can provide opportunities for all students, regardless of their linguistic or socio-economic background.

## ***2. Cognitive Inclusivity: Addressing Linguistic Diversity in Learning***

Cognitive inclusivity is the second critical component of the proposed model. As Linguistic Relativity Theory suggests, the structure of a

language shapes cognitive processes, which in turn affect how students engage with educational content (Kramsch, 2009). For multilingual learners, whose cognitive processing may be influenced by their native language, traditional educational methods that assume cognitive uniformity are inadequate. This is especially true in a digital learning environment, where the cognitive demands of navigating multimodal content can be heightened.

To address this challenge, educators must be trained to recognize the cognitive differences that arise from linguistic diversity and adapt their teaching methods accordingly. For instance, students from languages with complex syntactic structures may benefit from visual aids or interactive elements that help them process grammatical rules more effectively. Similarly, students from tonal language backgrounds may require additional auditory support to fully comprehend spoken content in a non-tonal language (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005). By acknowledging these cognitive differences, educators can create more inclusive learning environments that accommodate the diverse needs of multilingual students.

The need for cognitive inclusivity also extends to the design of educational platforms. Many online learning tools are developed with the assumption that all students process information similarly, which can disadvantage students whose linguistic backgrounds require different cognitive strategies. For example, a language learning platform designed for English speakers may not take into account the grammatical complexity of languages like Russian or the tonal nuances of languages like Vietnamese. This can create additional cognitive barriers for multilingual learners, who are already navigating the challenges of learning in a second or third language (Baker, 2006).

The validity of cognitive inclusivity lies in its ability to bridge the gap between linguistic diversity and educational equity. By recognizing that language shapes thought, educators and platform designers can develop strategies that support the cognitive needs of all learners. This approach ensures that multilingual students are not only included but are also able to thrive in the educational system, regardless of the language they speak.

### ***3. Multimodal Learning Environments: Expanding Literacy Beyond Text***

The third component of the proposed model is the creation of multimodal

learning environments. In a post-pandemic world, where digital platforms have become central to education, it is essential to recognize that literacy is no longer confined to traditional reading and writing. As Multiliteracies Theory emphasizes, literacy now encompasses a wide range of communicative practices, including visual, auditory, and digital literacies (New London Group, 1996). For multilingual learners, the ability to engage with multimodal content is critical to their success in a globalized and digitized world.

During the pandemic, students were exposed to multimedia resources—such as video lessons, interactive simulations, and digital storytelling tools—that extended beyond traditional classroom settings. Platforms like Tandem and Storybird provide students with the opportunity to practise language skills in real-world contexts, using multiple forms of communication to enhance their learning experience (Storybird, n.d.). These platforms allow students to navigate multimodal environments that reflect the complexities of modern communication.

The creation of multimodal learning environments is particularly important for multilingual learners, who may struggle with traditional text-based methods of instruction. By incorporating visual, auditory, and interactive elements into the curriculum, educators can create more engaging and inclusive learning experiences that cater to the diverse literacy practices of multilingual students. For instance, a student learning English as a second language may benefit from a video-based lesson that incorporates subtitles and visual aids, while another student may prefer an interactive simulation that allows them to practise their language skills in a real-world context.

The rationale for multimodal learning environments is grounded in the idea that literacy is no longer a singular concept but a dynamic and evolving practice. In a globalized world, where students must navigate multiple forms of communication, it is essential that educational systems reflect this reality. By embracing multimodal literacies, we can create a more adaptable and inclusive educational model that prepares students for the complexities of a digital world (Kalantzis & Cope, 2012).

## **Conclusion**

The Covid-19 pandemic has provided a stark reminder of the inequalities that exist within global education systems, particularly for

multilingual learners. By applying Linguistic Relativity Theory and Multiliteracies Theory, this paper has proposed a comprehensive model for reimagining multilingual education in a post-pandemic world. The model emphasizes technological accessibility, cognitive inclusivity, and multimodal learning environments, offering a framework for addressing the specific challenges faced by multilingual learners.

This model is not merely a response to the immediate challenges posed by the pandemic; it is a forward-looking approach that seeks to create a more inclusive and sustainable educational system. By investing in digital infrastructure, adapting pedagogical strategies to account for cognitive diversity, and embracing the evolving nature of literacy, we can ensure that multilingual learners are provided with the tools and support they need to succeed in a globalized world.

The proposed model contributes to the growing body of research on multilingual education by offering a practical and theoretically grounded framework that addresses the cognitive, technological, and pedagogical challenges of the twenty-first century. As we continue to navigate the complexities of a post-pandemic world, this model provides a vision for a more equitable and adaptable educational future.

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## Feedback on Writing in Multilingual ESL Classroom: A Study on Students' Beliefs

*Muhammedali Chalikandy Puthiyapurayil*

### Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative paper is to explore multilingual ESL students' beliefs about feedback on writing. Beliefs play a significant role in any human action and they are a central deciding factor in human behaviour and learning. Beliefs "act as very strong filters of reality and can be of enormous influence on the success of their learning" (Arnold, 1999, pp. 256-257). Since beliefs influence and play key roles in language learning and teaching, the role of learners' beliefs about language learning has been investigated. However, very few studies have focused on multilingual ESL students' perception of feedback on writing. The participants were 40 graduate students from one of the colleges in Kerala. This study used an open-ended questionnaire to generate data. The findings show that there is a serious discrepancy between what theorists and educationist suggest and what learners' view on error correction in writing.

**Keywords:** Beliefs, feedback, writing, multilingual classroom, language learning

### Introduction

Beliefs influence and play key roles in language learning and teaching and they are culturally bound. Since beliefs are formed in early life, they differ from person to person. Beliefs play a significant and pivotal role in any human action and they are a central deciding factor in human behaviour and learning. Arnold's quotation on beliefs (given above) is pertinent here. Since beliefs influence language learning and

teaching, the role of learners' beliefs about language learning has been investigated. However, very few studies have focused on multilingual students' beliefs in feedback on students' writing. Consequently, this paper is an attempt to fill the gap found in the literature.

### **Feedback on Errors**

Researchers and language educators have not reached a unanimous conclusion about feedback: whether to correct errors, what errors to correct, how to correct them and when to correct them though they have studied it intensively and extensively (Hendrickson, 1978; Hyland & Hyland, 2006). According to behaviourists and cognitivists feedback contributes to language learning. Similarly, structural and communicative approaches to language teaching consider feedback foster learner motivation and ensure linguistic accuracy. Brown (2007) commented that second language learners "will make mistakes in the process of acquisition, and that process will be impeded by if they do not commit errors and then benefit from various forms of feedback on those errors" (p. 257). Although scholars like Krashen (1982) argue that corrective feedback is ineffective, it is generally viewed that feedback plays a significant role in improving knowledge and acquiring skills in any educational contexts (Azevedo & Bernard, 1995; Bangert- Drowns, Kulik, Corbett & Anderson, 1989; Moreno, 2004). Cohen (1985) claims that feedback "is one of the more instructionally powerful and least understood features in instructional design" (p. 33). Feedback not only influences learners' achievement, but also it motivates them in learning (Lepper & Chabay, 1985; Narciss & Huth, 2004). Since feedback is "the drive which steers the writer through the process of writing into product" (Keh, 1990, p. 294) and it is connected to revision in the process of writing, it gives more opportunity to learners to discover meaning and rewrite their texts better. In short, feedback enables the learners to know whether they are successful or not and evaluate their progress in the process of writing. It tells the teachers whether their teaching is effective or not and it shows learners' weaknesses. In writing students must get feedback to rewrite their draft since the multiple drafts in the process of writing will help them to improve their writing skills.

### **Teacher Feedback and Peer Feedback**

Teachers' feedback is a type of motivation in writing which tells the

learners what to do to improve their writing (Raimes, 1983, p. 143). According to Tribble (1996), teachers' feedback during the process of writing would eliminate most of the existing problems in writing. Teachers' feedback can help to improve learners' writing by raising the right questions, pointing out gaps in information, ambiguities, discrepancies and making suggestions that guide students in revising their text.

It is viewed that peer feedback is effective and suitable to adult learners in the process writing class as the peers provide dynamic reader-text interaction immediately. Mendonca and Johnson (1994) studied the revisions of advanced ESL learners at the graduate level and reported that peer feedback enhances students' communicative power by encouraging students to express and negotiate their ideas (p.766). According to Alkuhuli (1996), peer correction enables students to learn working together and get them cooperate and exchange their ideas which eventually help them to improve their level of writing skill. In other words, peer feedback is a learning experience because learners learn how to evaluate others work maturely; furthermore, they learn to trust and respect each other's judgment.

### **Background of the Study**

Although extensive research has been carried out on what students believe about error correction and feedback in and around the world (e.g. Alkhuli 1996; Lee 2005; Radacki & Swales 1998; Eng, Ibrahim, & Shamsuddin, 2015; Widiastuti et al., 2019), a number of studies focused on Indian ESL context (e.g. Kumar, 2020; Mukherjee and Chattopadhyay, 2017; Tripathi, 2017), no study has focused on students who study different first languages in their colleges. Therefore, this study was an attempt to add more on the research about feedback by investigating multilingual ESL students' beliefs in feedback on writing.

### **Purpose of the Study and Research Questions**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore what multilingual ESL students think about feedback on writing. As a result, this study tried to find the answer to these two questions:

- Which types of feedback do you prefer in writing: teacher feedback or peer feedback? Why?

- Do you think that teacher feedback is useful? Why?

### **Contexts and Participants**

This study was done in one of the colleges in Kerala, India. The participants were 40 graduate students from the English department who were studying Malayalam, Arabic, Urdu and Hindi as their first language and English as their second language. They were not volunteers, but they were selected according to the first language that they were studying in the college; as a consequence, ten students from each language were selected and given an open-ended questionnaire.

### **Methods and Data Analysis**

Since the focus was on students' perception of feedback on writing, the study was interested in generating their views verbally. Consequently, this study used a qualitative approach because "the researcher collects open-ended, emerging data with the primary intent of developing themes from the data" (Creswell, 2003, p. 18) and "Qualitative research is empirical research where the data are not in the form of numbers" (Punch, 2009, p. 3). An open-ended questionnaire was used to collect the data for this study since open-ended questions are used to collect opinion, feeling and evaluation (Wellington, 2000).

This study used qualitative data analysis framework given by Miles and Huberman (1994) and thematic interpretation was used to analyze the open-ended questionnaire. Since the data was primarily "textual data", it employed "interpretative analysis" (Croker, 2009, p. 5). Different levels of analysis were done by "moving deeper and deeper into understanding the data and making an interpretation of the larger meaning of the data" (Creswell, 2003, p. 190). In short, the data went through four stages such as data reduction, data display, data conclusion and data verification. Three processes were combined throughout the study: collecting data, coding data and analyzing data (Glaser & Strauss 1967).

### **Findings and Discussions**

Three major themes emerged after analyzing the data: students' preferences of feedback, the reason for their choice and the use of teacher feedback over peer feedback. The themes that were identified for each question are presented here.

**Which feedback do you prefer: teacher feedback or peer feedback? Why?**

Analysis of the questionnaire shows that all the participants prefer teacher feedback regardless of the first language that they are studying. They prefer teacher feedback to peer feedback because of teachers' qualifications and experience, teaching skills, their professionalism, knowledge, and honesty. In other words, they want their teachers to correct their mistakes in their writing since the teachers are "older and more experienced" (participant 2), which helps them not only to illustrate their mistakes but also gives the reason for their mistakes as participant 19 wrote "my teacher shows me the mistake and explains the reason why I make mistakes." Furthermore, the participant students evaluate that the teacher's "English is excellent" (participant 32) and much better than their peers in all aspects. The participants also feel that their teachers are highly qualified and their classmates have just begun their bachelor programme; in addition, they even question their peers' eligibility to correct their writing. To illustrate, participant 13 wrote "my professors are doctors with Ph.D. in English or MA in TESOL with teaching diplomas that trained them in teaching writing while my friends are just like me who have just started studying for the Bachelor's Degree." As a result, the participants "can learn from him (teachers)" (participant 40); moreover, participants believe that it is the responsibility of the teacher to correct students' mistakes as participant 3 wrote "this is his or her job." They prefer teacher feedback in writing since they can trust their teachers and because their teachers want the students to improve their writing skills. To demonstrate, participant student 12 wrote, "I can trust my teacher because she wants me to improve my writing." To conclude, the participants strongly believe in teacher correction and think that teacher feedback is necessary for students to improve their writing skills.

Interestingly, there was not a single participant student who preferred peer correction. The reasons why they do not prefer their peers to correct their writing are connected with students' attitudes towards their classmates. It is found that the students do not trust their peers' ability, maturity to provide feedback on writing and are sceptical about their usefulness. For instance, participant 8 felt that "peers wouldn't be fair because they could change my answer" while participant 18 thought their peers "cannot give a perfect answer." The participants believe that

they do not accept their peers' answer and correction as participant 20 wrote, "I may not agree with my friend, but I agree with my teacher" and participant 30 expressed, "Peers don't have background and experience in correction." In short, the participant students even question their peers' skills and eligibility to correct their writing.

### **Do you think that teacher feedback is useful? Why?**

The study shows that the teacher feedback is useful for the learners. The participants feel that teacher correction is useful because it helps them to improve their writing, assist learning, avoid mistakes committing again, and enable them to score high marks in the exams. To illustrate, participant 36 wrote that the teacher "shows me the problem clearly"; they (teachers) teach, write exams and he knows "the correct answer". Participant 42 argues "I will learn and won't repeat that mistake next time" which leads to "good marks in the exam" (participant 4). The participants believe that teacher correction improves their writing as participant 28 wrote, "He can improve my writing when he catches the errors and he can judge because he has good experience and skill. He knows what I need to write. I knew my mistake and I avoid it next time." Furthermore, the participants point out that the teacher correction is more beneficial than peer correction since the teacher can "explain more logically and reasonably" (participant 22) and "specify the mistakes" (participant 7). Consequently, they "avoid the mistakes in the exam" (participant 47). According to participants, teacher correction enables them to review their own writing and rewrite it as participant 13 wrote, "I will correct my writing." Above all, teacher correction is very useful for the students since the teachers can convince their students that there is a mistake which needs to be corrected. For instance, participant 19 wrote, "He can persuade me to correct." Teacher feedback has affected the participants' English language skills positively. It has increased the students' confidence in writing as participant 33 wrote, "whenever the teacher corrects my writing, I find some suggestions which help me to improve my writing and now I am more confident than before."

This study matches Lee's (2005) finding that the learners wanted their teachers to correct their errors and believed that it was teachers' responsibility to correct learners' errors. It also corroborates Leki's (1991) discovery that the students were eager to get teachers feedback and they believed that it was useful. This study also goes with Cathcart and Olsen

(1976) who have shown that students need teacher feedback and want them to be corrected more than the teachers feel so. Nevertheless, this study does not go with studies done by Mendonca and Johnson (1994) who demonstrate that peer feedback enhances students' communicative power by encouraging students to express and negotiate their ideas. Alkuhuli (1996) claims that peer correction helps students work in teams cooperatively and improves writing skills. Giving and getting peer corrections is a learning experience because learners learn how to evaluate others' work maturely and they learn to trust and respect each other's judgment.

### **Significance of the Study**

The study contributes significantly to research on perception in general and students' perception of teacher correction in particular. This study stresses the importance of including students' views in English language teaching. Since this study contrasts educationists, theorists and scholars' beliefs about the effectiveness and usefulness of peer feedback, it sheds light on the other side of the reality. Furthermore, this study clearly suggests that learners' views should be given priority in order to make any innovation successful.

### **Conclusion**

This study in multilingual ESL classroom shows that the students' prefer teacher feedback to peer correction because teachers are more qualified to give feedback, skilled and experienced to correct their errors than their pairs. Moreover, they do not trust their peers' ability, maturity to correct errors in their writing and give feedback and are sceptical about their usefulness. It is found that the students feel teacher correction is useful because it improves their writing, learning English language, and it helps them to avoid mistakes in future. Furthermore, teacher correction boosts the students' confidence and helps them to get a high score in the exams including competitive exams..

### **Limitations**

The result cannot be generalized since this study is a context-specific qualitative study. A study in a different context with another group of participants might generate an entirely different result. Moreover, quantitative data would indicate multiple direction of the perception.

Therefore, it is highly recommended to have a mixed study that compares teachers' perceptions and students' perceptions would provide a comprehensive idea about perception or beliefs of feedback on writing.

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## Using Storytelling as Language Input in Task-Based Instruction in ESL Classroom in a Multilingual Setting

*Aliya Halim*

### Abstract

India is a multicultural, multiethnic and multilingual nation. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 lays importance in promoting multilingualism in the teaching-learning process in today's present-day classroom. Language acquisition of children depends on the creative construction model of language learning which is based on the learning input provided to them. Task-Based Learning (TBL) lays importance on authentic and purposeful tasks that will lead to student-student interaction.

The aim of this paper is to put forward the creative method of storytelling as an instructional strategy in English language classroom in a multilingual setting like India. It will examine storytelling as a language input in task-based learning instruction. This paper will also present some practical suggestions through examples for using storytelling as a language input in task-based learning instruction in English language classroom in a multilingual setup.

**Keywords:** Multilingual, input, task-based, storytelling, ESL

### Introduction

India is culturally and linguistically vibrant and a country rich in diversity. It is characterized by a multitude of cultures, religions, languages and traditions. This makes India a multicultural, multiethnic and multilingual nation. As a result of this diversity there is a united and shared sense of national identity and cultural heritage present among Indians. This multicultural fabric makes India fascinating and dynamic,

where diversity is celebrated and cherished by everyone. This unique feature of India makes it essential for including different vernaculars in the school curriculum. There are over twenty-two officially recognized languages and numerous dialects that are spoken across the country.

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 has developed a language policy which is inclusive. It lays importance in promoting multilingualism in the teaching learning process in the present day classroom. The policy emphasizes the importance of language in shaping children and promoting linguistic diversity in educational settings in India. NEP continues to follow the three-language formula but with greater flexibility where students are allowed to choose from a wide range of languages including local and regional languages. NEP 2020 puts emphasis on the bilingual approach in teaching, that is, the medium of instruction given in school along with the use of mother tongue especially in the early years of education. This will help learners to comprehend the lesson easily. It will also help in the promotion of Indian regional languages especially those mentioned in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution of India. Overall, this approach will help in building an inclusive, accessible and equitable educational system.

Mother tongue, local language, regional language, vernacular languages are different terms that are used to describe the multilingual setting in India. According to Tsimpli and Lightfoot (2020), multilingualism improves “understanding of concepts due to the absence of equivalent terms, developing or retaining identity or for socio-cultural expression, accommodating the listener or speaker’s proficiency in one of the languages used or simply for the pragmatic reason that it might be quicker to explain something in one language than another” (n.p.). Language is essential in shaping our understanding of the world. If we do not know the right words and concepts to convey our thoughts and ideas, then it would be challenging to express our intended meaning. This can be a problem for people coming from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds as they may struggle to express themselves effectively. This language gap could be bridged through multilingualism.

Any language development or growth depends on the creative construction model of language learning (Crain & Lillo-Martin 1999). This approach is also known as the “Constructivist” or “Generative” approach which proposes that children actively construct their own language systems through a combination of innate abilities and

environmental interactions. It states that similar to first language (L1) acquisition, the second language (L2) learning too is a creative process. Throughout the language learning process the L2 learners internalize language rules themselves based on the input provided to them. The input provided should be rich, varied and comprehensible. Therefore, sufficient language exposure plays a vital role in successful language acquisition. Long (1983) suggests that such opportunities for learners to participate in making meaning during verbal interactions in class has to be generated. This would establish the processing of whatever inputs were given to the learner as well as the outputs (the production of language). Instruction should then focus on comprehensible input and varied opportunities for learners to use language spontaneously and interact meaningfully. Task-Based Learning (TBL) lays importance on authentic and purposeful tasks that will lead to student-student interaction till the task is completed in class.

The aim of this paper is to put forward the creative method of storytelling as an instructional strategy in English language classroom in a multilingual setting like India that will provide meaning-focused input to the learners because of its communicative and interactive nature. It examines storytelling as a language input in task-based learning instruction. This paper highlights storytelling as a meaningful and enriching language input activity which can provide scaffolding to the students before the main task and increase interaction between teacher and students and among students themselves as well as enhance their language proficiency. This paper also presents some practical suggestions through examples for using storytelling as language input in task-based learning instruction in English language classroom in a multilingual setup.

### **Task-Based Language (TBL) Instruction and the Role of Language Input**

Task-based language instruction includes three stages: Pre-task, While-task (Task Cycle) and Post-task (Language Focus). In the pre-task stage the teacher introduces the topic and the task to the students in class. While the task cycle stage the students plan the task, complete it and present what they have done. The post-task stage is for the teacher to give feedback and review what the students have done. In the pre-task stage the teacher instructs or demonstrates in the mother tongue/local

language/natural language for the students to follow and understand. In this stage linguistically enhanced input in English language such as vocabulary or grammar should not be given to the students. Task-based learning engages learners in scaffolded interaction as slow learners collaborate with their more proficient peers to complete the task as well as student-student negotiation of meaning also takes place. This interaction among students may take place in their mother tongue. Littlewood (2004) says that, students doing enabling tasks prepares them conceptually and linguistically to perform the communicative task later on. The enabling tasks include asking questions to the teacher, filling up gaps, problem-solving, etc.

Based on the above discussion, a classroom input can be sub-divided into three types: (a) Input for task setting—for example, instruction and demonstration (b) Form-focused input—for example, explaining grammar rules, imparting vocabulary, error correction (c) Meaning-focused input—for example, activities like class discussion, storytelling, story reading, songs/videos/film clips, newspaper reading, role-play, games, etc. The Form-focused input is directed by the teacher as the aim is to teach language skills to students. The Meaning-focused input is learner-directed and more communicative in nature. The learners engage in meaningful activities as they get exposed to, or explore or practise the target language skills. This type of input will engage learners' attention and learning will become meaningful. They will actively participate in classroom activity and in turn learn the target language. In Form-focused input, feedback is given by the teacher.

### **Storytelling as Meaning-Focused Input in TBL Instruction**

Storytelling is considered one of the most effective-focused input activities because it is both interactive and communicative. It is beneficial for students learning a language. Firstly, stories and task-based learning are theme-based which provides linguistic support and creative ideas for completing the main task. Secondly, stories provide a natural and enjoyable way to expose students to a language. Lastly, it acts as a rich teaching resource for EFL/ESL teachers to teach phonics, vocabulary, grammar, sentence structure, etc. Therefore, storytelling as a teaching technique at the pre-task stage is useful, as it does not make language learning a mechanical process, instead makes it fun and an enjoyable one.

Storytelling is an oral activity that involves interpretation of a traditional, literary or personal story. The story can be fairytales, folk tales, traditional stories, mythological stories, biographies as well as personal stories. Such variation allows teachers chances to use storytelling at the pre-task stage to scaffold learners to different tasks such as phonics, vocabulary, grammar, reading, listening, speaking and writing tasks. For instance, the teacher shares her experience of her visit to the Taj Mahal in the form of a story. This will arouse the interest of students to read travel stories or learn about the Taj Mahal. The teacher should keep in mind that the story should interest the learners. It should relate to the learners' life experiences. The length of the story should not be very long as it might distract the students and there will not be enough time left for them to complete the task in class. The plot of the story should be simple for the students to understand according to their level or standard of learning. The language used by the teacher can be the mother tongue or the local language which will make the students readily understand the story. While the teacher is narrating the story in the mother tongue he/she can introduce and repeat target language items that he/she wants the students to acquire. The students will pick up the new words, phrases and sentences subconsciously.

The following are certain steps that a teacher needs to follow while delivering stories to students in class (Hess 2001; Peck 1989). Firstly, before narrating a story in class the teacher should rehearse it well so that it is delivered in a natural way to the students. This part is thrilling as the teacher interweaves the real and the imaginary world together for the students. Secondly, even though storytelling has its own pedagogical purpose of providing language input to learners yet the teacher should devote the class time in sharing a story with his/her students in an enjoyable and lively manner in the mother tongue or local language rather than putting emphasis only on teaching language. Thirdly, before beginning the storytelling session, a few minutes should be allotted for warm up activities where students are asked questions from their own personal experiences or allowed to make predictions relating to the content of the story. Fourthly, props like pictures, photographs and models can be used for better understanding of the main details of the story. Fifthly, while narrating the story the teacher can write down the particular words he/she wants to impart on the white board or show it through a power-point.

Throughout the storytelling process the teacher continuously interacts with the students in the mother tongue or the local language. He/she makes the students guess what will take place next in the story, give his/her views on any particular episode of the story and ask questions to see whether the students comprehend it or not correctly.

## Task Design

### Sample Lesson 1

The following example will show how the mother tongue is used in a storytelling session in class (duration 45 minutes) to develop speaking skill in students of Class 1 (age group 5-6 years). The teacher makes use of a children's story "बिल्ली और दूध" (Billi aur Doodh—Cat and Milk). The word introduced is "Drink" (पीना). The steps the teacher follows to conduct this session are—he/she first reads the Hindi story "बिल्ली और दूध" to the students. Then the teacher stops at the point where the cat wants to drink milk (बिल्ली दूध पीना चाहती है— The cat wants to drink milk). He/she asks the students to repeat the Hindi word "पीना" (peena) and explains its meaning. After that she introduces the English word "Drink" and explains its meaning. The teacher can make use of flashcards or visual aids to reinforce the vocabulary. In the post-task stage the teacher makes the students practise and repeat sentences like "Billi doodh peena chahti hai" (बिल्ली दूध पीना चाहती है)— "The cat wants to drink milk." He/she can also engage their students in a fun activity like drawing a cat drinking milk and labelling it with the English word "Drink." This approach helps students connect the English vocabulary to a familiar Hindi context, making learning language more accessible and enjoyable in a multilingual classroom.

### Sample Lesson 2

The level will change for Class 5 (age group 10-11 years). The duration of the class is 45 minutes. The teacher narrates the story titled "अलादीन और जादू का चिराग" (Aladdin aur Jadu ka Chirag—Aladdin and the Magic Lamp) to introduce the English word "Discover" (खोज करना). He/she reads the Hindi story "अलादीन और जादू का चिराग" to the students. He/she stops at the point where Aladdin discovers the magic lamp (अलादीन ने जादू का चिराग खोजा) and asks students to recall the Hindi word "खोज करना" (khoj karna) and explain its meaning to them. He/she then introduces the English word "Discover" and explains its meaning, highlighting

its connection with “खोज करना.” He/she makes use of flashcards or visual aids to reinforce the vocabulary. In the post-task stage he/she makes the students practise and repeat sentences like “Aladdin ne jadu ka chirag khoj kiya” (अलादीन ने जादू का चिराग का खोज किया) – “Aladdin discovered the magic lamp.” He/she also engages students in a discussion by asking questions like “What are some amazing things you have discovered recently?” and also encouraging them to use the English word “Discover” in their responses.

### *Sample Lesson 3*

Here is another example of using a story to teach English sentences to Class 5 students (age group 10-11 years) in a Bengali medium school. The teacher narrates the story titled “আমার বন্ধু রহিম” (Amar Bondu Rahim—My Friend Rahim) to the students in class (duration of 45 minutes). He/she stops at the point where Rahim’s love for football is mentioned “Rahim football khelte pachanda kare” (রহিম ফুটবল খেলতে পছন্দ করে—Rahim likes to play football). He/she asks the students to repeat the Bengali sentence and explain its meaning to them. Then he/she introduces the English sentence “My friend Rahim likes to play football” and translates it into Bengali “Amar bandhu Rahim football khelte pachanda kare” (আমার বন্ধু রহিম ফুটবল খেলতে পছন্দ করে). He/she makes the students focus on the English sentence structure “My friend [name] likes to [activity].” He/she makes them practise with different names and activities and encouraging students to create their own sentences. The teacher can also engage the students in an enjoyable activity like sticking a photo of their friend and writing a short paragraph about their friend’s interests using the English sentence structure they have learnt. In this way the students connect the English sentence structure to a familiar Bengali context, building their language skills and confidence in using English.

### *Sample Lesson 4*

Here is another example of using a Bengali story to teach English grammar to Class 8 students (age group 13-14 years) in a Bengali medium school. The teacher tells a biographical story named “বিদ্যাসাগরের জীবনী” (Vidyasagarer Jiboni—The Life of Vidyasagar) in the class (duration of 45 minutes). He/she is going to teach the Past Perfect Tense in English grammar. The teacher reads the Bengali story “বিদ্যাসাগরের জীবনী” to the students, focusing on Vidyasagar’s achievements. He/she stops at a point

where Vidyasagar's past actions are described like for example, "তিনি বহু বছর ধরে লেখাপড়া করেছিলেন" (He had studied for many years). He/she then asks his/her students to identify the Bengali equivalent of the Past Perfect tense (তিনি... করেছিলেন—he... had done). He/she introduces the English Past Perfect tense, explaining its usage and structure (example: "He had studied..."). He/she uses flashcards or visual aids to illustrate the difference between Past Simple and Past Perfect tenses. He/she makes the students practice exercises on converting Bengali sentences to English using the Past Perfect tense. For example: Complete the given sentence: "By the time Vidyasagar \_\_\_\_\_ (finish) his studies, he \_\_\_\_\_ (become) a renowned scholar." He/she then engages the students in a class discussion on "What had you done before you entered Class 8?" and encouraging them to use the Past Perfect tense in their responses. This will help students to connect the English grammar concept to a familiar Bengali context, making learning more accessible and interesting.

### **Implications**

The examples given above show how meaning-focused input for teaching English vocabulary, grammar and sentence structure can be done through the storytelling method. This suggests that if stories are correctly chosen and delivered properly to students it can act as a powerful instructional tool making learning a foreign language interesting and easy. It is also helpful for the teacher as the students get engrossed in the lesson and learning becomes an enjoyable activity.

The storytelling process is dynamic and interactive. The teacher engages the students and gives them many opportunities to guess what is going to happen next. Storytelling sessions in class allows students an exposure to different language forms and also gives them the scope to reproduce the language items in a natural communicative context. The students gain a deeper understanding of the linguistic forms and their functions. While the students are listening to the story, the teacher may make them aware of different words, their function, usage and meaning depending on the context they are used in. This will develop in the students guessing strategies to understand unfamiliar words. The students automatically learn new vocabulary for both first and second language acquisition.

## Conclusion

Therefore, storytelling sessions in class are motivating, encouraging, and helps develop a positive attitude towards learning a foreign language like English or learning a language in general. The English teachers can code-switch from native language to English language. It provides students both linguistic input and innovative ideas for the task they have to do. However, the expected learning outcome will differ depending on the type of story delivered, the way it is delivered and how the teacher interacts with his/her students during and after the storytelling session in class. Though the storytelling method is time consuming and involves creativity yet considering the benefits it can bring to the students like, for example, students' active participation in the lesson, students' attention engagement, students' increased interaction, confidence building and supporting language learning, such effort is definitely worth taking. This hybrid mode of teaching needs to be welcomed by educators and adopted particularly in the beginning stage of English language learning.

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# Navigating Multilingual Classrooms: Expectations, Opportunities, and Challenges in Inclusive Pedagogy

*A. Sathiyaraj, M. Deivam & T. Arul Kavya*

## Abstract

The multilingual classroom presents a dynamic educational setting rich with opportunities for language development, cultural exchange, and academic success. However, it also poses challenges related to communication, inclusion, and pedagogical approaches. Educators play a crucial role in fostering a positive and inclusive learning environment where students from diverse linguistic backgrounds feel valued and supported. By embracing the concept of translation, educators can facilitate effective communication and meaning-making processes among students with varying language proficiencies. Strategies such as promoting multilingual identity, providing language support models, and implementing inclusive teaching practices are essential for creating a welcoming and empowering space for all learners. Through the implementation of these strategies, educators can enhance cross-cultural understanding, promote linguistic diversity, and support the academic growth of students in multilingual classrooms.

**Keywords:** Multilingual classroom, inclusive pedagogy, linguistic diversity, cultural exchange, language development

## Introduction

The concept of a multilingual classroom refers to an educational environment where students from diverse linguistic backgrounds come together to learn and interact. This setting provides unique opportunities for cross-cultural learning, linguistic exchange, and the development of

intercultural competence (Krulatz et al., 2023). However, it also presents various challenges that educators must navigate to ensure a productive and inclusive learning experience for all students (Gitschthaler et al., 2021). Some of the expectations in a multilingual classroom include fostering a positive and inclusive learning environment, promoting language development in all students, and embracing cultural diversity (Dhokare & Jadhav, 2023). These expectations can be met by implementing inclusive pedagogy strategies, such as translation, which values and incorporates students' diverse linguistic resources for meaning making and communication (Tai, 2022). Additionally, educators in multilingual classrooms should be aware of the complex ways in which disabilities, gender, language barriers, ethnicity, and social class can influence a student's opportunity to succeed or fail in the educational system (García et al., 2006). They should strive to create a safe and supportive space where all students feel valued and respected, regardless of their language background.

Furthermore, educators should provide differentiated instruction that takes into account the various language proficiency levels and learning needs of students (Helman, 2016). By embracing the opportunities and addressing the challenges of a multilingual classroom, educators can create an inclusive learning environment that promotes linguistic and cultural diversity, fosters academic success, and prepares students to thrive in a globalized society (Faltis & Valdés, 2016). To effectively navigate a multilingual classroom, educators should embrace the opportunities and challenges that arise in such an environment. Educators operating within multilingual classrooms ought to actively endorse language development for every student, implement inclusive pedagogical strategies including translation, and acknowledge the multifaceted factors that influence student achievement (García & Sylvan, 2011). Through the cultivation of a learning atmosphere that appreciates linguistic diversity and acknowledges cultural variances, educators can promote cross-cultural comprehension and equip students for success within a globalized society (Hymel & Katz, 2019). Furthermore, differentiated instruction is instrumental in accommodating the diverse levels of language proficiency and varying learning requirements, thereby facilitating social inclusion and fostering academic success for all learners (Schmidt & Molin, 2023; McLoughlin, 2001).

## **Multilingual Classroom: Expectations**

A multilingual classroom is an educational setting where students bring various first languages to their learning experience. The overarching expectation in such a classroom is the cultivation of an environment that not only acknowledges the richness of linguistic diversity but also leverages it to enhance learning for all students. Educators expect to foster a positive atmosphere that embraces different languages as assets, promoting academic development and intercultural competence (Tigert et al., 2022).

In a multilingual classroom, students are expected to receive equitable opportunities for language development. Teachers aim to support the improvement of students' dominant languages while concurrently facilitating the acquisition of the classroom's language of instruction, often English. This can be done by employing pedagogical strategies that validate and incorporate the students' native languages in classroom activities, discussions, and assessments.

Educators also expect to confront and surmount barriers to learning that may stem from linguistic differences. They work to devise instructional approaches personalized to the varied linguistic proficiency levels within the classroom. Employing techniques such as translanguaging and scaffolding, teachers provide differentiated support that assists students in engaging with the curriculum meaningfully (Mina & Cimasko, 2020).

Expectations further extend to promoting a culturally responsive classroom environment. This includes integrating content that reflects the varied cultures and backgrounds of the students, ensuring representation and relevance in learning materials. In doing so, educators promote an inclusive atmosphere where every student feels valued and respected.

Additionally, educators in multilingual settings are prepared to continuously develop their understanding of language acquisition and cultural sensitivities to effectively guide their students. This involves ongoing professional development and collaboration with colleagues, potentially including language specialists, to refine strategies that address the dynamic needs of a linguistically diverse student body.

Ultimately, the aim is to prepare students not just academically but also socially, equipping them with the intercultural communication skills necessary to thrive in an increasingly globalized society. By meeting these expectations, educators contribute to students' personal growth, social inclusion, and the dismantling of linguistic hierarchies, fostering

an appreciation for the world's linguistic and cultural tapestry in the next generation.

### **Nep 2020: Multilingual Classroom**

One of the most prominent features of NEP 2020 is its emphasis on the promotion of the mother tongue or local language as the medium of instruction at least till Grade 5, and preferably till Grade 8 and beyond (Mahapatra & Anderson, 2023). This aligns with research showing that children learn and grasp concepts better in their mother tongue in the early years of education.

The policy demonstrates a progressive step towards multilingualism, recognizing the cognitive benefits of early education in a child's home language. It advocates for the inclusion of Indian Sign Language as a subject and teaching ISL-development programmes to support students with hearing impairments (Panda & Mohanty, 2014).

NEP 2020 also strives to address the challenges related to multilingualism and aims to support the development of linguistic proficiency in three languages, respecting the "three-language formula," while ensuring that at least two of the three languages are native to India. The aim is to promote multilingualism and the power of language in uniting people and preserving cultural heritage, along with improving cognitive abilities (Bashir & Jan, 2024).

To bolster this multilingual approach, NEP 2020 encourages the creation of high-quality textbooks and teaching-learning materials in home languages. It stresses training teachers to be adept at teaching in bilingual or multilingual classrooms, making them sensitive and inclusive to the diverse linguistic backgrounds of their students (Gupta & Chatterjee, 2023).

### **Multilingual Classroom: Opportunities**

A multilingual classroom offers a wealth of opportunities that extend beyond traditional language learning. In such an environment, students can develop various skills essential for success in the modern, interconnected world—the opportunity for authentic cultural exchange. A classroom rich in linguistic diversity is also inherently rich in cultural perspectives. Students can share their cultural norms and practices with their peers, promoting a deep understanding of one another's backgrounds. This authentic exchange nurtures empathy, respect, and social cohesion. Multilingual settings also promote the

development of advanced cognitive abilities. Research suggests that multilingual individuals often display improved executive functions, such as problem-solving, switching attention, and working memory. Students can enhance these cognitive processes by regularly operating in a linguistically complex environment, improving overall academic performance (Planas, 2021).

**Enhanced Cognitive Development:** Research suggests multilingualism can positively impact cognitive flexibility, problem-solving skills, and metalinguistic awareness (Poudel, 2019). Specifically, in the Indian context, where children often navigate multiple languages from a young age, this can be a significant advantage. For example, a child fluent in Hindi and English might better understand grammatical concepts in both languages.

**Preservation of Linguistic Diversity:** India's rich linguistic landscape is a valuable cultural asset. Multilingual classrooms can be crucial in preserving and promoting less dominant languages (Groff, 2017). Consider examples of successful bilingual education programmes in India that have helped revitalize local languages. Morve and Maurya (2022) mentions the challenge of teaching English in a multilingual classroom, which implies the inherent opportunity to leverage existing language skills.

**Improved Intercultural Communication:** Multilingual classrooms foster empathy and understanding between students from diverse linguistic backgrounds (Choudhary, 2016). In India, where cultural and linguistic diversity are intertwined, this can lead to stronger social cohesion.

**Increased Educational Access:** Using students' first languages as a bridge to learning can improve access to education for those whose mother tongue is not the primary language of instruction. This is particularly relevant in India, where many children enter school with limited proficiency in the dominant language of instruction (Saneka & de Witt, 2019).

**Greater Academic Achievement:** Research indicates that students learning in their mother tongue, alongside other languages, often perform better academically (Anderson & Lightfoot, 2019). Look for studies explicitly examining the impact of multilingual education on academic outcomes in Indian schools. (Macmillan Education India Report, 2023) mentions a report on the benefits of using the mother tongue in Indian classrooms, which could be valuable if you can access it.

Moreover, a multilingual classroom can challenge and ultimately shift long-standing beliefs and attitudes towards language learning and use. It can dispel common myths about bilingualism, such as the idea that learning two languages can confuse students or hinder their academic progress. By celebrating all languages, these classrooms can help to deconstruct language hierarchies and promote an inclusive language policy that recognizes the value of all linguistic resources students bring with them.

### **Multilingual Classroom: Challenges**

The multilingual classroom, while rich with opportunities, has its challenges. Educators, students, and institutions may face several obstacles impacting the learning experience. Language barriers are the most immediate challenge. Students may have varying proficiency levels in the language of instruction, which can lead to difficulties in understanding the curriculum, participating in discussions, and demonstrating their knowledge. Teachers must find ways to communicate effectively with all students, often employing creative strategies or assistive technologies to ensure comprehension.

**Teacher Training and Resources:** Equipping teachers to manage multilingual classrooms effectively requires specialized training and resources (Poudel, 2019). The study highlights the need for teachers to “tackle” the multilingual classroom, suggesting a lack of adequate training (Morve & Maurya 2022).

**Assessment and Evaluation:** Developing fair and accurate assessments for students from diverse linguistic backgrounds can be challenging (Anderson & Lightfoot, 2021).

**Resource Allocation and Infrastructure:** Providing adequate resources and infrastructure to support multilingual education can be a significant challenge, particularly in resource-constrained settings (Tupas, R. (2015).

**Language Policy and Implementation:** Navigating complex language policies and ensuring effective implementation can be a significant hurdle (Groff, 2017).

**Social and Cultural Attitudes:** Societal biases and preferences for specific languages can challenge multilingual education (Meier, 2017).

**Policy and Institutional Support:** Educational policies and institutional support play a critical role. Often, educational institutions may not

have policies that support multilingual education. Without a supportive infrastructure, from leadership to policy, educators may struggle to effectively address the complexities of a multilingual classroom (Ticheloven et al., 2021).

## Conclusion

The multilingual classroom offers a wealth of opportunities for students to develop language skills, cultural awareness, and cognitive abilities essential for success in a globalized world. While challenges such as language barriers, resource limitations, and psychological well-being concerns exist, educators can navigate these obstacles by promoting inclusive pedagogy, embracing linguistic diversity, and fostering a supportive learning environment. By leveraging the benefits of translation, encouraging collaboration, and valuing students' linguistic identities, educators can create a space where all learners feel respected and empowered to thrive academically. Through continuous innovation, collaboration, and a commitment to inclusive practices, multilingual classrooms can serve as catalysts for promoting cross-cultural understanding, enhancing language proficiency, and preparing students to become global citizens equipped to navigate the complexities of our interconnected society.

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# Unlocking Potential, New Strategies: Analyzing and Applying English-Language Strategies in Multilingual Classrooms

*Arokia Immaculate Sheela S.*

## Abstract

In today's world, the need for the English language in multilingual classrooms is increasing (Graddol, 2006). This study looks at how English may act as both a connector and an impediment in educational settings with several languages. It examines how English influences student participation, comprehension, and educational attainment while accounting for the other languages spoken by students. It is crucial to have effective measures in place to improve outcomes in certain environments. This study emphasizes important strategies such as customising instruction, employing translanguaging, teaching with cultural sensitivity, and using technology to assist language acquisition. These strategies aim to improve students' linguistic and cognitive abilities by fostering an inclusive learning environment. The study highlights how important it is to provide teacher training and develop policies to create a supportive multilingual educational system. In the end, this research helps to enhance our comprehension of how English can be successfully used to support all students in classes with multiple languages.

**Keywords:** Multilingual classroom, English, differentiated instruction, translanguaging, culturally responsive teaching.

## Introduction

An increasing number of multilingual classrooms characterize today's educational environment, reflecting larger worldwide trends of

migration, internationalization, and cultural exchange (Cenoz & Gorter, 2015). Because of its status as a widely spoken worldwide language, English is frequently selected as the primary language of instruction in various settings (Crystal, 2012; Phillipson, 2009). The role of English in multilingual classrooms is complex, serving the dual objective of enabling communication and fostering diversity while occasionally reinforcing language dominance and exclusion (Garcia & Lin, 2017). Educators, policymakers, and researchers committed to building equitable and effective educational environments must understand this dual obligation. Using English in multilingual classrooms may boost access to global information, improve academic and professional possibilities, and promote cross-cultural communication. However, it also presents difficulties, especially for students who are not native English speakers. These students might struggle with understanding, engaging, and expressing themselves, which could result in differences in academic achievements. Therefore, it is crucial to develop strategies that can use the advantages of English while reducing its possible disadvantages.

This study seeks to investigate the diverse significance of English in classrooms with multiple languages and to pinpoint methods that can enhance academic achievements for every student. Key areas of emphasis include personalised instruction to meet unique learning needs, multilingual approaches to promote language use, culturally inclusive teaching to connect with students' backgrounds, and technology integration for language development and learning support. In order to make multilingual education more inclusive and efficient, this study attempts to provide educators and policymakers with useful guidance. Ultimately, this study advances our understanding of how English may be utilised to enhance learning in classes containing multilingual individuals, ensuring that every student has an equal opportunity to succeed academically and socially.

## **Literature Review**

Kirss et al. (2021) in their study, investigate the disconnect between School Effectiveness Research (SER) and multilingual education research, aiming to bridge this gap by systematically reviewing factors that contribute to student success in multilingual education programmes. In spite of the growing interest over the past four decades, the purpose of the study is

to provide a comprehensive overview of the essential components that guarantee the effectiveness of multilingual education. Kirss et al. use a method called a systematic literature review to find the most important factors that help students succeed in multilingual settings. Their findings highlight that most of the reviewed studies focus on school-level factors, with less emphasis on state/regional or individual-level factors. Additionally, the study underscores the crucial role of leadership in driving the success of multilingual education programmes. The current study benefits from this research as it offers evidence-based insights into the factors that improve the effectiveness of multilingual education. Kirss et al.'s systematic review validates the theoretical framework that underscores the importance of integrating school-level strategies, leadership, and considering various contextual factors to enhance English learning in multilingual classrooms. Their findings correspond with the current study's emphasis on using differentiated instruction, translanguaging practices, and culturally responsive teaching to achieve optimal outcomes in multilingual education.

Haukås (2016) explores the views of Norwegian language teachers on multilingualism and the use of a multilingual teaching method in the third-language (L3) classroom. Haukås' research focuses on examining how these educators view multilingualism as a possible advantage and their strategies for incorporating students' language abilities into L3 instruction. Methodically, Haukås organizes focus group conversations with 12 teachers who specialise in French (N = 4), German (N = 2), and Spanish (N = 6), using qualitative content analysis to extract thematic understandings. Upon review, three main themes are evident: At first, educators acknowledge the potential value of multilingualism, drawing from their own language learning experiences, but they are uncertain whether it will automatically benefit students. In addition, teachers often integrate students' proficiency in Norwegian and English into L3 instruction, yet they do not prioritise the transfer of learning strategies, viewing L3 learning as distinct from learning L2 English. Furthermore, educators recognize the potential benefits of collaborating across languages to enhance language learning outcomes, despite not currently participating in such collaboration. This study deepens our understanding of teachers' beliefs and decision-making in multilingual education environments, uncovering the difficulties of integrating multilingual teaching approaches. The findings of Haukås emphasize

how important it is for language teachers to recognise and draw on their students' varied linguistic origins while teaching languages. Her study is consistent with the theoretical framework that emphasizes the value of individualized instruction and cross-linguistic collaboration to enhance educational outcomes, and it provides support for a thorough approach to teaching English in classes with multilingual learners.

The focus of Ismaili's (2015) study is exploring the dynamic challenges of teaching English as a foreign language at South East European University's Language Centre (SEEU) following ethnic conflict in Macedonia. Ismaili seeks to explore the utilization of students' primary language (L1) in ELT classrooms and how it affects students with different language backgrounds. In terms of methodology, Ismaili uses a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods to analyze data gathered from English teachers and students at SEEU. She is researching the methodologies teachers employ to meet the needs of students in multilingual environments. Research by Ismaili suggests that using L1 in English classes at SEEU's Language Centre in a balanced and careful manner does not have a major negative impact on students' exposure to the target language. This indicates that incorporating L1 when suitable can help in understanding and improving learning results for multilingual students without taking away from English language immersion. This paper is important for the current study because it highlights how theoretical principles can be practically applied. Ismaili's research backs the idea of a sophisticated method in teaching languages, which includes techniques like translanguaging and varied instruction to improve English learning in diverse language settings. Her research emphasizes the need to adjust teaching methods to cater to students' varied linguistic needs, consistent with the theoretical framework supporting all-encompassing language education approaches.

Cummins (2007) has critically analyzed three widely held beliefs about language instruction and bilingual education: that instruction should only be given in the target language, that translation between languages should not be done in the classroom, and that immersion and bilingual programmes should strictly separate the two languages. By offering a thorough examination of the literature review and theoretical stances from the fields of applied linguistics and cognitive psychology, Cummins aimed to challenge these presumptions. He employed a methodical approach, scrutinizing both theoretical models and recent

research data to provide a range of multilingual teaching strategies. Cummins discovered that there was minimal support for only using the target language and completely separating the languages. Instead, people wanted to use both the first language and the target language equally and in a supportive way. Because it emphasizes the significance of incorporating multilingual approaches into the teaching of English.

Based on interviews with teachers and students, the Kyeyune (2003) study investigates how students' learning efforts are affected when English is used as the medium of instruction. Kyeyune's exploration focuses on revealing how the use of English can hinder student learning rather than support it, while also examining potential solutions. She approaches the issue by qualitatively analyzing interview data, which provides insight into classroom communication challenges. According to Kyeyune's research, the issues stem from the prevalent forms of teacher-student interaction rather than just linguistic ability. Kyeyune is of the opinion that teaching in one's mother tongue poses real-world challenges and underlying communication barriers, so even if it is considered a different approach, it may not result in significant progress. She argues in favour of using a bilingual, communication-focused approach while maintaining English as the major language of instruction. In order to increase students' comprehension and engagement, she emphasizes the need of instructors obtaining training in the analysis of language-related barriers as well as the development of critical questioning and explanation abilities. This study is relevant to the present investigation because it highlights the need of effective teacher communication strategies in multilingual classrooms. Kyeyune's recommendations align with the theoretical framework that promotes multilingualism, diversified learning, and culturally sensitive teaching. Her findings highlight how crucial teacher preparation is for overcoming communication barriers and implementing effective bilingual strategies—two things that are necessary to get the greatest academic outcomes in multilingual settings.

### **Methodology**

This theoretical paper draws from extensive literature in fields such as multilingual education, second language learning, educational psychology, and instructional design. Relevant books, journals, and articles were systematically collected and reviewed to build a comprehensive knowledge base. The study focuses on the convergence

of key strategies for teaching English in multilingual classrooms, specifically differentiated instruction, translanguaging approaches, culturally sensitive teaching, and technology integration.

Data in this paper refers to the body of theoretical frameworks, research findings, and pedagogical approaches gathered from the literature. These materials were carefully organized and categorized by themes, such as instructional methods, learner diversity, and language acquisition strategies. The analysis involved a comparative evaluation of these theories, identifying commonalities, divergences, and patterns in their application to multilingual classrooms. Special attention was given to assessing their relevance and adaptability to the Indian educational context, where multilingualism is a critical feature of both urban and rural classrooms.

### **Merits and Precautions of Using/Combining Differentiated Instruction, Culturally Responsive Teaching, and Technology Integration in Multilingual Classrooms**

#### *Inclusive Learning Environment*

Combining these approaches creates a more inclusive classroom that respects and responds to the unique cultural and linguistic identities of students. This promotes equity and ensures that all students feel valued and supported.

#### **Holistic Development**

Integrating these methods supports not only language acquisition but also social, emotional, and cognitive development. Students are encouraged to express themselves in multiple languages, which can enhance their overall language skills and intercultural competencies.

#### *Collaborative Learning*

These strategies encourage collaborative learning opportunities, where students can share their diverse perspectives and experiences. This not only enriches the learning experience but also promotes peer support and interaction.

#### **Precautions**

##### *Implementation Complexity*

Successfully combining these strategies requires careful planning and

training for educators. Teachers need to be well-versed in all three approaches to implement them effectively, which may necessitate professional development and ongoing support.

### *Overwhelming for Students*

Introducing too many strategies at once can overwhelm students, especially those who are still developing their language skills. It is important to pace the introduction of new concepts and ensure that students have a solid foundation before adding complexity.

### *Resource Availability*

Effective technology integration requires access to appropriate resources, such as devices and reliable internet connectivity. Schools in under-resourced areas may struggle to implement these strategies effectively, potentially widening the achievement gap.

### *Potential Misalignment*

If not carefully aligned, differentiated instruction, culturally responsive teaching, and technology integration can lead to contradictions in practice. For example, technology tools that are not culturally relevant may disengage students from their learning.

### *Assessment Challenges:*

Assessing student progress in a multilingual and multicultural context can be challenging. Educators must be careful to use assessment methods that accurately reflect students' understanding and progress, considering their diverse backgrounds and languages.

## **The Comparative Study of the Strategies with Reference to Multilingual Teaching/Learning in the Indian Context**

The comparative study of strategies such as differentiated instruction, translanguaging, culturally responsive teaching, and technology integration is essential in addressing the diverse linguistic and cultural landscape of multilingual classrooms in India. Differentiated instruction has been shown to effectively cater to the varied learning needs of students, as evidenced by Tomlinson (2001), who emphasizes the importance of tailoring teaching methods to meet the unique needs of learners. Translanguaging, as described by García and Wei (2014), empowers students to leverage their full linguistic repertoire, fostering deeper comprehension and engagement with the curriculum. In the

Indian context, where multiple languages coexist, this approach can enhance learning outcomes by allowing students to draw on their first languages to aid their understanding of English. Culturally responsive teaching, which is critical for recognizing and valuing students' diverse cultural backgrounds, has been supported by Ladson-Billings (1994), who argues that incorporating students' cultural references in teaching enhances their academic success and engagement. Lastly, the integration of technology in multilingual classrooms has been shown to provide interactive and personalized learning experiences that can significantly improve language acquisition (Zhang et al., 2021). By analyzing these strategies collectively, educators can develop a comprehensive approach that not only addresses the challenges of multilingualism in Indian classrooms but also maximizes student engagement and learning outcomes.

### **Study and Results: Effective Strategies for Multilingual Classrooms**

**1. Differentiated Instruction:** Differentiated instruction is a critical strategy for addressing the diverse linguistic needs of students in multilingual classrooms. This requires customizing teaching techniques and resources to meet the different levels of English skills among students. Teachers can guarantee that all students, no matter their language background, are able to participate in and connect with the curriculum through personalized learning experiences. For example, proficient English speakers may tackle intricate reading and writing assignments, whereas novices concentrate on building basic language abilities. Providing differentiated instruction not only aids in language learning, but also fosters a more inclusive and fair learning setting where all students can thrive (Tomlinson, 2001).

**2. Translanguaging Practices:** Translanguaging is a new strategy that uses students' full range of languages to improve learning outcomes. In a classroom with students who speak different languages, it is important to motivate them to use their first languages along with English to understand and interact with the subject matter. (García & Wei, 2014). Translanguaging practices may include changing languages for various tasks, using bilingual materials, or integrating multilingual conversations and collaborative activities. Teachers can create a more inclusive environment by acknowledging and incorporating students' native languages, which highlights and honours linguistic diversity.

This method helps students to not only grasp and remember new ideas, but also enhances their language abilities and cultural identity

**3. Culturally Responsive Teaching:** Culturally responsive teaching is crucial in establishing a learning space that honours and appreciates the cultural heritages of every student. This approach includes incorporating cultural allusions into the syllabus, using culturally appropriate instances, and implementing teaching techniques that mirror the varied backgrounds of students (Gay, 2010). When teaching English in classrooms with multiple languages, culturally responsive teaching can assist students in understanding how English is important in their own lives and experiences. It enhances student engagement and motivation by relating learning to their cultural backgrounds. Furthermore, this strategy fosters a nurturing environment in the classroom, where students feel acknowledged and valued, ultimately boosting their motivation to engage and acquire knowledge.

**4. Technological Integration:** Using technology in multilingual classrooms provides effective resources for enhancing English language acquisition. Digital tools like language learning apps, online dictionaries, and multimedia materials offer interactive and interesting opportunities for students to practise English (Blake, 2013). Technology enables personalized learning experiences, allowing students to learn at their own speed and access materials designed for their skill levels. Translation apps and bilingual educational software can help students bridge language barriers and enhance their English proficiency. Moreover, technology also fosters collaborative learning by linking students with peers and educators around the world, thus deepening their language skills and cultural awareness.

In the Indian multilingual context, using differentiated instruction, translanguaging practices, culturally responsive teaching, and technological integration are important for fostering an inclusive, fair, and interactive learning setting. These strategies handle both the language barriers and use students' varied cultural experiences to achieve the best educational results. However, while each approach offers unique benefits, challenges arise in the implementation—such as ensuring equitable access to technology or managing the complexities of catering to multiple languages simultaneously. The study highlights the need for a balanced approach that adapts these strategies to India's

specific educational needs, maximizing their effectiveness in diverse, multilingual learning environments.

## **Discussion and Implications**

### ***1. Teacher Training and Development***

Teacher training and professional development are crucial for the successful integration of English in classrooms with multiple languages (Murray & Christison, 2011). In order to meet the diverse language and cultural needs of their pupils, teachers must possess the requisite abilities and expertise. Techniques such as translanguaging, changing instruction, and incorporating culturally sensitive teaching approaches need to be emphasized in training programmes. By understanding these approaches, educators may create inclusive lesson plans that accommodate students with varying levels of English ability as well as their native tongues and cultural backgrounds. Professional development seminars also provide educators with hands-on experience with technological tools that facilitate language acquisition, enabling them to successfully incorporate digital resources into their teaching.

Furthermore, it is imperative that educators pursue continuous professional development to guarantee they are up to date on the latest research and cutting-edge techniques in multilingual teaching. With the help of continuing education, educators may better adapt to the evolving needs of their students and the rapid improvements in educational technology in the classroom. By giving educators the chance to share experiences and develop fresh approaches to teaching, mentoring programmes, peer collaboration, and reflective practices may help educators advance their careers. Schools can ensure that teachers are adequately prepared to strengthen the role of English in classrooms with various languages, leading to higher student outcomes and a more inviting learning environment, by providing consistent and comprehensive teacher training.

### ***2. Policy Recommendations***

It is important to have strong policy recommendations to uphold the importance of English in classrooms with multiple languages and to guarantee the best outcomes for every student (Baker, 2011). Policymakers have a vital role in developing educational structures that support linguistic diversity, fairness, and high quality. First and foremost,

rather than viewing bilingualism and multilingualism as barriers to education, policy should emphasize their importance as benefits. This entails acknowledging the cognitive and cultural benefits of maintaining and promoting a range of languages, as well as encouraging the use of students' mother tongues alongside English in teaching techniques. Furthermore, it is critical that governments prioritize funding resources and giving educators chances for professional growth. This includes funding for teacher preparation programmes that have an emphasis on effective strategies such as culturally sensitive teaching, translanguaging, and customized education. Policies should also support the use of technology in language instruction by providing schools with the resources and tools they need to help multilingual students learn English.

Policies should also address systemic disparities by ensuring that all students, regardless of linguistic background, have equitable access to educational opportunities. This might entail developing explicit language competency objectives, implementing targeted interventions for English language learners, and monitoring progress to identify and address disparities in academic performance. Educational systems may integrate evidence-based strategies and give priority to the requirements of multilingual learners to establish inclusive settings that promote the academic performance and language development of all students. The discussion about the significance of language education in today's globalized society and the significance of English in multilingual classrooms underscores the complexity and complexity of language education. Realizing that English proficiency is more than just knowing a language is one important implication. It also opens up more educational and career options. Teachers can assist students in increasing their participation in global discussions, broadening their academic perspectives, and increasing their chances of finding employment in a globally competitive economy by effectively incorporating English into multilingual classrooms.

However, the discussion also highlights how crucial it is to thoroughly consider the challenges and potential drawbacks associated with prioritizing English in a multilingual educational environment. When promoting proficiency in English among students, it is critical to avoid marginalizing their home languages and cultures. In order to preserve linguistic diversity and cultural heritage while fostering English proficiency among students, strategies such as individualized instruction,

multilingual approaches, and culturally aware strategies are essential. Furthermore, making use of technology advancements can improve language learning and provide more expansive learning environments. This also has consequences for practices and policies, emphasizing the necessity of collaboration between educators, legislators, and stakeholders to develop comprehensive frameworks that successfully support multilingual learners. Schools can improve the efficacy of English as a teaching method and guarantee fair educational outcomes for all students by promoting inclusive educational settings that support and embrace linguistic diversity. In the end, the discussion focuses on how multilingual learners' future readiness and global competence can be significantly affected by strategic language education practices.

## Conclusion

Educational institutions can ensure that every student has the opportunity to succeed academically, become fluent in English, and have a meaningful influence on a globalized society in this way. In summary, a complete plan that respects other languages, stimulates innovative teaching techniques, and fosters cooperation among all parties involved is necessary for successfully integrating English into classrooms with multiple language learners. By implementing these ideas, educators may better prepare their students for success in a globalized world where proficiency in the language is critical for advancement in the classroom, on the job, and in personal relationships.

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# The Use of Graphic Novels as a Pedagogical Tool in Multilingual Classrooms: Expectations and Challenges

*Sanjiv Kumar*

## Abstract

Graphic novels offer an accessible means of exploring complex concepts, experiences, and stories, making them an attractive avenue for educators worldwide. Given the increasing importance of pedagogical approaches that leverage multimodal representations in the process of acquiring one or more languages commonly observed in multilingual classrooms, it is essential to consider the potential benefits and drawbacks of integrating graphic novels into language learning environments, particularly in multilingual settings. This paper aims to explore the expectations of educators, and students, as well as the challenges related to the use of graphic novels as a pedagogical tool in multilingual classrooms. Graphic novels simplify difficult ideas by combining visual and text components, so improving understanding and involvement. Through contextualized language input and encouragement of reading interest, they help language development and literacy. Through many stories, graphic novels also help to promote cultural understanding and empathy. Their application suffers, too, in terms of curriculum alignment, resource constraints, and handling of various learning needs.

**Keywords:** Graphic novels, multilingual education, visual learning, classroom, pedagogy, literacy

## Introduction

In today's globalized world, classrooms are increasingly diverse, with students coming from various linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

Multilingual education aims to accommodate this diversity by promoting language proficiency in multiple languages, enhancing cognitive abilities, and fostering cultural awareness. Effective pedagogical tools are essential in this context to support students' learning and development. These tools not only aid in language acquisition but also help bridge the gap between different languages and cultures, making education more inclusive and effective. Traditional pedagogical methods, while valuable, often fall short in addressing the unique needs of multilingual learners, necessitating the exploration of innovative and multimodal teaching aids. Immigrant and refugee student numbers have also increased in European countries, influencing school populations. The heterogeneity in classrooms is a result of multiple languages and cultures. This growing diversification of classrooms presents new challenges and opportunities for teachers. Many of them feel a gap between the realities in their classrooms and the monolingual education they receive. This situation forces them to face their students' linguistic diversity by trying to build on it, overcoming the language barrier that sometimes separates them from their students and their academic success. In many European countries, however, the educational response to these dramatic transformations has been slow and uncertain. For many young children, school can be a place where they feel like outsiders due to their language, culture, and experiences. It is important to create a classroom environment that values and supports their identities. Teacher education programmes should expose educators to linguistic and cultural diversity, providing them with tools to support multilingual students. Multilingual classrooms can be challenging, with discomfort and confusion among students and a lack of tolerance for different languages. Teachers often underestimate the diversity within their classrooms and focus on homogenization through the national language. This exclusionary process must be addressed to create a more inclusive learning environment for immigrant students.

In the context of India, classrooms that include multiple languages are extremely important because the country has a wide variety of languages and dialects. The Indian Constitution acknowledges 22 scheduled languages, and many areas have their own unique linguistic identities (Constitutional Provisions Relating to Eighth Schedule, n.d.). This diversity presents both opportunities and challenges for the education system. In India, being multilingual is not only a part of education but also a cultural and social aspect that should be embraced in classrooms.

Teachers often struggle to meet the diverse linguistic needs of students, many of whom speak a different language at home than the one used for instruction in schools. This challenge is made more difficult by the socio-economic differences that impact students' access to quality education.

The 2020 National Education Policy (NEP) has highlighted the significance of using the mother tongue in education, particularly in the early years, to improve understanding and learning achievements. It promotes the use of local languages as a teaching medium, aiming to make education more inclusive and available (Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2020). Nevertheless, challenges in implementing multilingual education, like insufficient teacher training, resource shortages, and societal preferences for English, continue to pose obstacles.

Education has experienced changes fuelled by technological developments and by the greater cultural diversity of students, especially in countries like Canada and India. Contemporary literature has evolved, and schools need to incorporate diverse cultural perspectives. It is not always easy to connect canonical works to the values of dialogue and diversity. It is important to explore alternative sources and use the potential for innovation in literature.

Multilingual classrooms present unique challenges and opportunities, requiring specialized pedagogical tools. Traditional tools like textbooks and lectures often fall short of engaging students from diverse linguistic backgrounds, necessitating the exploration of innovative strategies. The effectiveness of these techniques demonstrates a shift towards multi-sensory, active learning methods that incorporate images, stories, and engagement. This is where graphic novels prove to be an overlooked educational resource that merges pictures, text, and conversation, allowing difficult concepts to be easily understood by people from different language backgrounds. Graphic novels offer visual context, cultural relevance, engaging narratives, and multimodal learning support. They provide clear understanding, share different cultures, captivate students, and accommodate diverse learners.

In India and other countries, educators are exploring new methods to involve students who speak multiple languages, and graphic novels are an attractive option. This approach combines the best aspects of current teaching methods, transforming classrooms into inclusive environments where storytelling helps language and literacy thrive.

## 2. Literature Review

Various pedagogical tools are employed in multilingual classrooms to aid language development and content understanding. The expectation usually associated with employing these visual tools includes improved learning and assimilation of subject matter. According to Gaskins et al., (1993) the use of narrative images in particular and illustrations, in general, aid in “comprehension and make the text more interesting” (p. 264). This holds for the use of graphic novels in educational research. Studies have established that graphic novels have a multifaceted impact on learners. For instance, Parker (2017) demonstrated significant improvement in students’ literacy skills, particularly in reading engagement and comprehension, when using graphic novels in a study involving Grade 4 students in California.

Graphic novels are being increasingly recognized for their ability to engage learners through a variety of literacy practices. According to Rycroft (2014), these novels provide a diverse and rich learning experience that integrates traditional text with visual components, helping students to develop literacy skills. Rycroft also highlights that graphic novels encourage critical discussions, empowering students to actively participate in their meaning-making process, which is particularly beneficial for addressing sensitive topics such as social justice, gender, and cultural identities (Rycroft, 2014).

Hurwich (2021) explores graphic novels’ role in promoting critical analysis of conventional texts, especially in educational settings with diverse backgrounds and cultural beliefs. She found that using graphic novels helped adolescent girls challenge their preconceived notions about gender roles and gain a deeper understanding of the original stories.

McCann et al. (2007) find that graphic novels “suggest potential contributions to our pedagogy and a particularly powerful capacity to interest students in how they learn through thinking and composing in multiple media” (p. 45). The assumption, then, is that graphic novels are effective as cognitive tools in the multilingual classroom. However, El Refaie (2012) observes that when engaging with the language of graphic novels, readers are compelled to focus closely on nuanced meanings and connotations.

### **3. Benefits of Using Graphic Novels in Multilingual Classrooms**

Using graphic novels in teaching multilingual classrooms has the potential to change traditional English language learning practices and bring about educational integration, as well as foster cultural understanding. However, the degree of cultural integration may depend on the alignment of the graphic novels' content with the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of the students (Duncan & Smith, 2009; Ladson-Billings, 1995). The viewing and analysis of the graphic novel genre can act as a first step in the encouragement of visual literacy, which is often one portion of the curriculum. It lays realistic (drawback against pornography) in expressing what foreigners will generally think about Malaysians as un-British. The University of Malaya Library website (<http://umplib.um.edu.my/index>) displays graphic novels, and short stories for entertainment presented in English, as a worthy read in itself, and invites members of other cultures to make a special effort to cater for the needs and convenience of multiracial readers.

Graphic novels are valuable in the Indian educational setting, especially due to diversity. They provide an inclusive approach to learning, bridging gaps between students from different backgrounds. Works like *Harappa Files*, *Kari*, and *Ramayana: Divine Loophole* offers unique perspectives on Indian society, culture, and mythology. *Bhimayana* addresses social issues like caste discrimination. Incorporating graphic novels that reflect Indian culture and languages makes students feel represented and enhances the educational value of graphic novels for multilingual learners in India.

Important developments in visual literacy, a perceptive set of interpretive skills for reading and comprehension of visual information and/or "documents" of various kinds, including text, can also inform educational graphic novel reading. J.B. Carter (2007) also agrees and says that "Graphic novels can serve as a bridge to more complex texts, helping students develop critical reading skills and visual literacy" (p.48). Graphic novels help visual literacies—especially visual narrative communication—by means of language-specific intertwines and extensive inter-cultural reading practices can be shared, exchanged, postulated, tested, and refined. Therefore, regardless of dictionary or teaching journal recommendation, investigating and interpreting graphic novel panels can introduce mutually recoverable visual literacy processes.

### ***3.1. Inspired Participation***

Establishing an immersive and welcoming educational setting is crucial for nurturing the development of students, especially in classrooms with diverse language backgrounds. Equipping students with the necessary tools and techniques that enable them to fully engage in their learning journey is of utmost importance. One method that supports this objective is positive discipline theory, which is formulated by Jane Nelsen (2006). Positive discipline theory underscores the importance of creating respectful and supportive environments for students, encouraging their active participation without resorting to punitive measures. This theory prioritizes the cultivation of a sense of belonging and significance through positive communication, mutual respect, and encouragement (Nelsen, 2006). Graphic novels support this method by offering an immersive, approachable format that encourages curiosity and involvement. Through the use of visual storytelling, graphic novels contribute to creating a welcoming and supportive classroom environment, motivating students to learn at their own speed without worrying about criticism or setbacks. In this way, they promote the essential principles of positive discipline.

In a multilingual classroom, where some students are accustomed to sitting through the tormenting, confusing dead air when the lesson moves into the content they struggle to navigate alone, graphic novels offer a means to make the experience less intimidating and more participatory (Boerman-Cornell et al., 2017). The classroom thus becomes a place where learning can be plodding or exciting—depending on the student’s pace—rather than an assessment-driven space where value judgments dominate if children lack galleries of superficially labelled mistakes to overcome, and all the discursive space appears to be waiting on their tentative interpretation.

### **3.2. Diversity and Cultural Referencing**

Like all society’s knowledge and products, cultures are dynamic. Always the outcome of cultural interaction and fusion is a unique culture. This is why one cannot discuss national or regional cultures, or their differences/diversities, without discussing a multitude of cultures and traditions, mixed cultures at different levels, a variety of perspectives that embody, reflect, and respect many kinds of thought, and the struggle to survive. Analyzing several cultural expectations

with their representatives can help to show their variety. Our planet is shrinking, getting more vibrant, and bringing us closer to people from many cultures, languages, religions, and backgrounds as we can see. Amazingly, many symbolic and cultural codes form the foundation of societies. Graphic novels can also exhibit diversity and cultures from many angles. Everybody's graphic novel expectations and possibilities will enable them to investigate art, culture, and surroundings. From the multilingual classroom teacher and student development, we can "see" many perspectives before assessing art. As Duncan and Smith (2009) rightly reflected on it; "Graphic novels offer a unique medium for exploring cultural diversity, allowing readers to engage with stories that reflect a wide range of experiences and perspectives" (p. 67).

Graphic novels are now used in Western classrooms such as "The Savannah (Ga.) College of Art and Design offers one of the top education programs in graphic novels in the country, but far from the only one. The Joe Kubert School of Cartoon and Graphic Art in Dover, New Jersey, has been devoted exclusively to the study of the form since 1976" (Karp, 2011). It is proving very beneficial, particularly for migrant and refugee children needing rehabilitation and integration. This is also evident in the research of Ramzi Darwazeh (2016), who used the graphic novel *Palestine* by Sacco "to assist students in understanding the benefit of a graphic novel in aiding our understanding of migration" (p. 35). He observes that

...students examined how the Palestinian refugees arrived in Jordan and the nature of the support provided to them by the United Nations and the Jordanian government. Palestine extended the students' understanding of the plight of the Palestinians as Sacco vividly portrays the reality facing the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. ...Furthermore, the students compared the advantages and disadvantages of using a graphic novel, such as *Palestine*, with other texts, such as UN publications, in informing their understanding of the Palestinian migration. As a result of the first half of the unit, students were able to develop an understanding of how graphic novels can help them better understand the migration by examining how visuals and narratives can inform their understanding in a social studies context (p. 35).

Graphic novels are increasingly used to link readers to the text, generate liminality and identification, and support ethnic literature. All have graphic novel-like advantages. Multicultural graphic novels discovered

in multilingual classrooms can encourage another good change in the classroom since mainstream American culture is a “blend” of drafts from other civilizations. The cosmopolitanism of the main culture will enable us to welcome variations.

#### **4. Expectations of Using Graphic Novels in Multilingual Classrooms**

Teachers expect graphic novels to resuscitate multilingual classes because they value the multimodal representation that they enable to present. They also reckon that multilingual students would find it easier to translate verbal language due to the presence of pictures as a non-verbal element of the medium. Teachers believe that students will be very enthusiastic about reading graphic novels and that it will make them willingly focus on their linguistic deficiencies. Students also expect the nature of graphic novels to provide additional meaning and to help them more easily understand the text. Similarly to Block, it is expected that graphic novels will facilitate the understanding of advanced vocabulary and grammar. It is also expected that graphic novels will help multilingual subject teachers, especially those teaching content through the target language, to better understand various methods of second language teaching.

It is important to note that the above-mentioned expectations hark back to an earlier emphasis that Block places on graphic novels. Additionally, Stephen Cary (2004) also underlines that through graphic novels, students can acquire strategies for understanding second-language printed text. They learn to understand text strategically: they are introduced to choosing the right passages relevant to a particular main idea for designing a panel, understanding sequence, decoding character relations, and so on.

##### ***4.1. Empirical Studies and Their Learning Outcomes and Benefits***

The use of graphic novels in teaching and learning practices has several benefits, including improving literacy levels and language skills. In multilingual settings, graphic novels can support the development of all languages used in teaching, as well as enhance students’ cognitive processes. Incorporating graphic novels into classrooms can enhance language skills, reading understanding, and cultural knowledge, as substantiated by empirical research.

For instance, the use of graphic novels in English as a Foreign Language

(EFL) education has proven to be effective for 10th-grade International Baccalaureate students. Öz and Efecioglu state that graphic novels have a significant impact on students' grasp of literary concepts, inference skills, and vocabulary development. However, the study also found that while graphic novels did not greatly improve students' ability to answer comprehension questions or analyse comparison-contrast relationships, the visual and narrative components of graphic novels do engage students' critical thinking and understanding of literary devices, making them valuable addition to EFL curricula. The authors suggest incorporating graphic novels into EFL syllabi to take advantage of these benefits and enhance overall learning outcomes (Öz & Efecioglu, 2015).

Similarly, Aldahash and Altalhab (2020) examined how graphic novels affect the reading comprehension of EFL learners. Their study focused on Saudi EFL learners and involved 66 intermediate school students. The findings showed that students who read graphic novels performed better on reading comprehension tests than those who read traditional narrative texts. Both students and teachers believed that graphic novels help improve reading skills, increase motivation, and build vocabulary. The study highlights the potential of graphic novels as valuable teaching tools in EFL classrooms and encourages their wider use to enhance language learning.

The firsthand research shows solid proof that incorporating graphic novels into multilingual classrooms has the expected educational advantages. This makes them a valuable resource for improving literacy skills and creating an inclusive learning atmosphere. It is also our estimation that the variety of the presentations in this section supports the idea that graphic novel studies, and their utilization in EFL teaching, engage with a range of skills, attitudes, contexts and literacies that go beyond the mere teaching of reading.

## **5. Challenges of Implementing Graphic Novels in Multilingual Education**

The integration of graphic novels into educational settings is not without its age-old challenges. In the field of multilingual education, however, many of these challenges curiously intersect with those encountered when introducing graphic novels into pedagogy. Firstly, there are significant linguistic and cultural barriers. There are very few multilingual graphic novels available, and those that do exist are almost

exclusively in the most widely taught languages French, Spanish, and English. Funding is cited both as a challenge for authors and publishers and as a prohibitive factor for educators looking to diversify their pedagogy. Likewise, educators feel that they are in need of training and professional development to use graphic novels in general, but especially multilingual graphic novels. Any text or novel in a foreign language is associated with decreased rigour by both educators and students, leading to a deficit in motivation. In a multilingual context, this results in poor perceptual ability to engage with the visual narrative based on the language comprehension or decoding level, and no reader identification.

Finally, academics of graphic novels continue to argue that their claimed educational potential likely leans over into the prescriptive and is rarely ever as evidence based as it should be, concluding that the status and approach to graphic novels in education are not predicated on empirical research (Downey 2009). The application of graphic novels in education then occurs without a clear procedure. This constitutes a remaining challenge in graphic novel pedagogy. Without an empirical research base, the benefits that graphic novels in general and in a multilingual context might confer are largely anecdotal and speculative. There are significant complications in establishing a base for graphic novel pedagogy. For this reason, the following systematic review studies the existing empirical research base on the use of graphic novels in educational contexts.

One concern is the limited availability of multilingual graphic novels for use in classrooms. This scarcity poses challenges to the goal of implementing graphic novels in education to support multilingual education and inclusivity. While translated versions are available for popular graphic novels, they may not fully meet the needs for multilingual representation. The focus of our exploration is to understand how graphic novels valuable learning resources in various languages can be. Teacher training is crucial in understanding how to effectively use graphic novels, develop teaching materials and tasks, and enhance students' skills in creating their graphic novels.

## **6. Conclusion and Future Directions**

In sum, these arguments indicate that graphic novels have the potential to positively shape learner>s experiences in the classroom and their learning of a target language. Hence, this paper suggest that graphic

novels have shown us valuable sides to discuss concerning relevant issues in multilingual education because they embody a multifaceted pedagogical reality oriented towards a better comprehension of it. Graphic novels, with their combination of text and visuals, have the ability to simplify intricate concepts and capture the attention of learners in a way that conventional materials cannot. This is particularly important in diverse linguistic environments like India, where students have varying language backgrounds and often speak different languages at home than the ones used for teaching. Notwithstanding the title of this article, the narration proposed and revised can be extended to a wide range of personal stories who managed to develop advanced skills in a foreign language by using books in general.

Based on discussions, I suggest three areas for further study: exploring how to adapt and implement research findings in classrooms, promoting research on the use of graphic novels in multilingual classrooms, and informing policymakers about the trends and importance of multilingual education. This includes media-based approaches to ensure proper interaction among children from diverse backgrounds.

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## The Pedagogical Role of Literature in a Multilingual Classroom

*Ashish Awasthi & Ram Prakash Gupt*

### Abstract

Literature has a broad educational role in multilingual classrooms, fostering language learning, critical thinking, cultural awareness and personal development. The revival of the use of literature in the language classroom has been accompanied by increased research articles in this field. Studies have examined the kind of relationships and language that emerge from literary conversations in the classroom, as well as the perspective of teachers and students. Crucially, the way that students respond to using literature in their language classes depends on the kind of task and methodology that are employed in the classroom. This research paper aims to explore the importance of literature in increasing teachers' pedagogical ability. The paper will also focus on the mediums to make the role of literature more important and simpler in a multilingual classroom.

**Keywords:** Pedagogy, multilingual classroom, literature, NEP 2020, foreign language.

### Introduction

Indians are accustomed to changes of cultures and languages from birth; therefore, multilingualism and multiculturalism are ingrained in their genes. In a bilingual and multiethnic pluralistic society, education must advance in such a way that all the constituent groups feel engaged in the process of governing and constructing their country. Furthermore, it is imperative to fulfil the distinct goals of every sector of the country in order to satisfy the diverse ethnic, religious and linguistic clusters.

In a multilingual classroom, students from diverse mother tongues appear as knowledge seekers in a social environment. In addition to, serving as a medium of communication, a mother tongue is a cultural construct that is integral to the social, emotional and cognitive development of those who speak it. The reputation of the homeland and the mother tongue in teaching English as a first language or a non-native language setting has been underlined by applied linguistics worldwide. Most people emotionally identify with their country just as they do with their mother tongue. A child's mother tongue is the language it uses to identify and categorise the world around him. It is the language one uses to communicate one's core ideas, opinions, feelings, pleasures, sorrows and other perspectives. We may say with certainty that having one's mother language enhances one's awareness of the outside world.

The capacity to comprehend and utilise two or more languages is known as multilingualism. It requires having the capacity to use every skill (LSRW) in those languages. Someone who understands and speaks two or more languages is known as a polyglot. American linguist Bloomfield (1993) once said that a person who can speak and understand numerous languages naturally can be referred to as multilingual.

Nevertheless, several contemporary scholars have questioned this conventional understanding of multilingualism. A claim is made that a monolingual person's native-like competency cannot serve as a proxy for a multilingual person's proficiency level. According to contemporary scholars, multilingualism ought to be evaluated from a different angle. Cenoz and Genesse in the book *Beyond Bilingualism: Multilingualism and Multilingual Education* point out interesting facts about multilingual speakers. They believe that these speakers own "a larger linguistic repertoire than monolinguals but usually the same range of situations in which to use that repertoire" (1998, p. 18) which results in them having extra "specific distributions of functions and uses for each of their languages." (1998, pp. 18-19) They put out claim that being multilingual requires using, "several languages appropriately and effectively for communication in oral and written language." (1998, p. 17) This concept of multilingualism, however, has certain drawbacks of its own because it does not define the precise level of ability required to qualify as multilingual. Some scholars through their considerable study believe that "schools that aim for multilingualism are likely to set different goals for each language" (1998, p. 19). It is again contradicted by Cenoz and

Gorter who point out that “achieving native-like competence need not be the goal of multilingual education. Rather, the goals would differ in each language and should be based on learners’ needs in a language.” (2011, pp. 339-343)

### **Literature and its Pedagogical Role**

Because of migration, globalisation and cultural variety, multilingual classrooms are more prevalent in today’s educational environment. For teachers, this setting offers both opportunities and challenges, especially when it comes to language learning and cultural education. Literature is essential in these situations because of its intricate web of linguistic and cultural narratives. This analysis examines the pedagogical role of literature in classrooms with multiple languages emphasizing the advantages, difficulties, and practical implementation techniques.

Reading literature exposes language learners to real language input, which is crucial. Literary works, instead of textbooks, provide various complex grammatical structures, colloquial idioms, and vocabulary in context. Students’ general language competency improves due to this exposure and helps them recognize linguistic nuances. Through literature one can discover many civilizations, eras, and viewpoints. Students who read stories from several cultures develop empathy and understanding in addition to an emotion of global citizenship. It supports students’ growth in intellectual competency and appreciation of cultural variety. Students are urged to reflect critically and analytically when they interact with literature. They pick up skills in text interpretation, underlying topic identification, and weighing opposing points of view. In a bilingual classroom where children are open to a wide range of cultural settings and viewpoints, this ability is very beneficial.

It may be difficult to obtain a wide range of literary writings in several languages. Educational institutions may lack the resources necessary to offer a broad selection of literature that represents the variety of backgrounds of their students. To deal with the language and cultural variety in their classrooms, teachers must be well-prepared. This entails possessing the pedagogical abilities to employ literature as a teaching tool successfully to be aware of the languages and cultures that are portrayed.

### **Advantages of Pedagogy in a Multilingual Classroom**

If an English teacher has multilingual proficiency and he/she is fluent teaching in the native tongue would be simpler for him/her. The New Education Policy 2020 is also encouraging a multilingual method in the English classroom teaching. India is a multilingual nation. This multilingualism should be taken as an advantage. Consequently, the use of multiple languages in English instruction has increased. A creative language teacher must use multilingualism as a resource, a classroom method, and an objective because it is an integral part of a child's identity and a common characteristic of the Indian linguistic landscape. Furthermore, this gets the best use of a readily available resource, but it is also a means to guarantee that every child in the English class feels safe and accepted and that no one is left behind because of their language background to take part in every activity.

Learning many languages can increase a learner's cognitive capacity and foster greater literariness and originality in language use in the context of teaching and learning a language. Such an instructional, though, might be predicated on reader-response techniques, translation strategies, and other ideas. Here, an effort is ready to investigate the many methods of multilingual pedagogy for teaching language through literature.

### **Difficulties of Pedagogy in a Multilingual Classroom**

There is a lot of disagreement over how language acquisition and literature are related. At the end of the twentieth century, the elitist study of literature as a foreign language became a legitimate source of language. By attempting to apply humanistic methods to the teaching of literature in a communicative language, Hall identifies the evolution of the view that sees literature, "as potentially playing a role in facilitating the learner's access to this English-using culture." (2005, p. 55)

### **Implementation of Pedagogy in a Multilingual Classroom**

The selected readings that represent the variety of languages and cultures in the classroom can be significant strategies. Popular books written by writers with diverse cultural origins must be translated in order to accommodate a range of interests in reading levels of learners. In this process, one should be sure that genres and themes are mixed.

Through scaffolding instruction, students must be provided with

various competence levels of help. This can involve guided reading sessions, vocabulary development and pre-reading exercises. To aid the understanding of the learner, summaries, translations and images must be included in literary textbooks that allow students to examine and debate literature in small groups. Students with various degrees of linguistic competency levels can also be paired or grouped to promote peer learning. As a result, they can acquire new insights and learn from each other.

Teachers can make use of technology to gain access to a greater variety of literary materials. Additional resources and assistance can be obtained through e-books, audiobooks and online literary databases. Apps and resources for learning a language can also help with vocabulary development and understanding. They can use culturally sensitive teaching strategies by relating literary topics to the backgrounds and experiences of students. They can invite students to present their cultural narratives and discuss how they connect to the literature they are reading. Thus, the learning environment becomes more engaging and inclusive. It is advantageous to invest in professional development for educators to improve their ability to oversee multilingual classrooms and make good use of literature. Planning collaborative meetings, workshops and classes can offer insightful information and useful tactics.

For teachers to distinguish between acquisition and learning is one of the most critical components of teaching language and literature. They should distinguish between acquisition and learning and view acquisition as the fundamental step in becoming proficient in a language. When learning is the deliberate internalization of linguistic rules, acquisition is an unconscious process that includes the realistic development of language skills. It results in an overt familiarity with the linguistic processes and the aptitude to express this knowledge. In actuality, acquisition cannot follow learning.

In a multilingual classroom, storytelling may be the most effective method for learners to learn a language since it puts them all on the same mental-emotional communication platform. A key concept of successful language acquisition is the use of storytelling techniques as students can only acquire or retain information that they are engaged actively. As Brierly points out, "Perhaps the most basic thing can be said about human memory after a century of intensive research is that unless detail is placed into a structured pattern, it is rapidly forgotten". (1980, p. 105)

Interpreting literature is an investigation in which readers make use of their pasts and feelings to generate meaning. The reader and the text engage in a transaction that creates meaning during that transaction, learners fill in the gap in the text by drawing on their prior knowledge and disposition. Numerous recent investigations have demonstrated that using literature to create active meaning-making in the classroom improves students' language proficiency. Literary talks provide excellent conversation, which is very beneficial for language development.

Today's world views the dialogic approach as ground-breaking in the pedagogical domain of learning. Dialogic pedagogy is highly valued by critical pedagogues because it puts the student at the centre in the process of learning. This is a learner-centric approach which means that the foundation of schooling is the learner's own background of knowledge and understanding. With the use of critical pedagogy, students will get an acceptance of their roles in society as well as the underlying meanings of the words that serve as world metaphors. While teaching and learning literature necessitates an understanding and sparking of creativity, a teaching-centric pedagogy does not offer students any room to use their own creativity. Through the learning of literary texts and the exploration of language use in them, a dialogic approach can deliver learners with a space to explore their own creative talents. This will support their growth in both creative and critical talents. The same problems have also been brought up by Petrosky (2011) regarding getting students to ask probing questions through writing, speaking, and interpretive discussions about texts they are studying in class which can bring forth multiple possible responses that can be argued from the text. In these lessons, students learn to use the text to substantiate their responses, they learn to up-take from and build on others' comments in discussions, and they learn that the text is a linguistic artifact whose construction by an author is a legitimate subject for inquiry." (2011, pp. 137-138)

Reading literature is an investigation in which readers make use of their nostalgia in order to construct meaning. Readers and texts engage in a transaction that creates meaning while learners use their prior knowledge and disposition to complete the text's gaps. Numerous recent investigations have demonstrated that using literature to create active meaning-making in the classroom improves students' language proficiency. Good conversation, which is extremely beneficial to

language development, arises from literary discussions and the desire to work out of meanings.

Folktales and other literary storytelling have been used to teach communities values and customs from very early times. In this reference, Culler defines “literariness” as the unique impacts of the pleasure and meaning-making that literature produces as a medium of expression. Literature conveys ideas through language and creates instructional and evocative meanings. Culler has enumerated the subsequent characteristics of literature as,

1. Literature as the ‘foregrounding’ of language,
2. Literature as the integration of language,
3. Literature as fiction,
4. Literature as an aesthetic object,
5. Literature as an intertextual or self-reflexive construct.

(2007, pp. 28-34)

Literature is regarded as the best use of language because it is “foregrounded” in language; as a result, it is the best medium for teaching language and concepts. When creating meaning, literary expressions arouse feelings, imagination, and creativity. DeMaria points out:

Writers do not make up things in order to conceal. They invent stories in order to reveal things about human nature and experience. We do the same thing when we dream. We represent inner feelings to ourselves in symbolic form. We make up situations and characters and sometimes nightmarish happenings, but these inventions are an expression of some inner truth about ourselves. One might even argue that *fiction is truer than fact* because sometimes the real truth can only be told by indirection, by the invention of revealing situations. (2020, pp. 4-5)

In the 1930s, the structuralist and formalist methods of literary analysis gave rise to the reader-response theory. The emphasis shifted from being mostly on the text’s inherent properties to being on how readers actively engage with the text to create meaning. I.A. Richards remarks on how one’s emotional reaction to literature might vary. Padley also notices in the reader-response theory that:

The reader and the text are always located in history, and the act of reading in any historical period is informed by the conventions and expectations of that period...The process by which the reader acquires lived experience and perceptions of the world is crucial to

the development of the reader's interpretative skills and the ability to produce textual meaning from the act of reading. (2006, pp. 187-188)

Considering this perspective, the reader's own knowledge—beliefs, culture and emotions—plays a substantial part in building the implications of a book, relatively, than the words themselves as an ordered structure.

Reader response techniques can be built into our pedagogical framework to teach language through literature, allowing students to create the meaning of the text by reflecting on their personal contexts. This method can be very beneficial for a bilingual classroom since it allows the students' shared cultural customs to be incorporated into the multicultural classroom setting. This would be an example of learner-centric pedagogy, wherein the knowledge and cultures of learners can be intact.

### **Conclusion**

There are numerous ways to use literature in a multilingual classroom. When choosing and grading activities and materials, the material design must consider the possibility that some politically and culturally sensitive language items would be absent, which might result in misunderstandings and obstacles. The goal should be to increase one's literary and linguistic proficiency and to foster an understanding and respect for all languages and beliefs of the many linguistic communities. Maintaining and enhancing the rich multilingual legacy that exists in our nation would be greatly aided by the appropriate discretion that gives way to learner-centric and dialogic approaches.

Literature has a broad pedagogical role in multilingual classrooms, providing important advantages for language learning, cultural awareness, critical thinking and interpersonal relationships. But it also brings with it difficulties that call for thoughtful strategies and calculated preparation. Through a mixture of strategies, including the critical reading of various literary works, scaffolded instructions, collaborative learning, integration of technology and culturally responsive teaching practices, educators can effectively use literature to enhance the multilingual classroom experience.

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## Interview

### **The Future of Teacher Education: Embracing Multilingualism, Collaboration, and Cultural Integration**

*Tasneem Shahnaaz & Veena Kapur in Conversation with Kathleen Heugh*

Kathleen Heugh, Professor of Language Education and Multilingualism, is a socio-applied linguist who specializes in language policy and planning, bilingual and multilingual education, and English Medium Instruction (EMI). She uses multilingual pedagogies including translanguaging and transknowledging in her teaching of applied, educational and socio-linguistics. Kathleen Heugh works with several large transnational organizations (including various agencies of the UN, the EU and the African Union; transnational bodies such as the British Council, and international policy think tanks) located in Africa; Central, South and East Asia; Europe; and North America. Currently she focuses on policy and its implementation in bilingual and multilingual education for displaced, migrant and refugee students within mainstream systems.

Professor Heugh has specialist expertise in system-wide and multi-country evaluation studies on languages and literacy in education in sub-Saharan Africa for international governments and development agencies (including UNESCO and UNDP). She was a Ministerial advisor on language policy for the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) and was subsequently appointed to two statutory bodies established through the Constitution. As a founding member of the Pan South African Language Board, Kathleen Heugh initiated and led the first Sociolinguistic Survey of South Africa (2000). She also led the design, development and administration of the first system-wide multilingual assessment of students in the world (2006). Her theoretical and field research in multilingual education in more than 30 countries informs

UNESCO and UNICEF language education policy recommendations for countries in Africa and the Asia-Pacific, and for minority communities worldwide for the UN Human Rights Council.

**Tasneem Shahnaaz (TS):** Hello Professor Heugh. Welcome to the *Fortell* journal. At the outset, we would like to thank you for agreeing to this interview. Let us begin right away with our first question. We would like your views on Teacher Education—what it means and what it entails?

**Kathleen Heugh (KH):** We need to remember that formal teacher education is a recent phenomenon dating back approximately 150 years. For millennia prior to this, education occurred and continues to occur through non-formal educational activities of community groups, and through informal educational practices at the family or local levels. Successful teacher education, in my view cannot be achieved through formal educational institutions alone. We need all three of informal, non-formal and formal if we are serious about sustainable and successful preparation of teachers. It is through informal and non-formal education that we can learn what needs to be brought into formal teacher education which has become entirely dislocated from the real needs and contexts of most school pupils of the world. Some of the best examples I have ever seen have been at the Vidya Bhawan Society in Udaipur, Eklavya in Bhopal, and at Literacy and Adult Basic Education (LABE) in Kampala and its district offices and village programmes in Uganda.

**Veena Kapur (VK):** What kind of teacher training and qualifications are necessary to encourage and support multilingual education?

**KH:** The preparation and professional development of teachers everywhere in the world should be reconfigured to begin with the fundamental principle that all children and adults everywhere have the innate capability of what Professor Rama Kant Agnihotri calls 'multilinguality' (2007, 2010, 2014, 2017). For teacher educators and pre-service and in-service teachers, we know that it is almost impossible to find a classroom of students who are all monolingual in the same language. Multilinguality is present in every classroom and along with multilinguality, students bring diverse ways of being (ontologies) from their local communities, diverse backgrounds of knowledge and knowledge systems (epistemologies), and often also different systems of belief (faith or religion). We need to prepare all teachers with recognition that this means that school pupils or learners bring many different

resources and all these need to be harnessed in ways that advantage and advance learning in the classroom for all students.

Usually, early years education begins with literacy and numeracy. This means that teachers need to know how to work with the literacy practices that come from the children's home or local communities. This could mean different languages, and scripts, but we now also know that this means recognising orality and oral traditions and the knowledge that accompanies these (linguistic, cultural, epistemic, ontological) and where and how these feed into or are embedded in art, dance, music, and song. It means that teachers need to know how to encourage students' engagement with their capabilities and resources and how to expand these—together with their peers. It is almost impossible now to think of literacy in one language only. We need to have a broader view of literacy as including biliteracy as a minimum, and multilingual literacies alongside multilingual oralities.

**TS:** Is it possible to work with mainstream curricula and forge successful multilingual processes and practices?

**KH:** It is possible to work with a mainstream curriculum by encouraging students to use two or more of their languages in understanding, negotiating understanding of new concepts, writing bilingually (using what I refer to as 'horizontal' translanguaging or multilingualism and that involves language mixing), and redrafting to produce texts that gradually become closer to those assumed to be two or more standardized written languages. I refer to the latter as 'vertical' translanguaging or multilingualism. At the same time, it is important to remember that students are bringing their own perspectives of knowledge and experience into the classroom and students need to be encouraged to share and exchange these in a reciprocal manner—one that I suggest could be called 'transknowledging.' This way students teach each other, and often also the teacher.

Important preparation for teachers is to learn how to develop a disposition that allows for humility—a humility that recognises how much we can learn from our pupils or students, how pupils/students are often much better at teaching their peers than we as teachers are, and how we can learn from other through convivial collaboration. Engaging with parents and community is critical and every effort needs to be taken to ensure that parents and community members recognise

themselves as co-responsible collaborators in their children's education. This may mean finding ways to ameliorate ways in which the school may appear to be an alienating or fearful place for adults. Village schools in Northern Uganda for example offer joint literacy classes for children and adults (parents, grandparents, community members) several mornings of the week. Parents and grandparents often find themselves in playful competition with their children in the early years—and the classes are places of joy and delight for everyone. It is these experiences that encourage teachers to learn how to be successful teachers.

**VK:** Do you think the regular teacher education programmes are effective?

**KH:** There are the regular formal teacher-education programmes offered in every context. But unless they get down to the nitty gritty of what happens and how to make things happen in the classroom daily—they are, in my view, of little value. Too often they offer abstract courses on curriculum design and assessment, the latest fad in reading (but not how to teach reading), or latest approaches to administrative duties of teachers.

**TS:** Do you think officials in government departments need a change in perspective in order to create effective programmes?

**KH:** My main concern is that it is the education officials in government departments that need professional learning on how to understand what it is that teachers and students need. When officials are moved from one government department to another, any institutional knowledge and expertise that they acquire in relation to education policy, planning and decisions are lost when replaced by novice officials. My next concern is that school leadership, especially the principal and deputy-principals need to be kept up to date and participate in refresher programmes that remind them of why they need to pay close attention to learning and supporting teachers, parents, community, and learners. Too often I see principals hiding in their offices, ignoring what is happening, and ignoring how teaching and learning is not taking place, and ignoring their own culpability in this. So, I advocate for professional learning for educational leaders and officials, including how to encourage the establishment of strong parent-community bodies to support accountability. Again, LABE in Uganda has developed sustainable strategies in which community empowerment has led to village elected

educational leaders who serve as liaison officers between village parents and school leadership.

**VK:** How should students be assessed in a multilingual class? How can we ensure that these assessments are culturally and linguistically unbiased?

**KH:** It is entirely possible to assess students bilingually or even trilingually in class, most especially in formative and ongoing classroom assessment. It is also possible to assess students trilingually or multilingually for summative purposes and in system-wide assessment tasks. One way to do this is to present each assessment tasks in bilingual or multilingual format, allowing the possibility for students to read the items or tasks in their preferred language and or in each of the language versions provided.

Students should be given the opportunity to be assessed multilingually and to be able to include knowledge from their home, community, or country background in their responses to assessment tasks. Together with colleagues I have been working on multilingual tasks and assessment as regular daily classroom activities in schools and system-wide assessment in secondary education since the early 2000s. I have also been working with colleagues on formative and summative assessment in undergraduate and postgraduate university programmes, including teacher education and training of teacher educators programmes since the late 1990s in South Africa and since 2010 in Australia.

One example, the process of developing a system-wide assessment of 75,000 Grade 8 students in the Western Cape of South Africa, involved both language and mathematics. In the language assessment item students were tested on their comprehension of an excerpt from a literary source originally written in their home language (isiXhosa, Afrikaans or English). Each literacy source was carefully selected to ensure lexical and syntactic equivalence in terms of reading level across the three languages. Students were also asked to compose a written response to two questions. One was to write about their views of a well-known figure, Nelson Mandela, from their own perspective, and in their home language. The second was related to a letter in which they were asked to explain how a particular schoolyard incident occurred, again in the students' home language. The students were also tasked with reading a previously unseen text aligned with environmental and geographic

context in a neighbouring country. The original text, produced to suit a reading level of 14–15-year-olds in English, was translated into Afrikaans, used as the medium of instruction for some students, and adapted for use as a text for English second or additional language students who were used to studying through EMI. The adaptations included glossing of complex lexical items, changing passive voice to active voice, simplifying complex sentences with multiple clauses to sentences with no more than two clauses. At the time, speakers of African languages were expected to study and be assessed through EMI in South Africa, this included the speakers of isiXhosa in the Western Cape Province.

Two versions of the mathematics instrument were developed, one with 55 per cent of items in, one with 55 per cent of items in Afrikaans. In each version, 45 per cent of the items were presented to students in three languages, isiXhosa, Afrikaans, and English. The different language versions were colour-coded so that students could associate their preferred language with the same colour throughout the instrument. Since speakers of isiXhosa studied mathematics through English (mostly) or Afrikaans (occasionally) these students were provided the mathematics instrument version that best matched the regular language of teaching and learning maths. Through a post-assessment survey, most students from all language backgrounds revealed that they read all three versions of the 45 per cent of items presented multilingually. Although this was the first time that a multilingual assessment had been administered across a whole grade cohort, and we had not really expected much difference in achievement scores between the items presented only in one language compared with those presented in three languages, it was clear that there was an increase in overall scores for items presented in the three languages (Heugh et al., 2017).

Bilingual assessment (Chinese and English) is currently being practiced for formative purposes in a primary school in South Australia supported by a team of bilingual teaching and learning specialists from the University of South Australia (Heugh et al., 2024). The use of multilingual assessment for multilingual students studying through EMI at an Australian university has been documented through a longitudinal five-phase series of action research project between 2010 to 2024. Most courses in which teaching staff have tried this pedagogical practice relate to English language programmes for international students and students from bilingual or multilingual communities, and a major in

applied linguistics with students who are bilingual, multilingual and monolingual in the same classes.

Assessment is both formative and summative and includes translation, use of informal or horizontal translanguaging and more formal vertical translanguaging processes. The research has led to recognition of the role of student agency and voice, and students desire to bring and exchange knowledge to which they have access in languages that are different from English. More than this, students who have previously considered themselves to be monolingual speakers of English have to their astonishment realised that they depend on multilingual students to provide them with access to knowledge that is not available in English. This has brought about a pedagogy of reciprocity where multilingual and monolingual students engage in what I have suggested is a process of both translanguaging and transknowledging (see also Heugh & Song, 2017; Heugh et al., 2022; and Heugh et al., 2024).

In my view, these efforts are a series of attempts to show that multilingual assessment is valuable for multilingual and monolingual students alike. Multilingual assessment is possible in the classroom, in schools, at system-wide secondary level, and in higher education. Multilingual assessment supports equal outcomes and offers advantages for all students whether multilingual or monolingual.

**VK:** What are the ongoing professional development opportunities available to teachers in multilingual classrooms?

These unfortunately are exceedingly rare—inadequate.

I have reported on ones in South Africa from about 1998-2005 for LLT previously but other than these I am unaware of any.

**TS:** Could you comment on the nature of educational policies that support multilingual education and the way these policies have been effectively implemented in developed nations?

**KH:** I am not sure what you mean by the term ‘developed nations. In my view there is a problem with the construct of a nation state—in that this is a concept that seems to have emerged in post-Reformation Europe, and subsequently exported through a particular form of colonial enterprise, with a drawing of artificial state boundaries that have often divided people who historically share the same systems of belief, knowledge and language. This has particularly become a problem in Africa where

as a result of European colonial interests, the continent was partitioned at the Conference of Berlin between 1884 and 1885 to suit the imperial interests of European powers rather than the communities of people living in Africa. The result of this partition has been the division of people across geopolitical borders that have divided communities with affiliations of language, belief (faith) and knowledge, and exacerbated cross-border conflict over the last 140 years.

Nevertheless, the best examples of system-wide implementation of multilingual education are in postcolonial countries, sometimes referred to as countries of the 'South' and that are linguistically complex or heterogeneous. The best examples of systemwide development and implementation of multilingual education, and the lessons we learn from these that may be relevant in countries elsewhere (for example in South and Southeast Asia) are in Ethiopia and South Africa. Attempts towards multilingual education systems in Europe and North America, which I prefer to call countries of the North-Atlantic (following Raewyn Connell, 2007) are few and insubstantial compared to those of countries of the South.

**VK:** Professor Heugh, you have experienced a rich academic life and we would be happy if you could share your insights on the evolution of language policies in different countries and the key takeaways that have evolved in the process?

**KH:** In Ethiopia, after a change of government in 1994 and a loosely configured centralised language policy was implemented through regional differentiation. This policy was supportive of the development and use of regional and local languages, the national working language (Amharic) and English as an additional (international) language of wider communication. In some of the regions, for example Oromo, Tigray and Somali regions, implementation meant, the use of Oromo, Tigrinya and Somali (one regional language each) as the medium of instruction for between six and eight years of primary school, plus the teaching and learning of Amharic, regarded as the 'working language' of Ethiopia, and English. A switch to English medium followed through secondary school. In other more linguistically complex regions, like the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples (SNNP) Region, differentiation meant that several languages within this region were developed and used as the mediums of instruction for up to six years initially, and later reduced

to four years, although continued to be taught as subjects to secondary school. Lastly in the Amhara Region, students were only expected to learn Amharic and English (a bilingual system for these students), and this system has also been implemented in the capital city of the country, Addis Ababa.

What we learned from this system-wide implementation of multilingual education is that:

It is possible for a low-income country to implement multilingual education successfully, by differentiating the range of languages on a regional basis, and that this increases the potential for social justice while reducing socio-economic inequality.

Students with six to eight years of home or local language medium of instruction, plus a national language plus an international language—are likely to remain in and complete secondary school, and have the best chance of entry to higher education.

Decentralization to regions and even local education authorities encouraged civil society agency and contributions to education.

What this example also demonstrates is that a change of government policy in the early 2000s allowed foreign advisors, mainly from the UK, promoting earlier introduction of EMI in teacher education and in primary school, led to the decline in literacy and school achievement in secondary and primary school, increased foreign debt, and undermined multilingual education (Heugh, et al., 2012).

The South African history of system-wide implementation of multilingual education offers several lessons. The first is that during the apartheid period (1948-1990) multilingual education was implemented at low-cost in seven languages. This was a highly centralized system and rapidly put in place to ensure an uneven socio-economic and segregated society. What we learned from this example is that:

It is possible to develop dictionaries and textbooks in multiple languages rapidly and to grow an educational publishing and translation industry at speed.

However, since this policy was not intended to foster economic or racial equality—it spawned socio-political conflict and eventual dismissal of the apartheid system in 1994.

A renewed attempt to implement multilingual education policy based

on the principles of democracy and equality was formulated (DoE, 1997), but based on a highly centralized system has served to curtail regional (provincial) differentiation.

However, an exceptionally strong lobby from those with English-language/-speaking interests (although only 8% of the population claim English as L1), together with English-speaking academics in higher education institutions, policy implementation has been delayed despite numerous national ministers of education promising to adhere to the 1997 language in education policy (Heugh, 2013).

The current Minister of Basic Education in South Africa, who announced the incremental implementation of the multilingual policy in 2014 has re-announced her commitment to this policy in June 2024—although it remains to be seen whether this will after 27 years see actual implementation.

The take-home message from the South African example is that the influence of the strong English-language lobby coupled with the current resurgence and expansion of global interest in EMI assiduously promoted by organizations such as the British Council, the Cambridge English language industry, and international English language testing regimes, including IELTS, is that the primary challenge for multilingual education has become a powerful transnational English language industry. The speed at which countries that were never colonised by Britain, or any other English-language dominant power have succumbed to the advance of EMI in higher education with inevitable washback to school education is astonishing. It is certainly not to the advantage of most citizens of low-income countries. Instead, it brings about or increases debt-trap diplomacy, and a reproduction of coloniality. Several authors have written a great deal about this, and I recommend the work of Robert Phillipson and Ruanni Tupas in this regard.

**TS:** Thank you once again for sharing your insights with us.

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## Language Activities

### From TED to Text: Developing Analytical Writing Skills of Undergraduates

*Nikita Goel*

**Skill in Focus:** Analytical Writing

**Sub Skill(s):** Critical Analysis, Argumentation, Textual Interpretation

**Level:** Undergraduates

**Estimated Time:** 60-90 minutes

**Student Group Size:** Individual or Small Groups (2-4 students)

**Aim:** To enhance students' analytical writing skills by using TED Talks as a source of material for developing critical thinking and argumentation.

#### Learning Objectives

1. To develop students' ability to critically analyze and interpret content from TED Talks.
2. To improve students' skills in constructing coherent and well-argued written responses.
3. To foster students' capacity to synthesize ideas and arguments from audio-visual materials into written form.

#### Materials

- TED Talk video ("Why You Procrastinate-and How to Stop it for Good" by Elyssa Smith)
- Transcript of the TED Talk
- Writing Prompts/Questions/Worksheets
- Paper and pens or digital writing tools

**PROCEDURE:****Pre-Writing Activities****1. Brainstorming**

The teacher will announce the title of the TED Talk, “Why You Procrastinate—and How to Stop It for Good” by Elyssa Smith, and facilitate a discussion based on the following questions:

1. Have you ever watched a Ted Talk before? If yes, what did you like about it or the speaker?
2. What does the title of the Ted Talk suggest to you? How might it relate to the main theme?
3. How does the topic of the TED Talk relate to your own experiences or interests?
4. What questions or doubts do you have about the topic that you hope the TED Talk will address?
5. What do you hope to gain from watching this TED Talk?

**2. Vocabulary Preparation**

The teacher will ask the students to review some key vocabulary words from the TED Talk. Working in pairs, they will discuss and predict the meanings of these words and try to form sentences using each one.

Key Vocabulary Word	Predicted Meaning	Sentence
Eradicate	To get rid of something completely	The government implemented new policies to <i>eradicate</i> poverty in the country.
Procrastination		
Agony		
Derail		
Trauma		
Distress		
Survival		
Ridiculous		

**Writing Activities**

The teacher will play the TED Talk and instruct students to watch it attentively. Students are encouraged to refer to the transcript if they encounter any difficulties in understanding the content. While watching, they should take notes in bullet points to capture key ideas and significant details, which will assist them in completing the subsequent writing tasks.

**1. Analytical Essay**

Write an analytical essay based on the TED Talk. Focus on the following aspects:

**I. Introduction (100-150 words)**

- Introduce the TED Talk, including the title, speaker, and main argument.
- State your thesis about the effectiveness of the TED Talk.

**II. Body Paragraphs (200-250 words each)****a) Argument Analysis**

- Analyze the main argument of the TED Talk. Is it clearly defined? Are there any potential counterarguments?

**b) Evidence Evaluation**

- Evaluate the types of evidence presented. How does the evidence support the main argument?

**c) Rhetorical Strategies**

- Examine the use of rhetorical strategies (ethos, pathos, logos). How do they enhance the speaker's argument? Provide specific examples.

**d) Presentation Style**

- Discuss the speaker's delivery and use of visual aids. How do these elements contribute to or detract from the overall effectiveness of the talk?

**III. Conclusion (100-150 words)**

- Summarize your analysis and restate your thesis.
- Reflect on the overall impact of the TED Talk and its relevance to the audience.

**Instructions:** Use the TED Talk transcript and your notes to craft your essay.

## 2. Quote Analysis

Keeping in mind the metaphors used, analyze the following quote from the TED Talk:

*“If you are running a race and you kept tripping over your shoelaces, would your solution be, ‘I’m just going to keep my band-aids right here, and every time I fall, you’re just going to dress your wounds’? No, right? I mean, you would tie your laces before the race starts. Procrastination is the band-aid. It’s the thing that makes you feel safe, but you actually have no shot at winning the race.”*

### Analysis

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## Follow-On Activity

### 1. Reflection

Write a brief reflection (200-300 words) on how analyzing this TED Talk has influenced your understanding of procrastination and motivation. Consider the following questions in your reflection:

- How has the TED Talk changed or reinforced your views on procrastination?
- What new insights have you gained about overcoming procrastination?
- In what ways has this analytical exercise enhanced your writing skills?

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## Applying Translanguaging Strategies for Crafting Situated Newspaper Reports

*Nirajana Bardhan*

**Focus:** To write a newspaper report on a local event using the entire linguistic repertoire.

**Level:** Secondary

**Strength:** 15-20 bi/multilingual ESL learners

**Time:** 120-150 minutes

### Aims

1. To develop ESL learners' situated meaning-making abilities through writing.
2. To promote writing as a process.

### Materials

- Task Prompt
- Newspaper reports published in local, national, and global dailies in English, learners' L1(s), and containing instances of codemeshing.
- Pen and paper

### Task Prompt

Write a detailed newspaper report on a local event or festival. Imagine you are writing the report for a national daily that features weekly articles on school events contributed by student reporters from across the country. Include key details like the rituals of the festival and 1, notable participants, winners, special guests (if any), performances etc.

## Procedure

Stages	Process	Objectives
<b>Pre-Production</b> 1. Warm-up	After explaining the prompt, the teacher asks learners to choose an event that has recently taken place or is typically organized at school and reflect on the details.	To set the context for the writing task.
2. Guided Free-writing	After each student has chosen their respective topics, the teacher asks them to write on it (individually) using their entire linguistic repertoire. Students are also allowed to change their topics in the middle.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To prepare learners for writing.</li> <li>• To facilitate their thinking.</li> <li>• To reduce their writing anxiety.</li> </ul>
3. Mentor Text <a href="https://www.etvbharat.com/bn/!state/durgapur-agrani-sanskritik-parishad-club-khuti-puja-2024-wbs24072802337">https://www.etvbharat.com/bn/!state/durgapur-agrani-sanskritik-parishad-club-khuti-puja-2024-wbs24072802337</a> <a href="https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kolkata/khuti-puja-kicks-off-durgostav-preps/articleshow/110022333.cms">https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kolkata/khuti-puja-kicks-off-durgostav-preps/articleshow/110022333.cms</a>	<p>The teacher provides learners with authentic Bangla and English newspaper reports and draws learners' attention to the purpose, audience and genre conventions through the following questions. (The questions can be in either L1 or English).</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Read the titles of the reports. What is this report written on?</li> <li>2. Who has written the reports?</li> <li>3. Who will read the reports? Which report is expected to be read by more people? Why?</li> <li>4. Which of these best describes the style of the reports? Tick one or more of the boxes               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal</li> <li>• Clear</li> <li>• Informal</li> <li>• Neutral</li> </ul> </li> <li>5. Look at the structure of the reports. What are common in them?</li> <li>6. Look at the introductory paragraphs of both reports. How are they different?</li> </ol> <p>After the students answer the questions in groups or pairs, the teacher discusses the answers with the whole class.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To make them read as writers.</li> <li>• To make them aware of the genre conventions of a newspaper report.</li> <li>• To draw their attention to the purpose, audience, and writing style of the reporters.</li> </ul>

<p>4. Lifting a Line</p>	<p>The teacher lifts a line from the mentor texts that use translanguaging (codemeshing) as a writing technique. She draws learners' attention to the language use through the following questions</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What did the writer do in this line?</li> <li>2. Why did the writer do so?</li> <li>3. What will you call this particular language usage/writing technique?</li> <li>4. Did you observe another writer write this way?</li> <li>5. In which context?</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To teach students to think of writing as a craft.</li> <li>• To draw their attention to translanguaging (codemeshing) as a powerful writing technique.</li> <li>• To make them aware of the situatedness of meaning.</li> </ul>
<p>5. Idea Bank</p>	<p>The teacher (along with students) creates a bank of ideas expected to be present in the text produced by the students.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To help learners organize their ideas.</li> <li>• To provide necessary linguistic support to students for completing the writing task.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Production</b> 6. Writing the first draft</p>	<p>Learners produce the first draft of the report using their entire linguistic repertoire</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To help learners get their ideas on the paper in a structured manner.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Post-Production</b> 7. Interview</p>	<p>The teacher conducts focus group interviews about learners' writing experience, the writing process, their languaging practices, and the final product.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To encourage learners to reflect on their learning process.</li> <li>• To gain insights into learners' perceptions of the process of writing and classroom instructions and give feedback accordingly.</li> </ul>

**Sample Idea Bank**

<p><b>Subparts</b></p>	<p><b>Cue questions to generate ideas</b></p>
<p><b>Content</b></p>	<p><b>What ideas to include in the report?</b>                  A catchy title                  An opening line  <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Describing the event</li> <li>2. Highlighting a key moment</li> </ol> </p>

	<p>A sequence of the happenings and highlights</p> <p>Quotes</p> <p>Ending</p> <p><b>1. A critical overview</b></p> <p><b>2. A quote</b></p>
Text Organization	<p>How will you organize the text?</p> <p>How many parts will it have?</p>
Language	<p><b>What tense do you need to include?</b></p> <p>Use <b>past tense</b> to narrate the events.</p> <p>The dialogues will have <b>present tense</b>.</p> <p>Pay attention to <b>subject verb agreement</b>.</p> <p>Use <b>linkers</b> to connect ideas (<i>but, however, then, after that</i>)</p>

### Comments

The task will promote writing as a process rooted in learners' local contexts. It will enable teachers to use learners' L1(s) systematically in the teaching of writing. Evaluation will prioritize task completion and meaning-making rather than imitating prescribed standardized norms. Errors will be identified through discussion with learners about their language choices and languaging practices. Any notable inconsistency in the instances of (trans) languaging can be considered an error rather than a personal variation of English. In the end, learners will become critically aware of the translanguaging strategies (like codemeshing) used in authentic writing contexts and purposefully use them in their own processes and products.

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## Book Reviews

**Melo-Pfeifer, S. (Ed.),** *Linguistic Landscapes in Language and Teacher Education: Multilingual Teaching and Learning Inside and Beyond the Classroom.* Springer, 2023, ISBN 978-3-031-22866-7; ISBN 978-3-031-22867-4 (eBook)

*Reviewed by Mukti Sanyal*

Reading *Linguistic Landscapes in Language and Teacher Education* edited by Silva Melo-Pfeifer proved to be an interesting experience on several counts. It is a collection of researches that teachers-cum-researchers did with the students they were teaching, I was excited. The numbers in their classes are really small; their linguistic demographic is very different; their student expectation from education are more nuanced and pedagogical tools they use are also very different. My curiosity of how they negotiate the space between teaching and research was something I was very keen to understand.

The assumption of the group whose work is represented in the book is that language that is displayed in public spaces is useful for pedagogic purposes and more; though, this is not the view that some scholars take and empirically show. The basic premise that the LoCALL (<http://localproject.eu/>) project takes is that Linguistic Landscapes (LL) manifests the multilingual reality in which we live and can be effectively used for language learning.

A few words about what Linguistic Landscapes (LL) is. Earlier, the area of study that is now commonly referred to as “language landscapes,” was referred to in a variety of ways, for example, “language of advertising,” “language of public spaces.” In the account of LL that the editor gives in her introductory essay and Durk Gorter, University of the Basque Country, Spain gives in the foreword, the present avatar emerged from Masters and PhD thesis, like Tulp’s in 1978 and is yet a popular topic for dissertations and other academic writing. Its early precursors were Spolsky and Cooper (1991).

LL can be broadly understood as language, signs, images, etc. that are available in public spaces and are “potentially read by multiple viewers” (Schmitt, 2020). Other terms like ‘public language,’ ‘spatial language’ have emerged in the literature which culls out different

aspects, theoretical and methodological tools. In brief, with LL we have moved beyond traditional linguistics of phonology, morphology, syntax to multilingualism, writing systems and onomastics.

The empirical studies in this volume demonstrate the success of Language Landscape as a pedagogic tool in a wide variety of context and countries. By perceiving and scrutinising the real-life manifestations of multilingualism around us, language awareness can be raised; starting points for valuing the presence of various languages and linguistic resources in mother tongue, foreign, second and other languages can be created. It favours active discussions on language hierarchies, linguistic prestige, comparisons of languages, translanguaging, development of linguistic repertoires, etc.

Though proponents and practitioners of Linguistic Landscapes believe that it should be treated as a “linguistics genre” and developments within it as occurring in three waves –quantitative, qualitative and critical; there are those who show that those claims do not stand scrutiny, for example, Swales,1990. LL, is at best, an umbrella term for a complex assemblage of diverse theoretical approaches. Interestingly, a wide array of writings such as those on vehicles, clothing, bags, tombstones, stickers, tattoos, graffiti, etc. are subjects of its scrutiny.

What I think is a takeaway from this volume is the ingenious and doable ways that researches are being conceived of, conducted and reported. To take a random example from the many that are reported here, Klaudia A. Kruszynska and Melinda Dooly demonstrate how a team of self-reflexive research and teacher use a small set of 5 LL tasks with 17 students to make students aware of the LL in their communities, which in turn enhances their metacognitive skills and understanding of their sociocultural milieu. The student thinking aloud transcripts show how linguistic landscapes-based projects for higher-order and critical thinking skills gave them authentic real life learnings life skill which would help them in the fast moving, ever-changing work-life scenarios that they will necessarily have to face. Perhaps the best illustration comes from the chapter by Oyama, Moore and Pearce in which they show how the Japanese six-grade student Y<sup>-</sup>uki becomes a co-researcher of his own language and literacy practices. By walking and taking pictures, the child starts to make discoveries, raises questions about language and explores the diversity of his local environment. Real-life material can provide an engaging way to teach about literacy and language

awareness, and educational purposes can be served by making active use of the linguistic landscape.

Finally, reading Josh Prada's and other articles in this collection made me aware of the many newer methodologies that can be used to do and report research findings. Prada, for example, in "Sensescapes and What it Means for Language Education" talks about having had to adopt "new roles that flowed between learner (as they explained to me their perspectives on the market), senser (as I attuned to the various stimuli they called upon while inviting me to make sense of the environment in the same ways they did), and researcher (as I tried to pursue—but still adapt—the original objectives of the project)." I was really floored by the extent of innovation, inclusion and knowledge formation that a single volume contains. It is a must read for any researcher!

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**King, L., *The Impact of Multilingualism on Global Education and Language Learning*. Cambridge Assessment English Perspectives. UCLES, The Languages Company, 2018.**

*Reviewed by P. Jani Reddy*

In the context of globalization, the world is becoming more multilingual than ever before owing to migration of people for economic reasons and technological enabled communication. People are migrating within a country or outside their countries and forced to communicate in a language other than their native language. In this backdrop, the English language is gradually occupying its place as a link language or a global language. Now, learning of the English language moved from elite status to aspirational language and people across the world started thinking about the value of English knowledge to succeed in life. Many countries are moving towards English medium education at all levels to meet the aspirations of their people. In this backdrop, the

English language has become a lingua franca and its scale and influence is unprecedented in world history. The language policies of the nations are also gaining significant importance in their education institutions due to multilingualism and multiculturalism of the societies.

The book is divided into five sections. The first section of the book deals with definitions of multilingualism and plurilingualism and the attitude of people towards the use of languages. The second section of the book addresses the multilingual landscape of societies across the globe. Historically multilingualism was the norm in many countries like Europe, India, China, Africa and America and at the same time some countries in Europe and other parts of the world maintained their linguistic hegemony and continued as monolingual to maintain their culture. In recent times new nation states have emerged on linguistic grounds. Monolingualism has been promoted by dominant groups and has posed a great challenge to the languages of indigenous, regional, local and immigrant minorities worldwide. Despite the existence of several languages a majority of countries recognize only one language for legal and official purposes, and even where several languages are officially recognized, one is usually dominant carrying 'disproportionate amounts of social, economic and political power. The globalization of many cities in the world emerging as cosmopolites, represent the multilingualism culture. In these cases, policy may be directed firstly towards language education at school and university, in particular in relation to the major languages of international communication, and secondly towards the provision of multilingual services and information for visitors. Significantly these cities and states will often choose to use English as the recognized 'hyper-central' language.

The third section of the book highlights the role of the English language in the context of globalization and multilingualism. Most observers now agree that English has effectively become the global language and that its role is unprecedented in world history. It is probably not too controversial to say that English has acquired this 'hyper-central' role not because it is a superior or intrinsically more useful language, but as a reflection of geo-political realities. In many countries English is said to be the first foreign language in 100 per cent of secondary curricula but there is a huge gap between the demand and supply in terms of the number of students enrolled in English medium schools and the availability of trained teachers, material and infrastructure facilities.

The fourth section of the book examines the trends and issues in multilingual education. The book mentioned the 1975 Bullock Report (A Language for Life) which argued that language was more than just a subject in schools but, in fact, the key to learning across the whole curriculum. Language is used in every subject area both to impart and acquire knowledge and understanding. In that sense it was said by Bullock that “every teacher is a teacher of language.” In the context of multilingualism, children from diverse groups are attending school and school language is different from that of knowledge of language that they bring to school. There is a huge gap in the cognition of children if their conversational language is different from that of the academic language. In many countries there is an immense vacuum in terms of language policy, especially when the school language differs from children’s mother tongue or the national language of the country. The book suggests that children have the ability to acquire two or three languages at the same time. Mother tongue or local language should be given preference at initial level and later English can be introduced for academic development and English language should not pose any problems to the local or national languages. It mentions some approaches like the use of mother tongue, individual support, CLIL and translanguaging for improving competence of English language.

The fifth and final section provides the recommendations for national systemic change in the context of growing cities and multilingualism. It suggests three areas which policy makers should consider - the validation of multilingualism, providing resources to protect the cultural and economic activities and provision of translation and interpreting services and educational opportunities for all citizens, particularly in relation to language.

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**Mishra, M. K., *Erai Erai: Multilingual Education in Tribal Schools of India: Voices from Below*. Manak Publication Pvt. Ltd., 2024, ISBN 13: 9789391897949**

*Reviewed by Blessy K. Benny*

*Erai Erai Multilingual Education in Tribal Schools of India: Voices from Below* is a profound experiential account that delves into the intricate realities driving policy formulation and implementation in the realm of multilingual education (MLE) in the tribal regions of Odisha and other areas like Chhattisgarh. The book, authored by an experienced practitioner, who offers a rich narrative of the challenges and successes encountered in the quest to make education meaningful for tribal children.

This book is divided into nine chapters. The first two chapters trace the evolution in educational policies in language and literacy education from post-independent times and its impact on tribal children. They also talk about the prejudices and resistance that the author and his team experienced in taking the ideas of MLE forward. The book offers due value and recognition to the languages spoken by the Scheduled Tribes, thus subverting the dominance of the language of power. Though there are multiple arguments in favour of using a child's home language in the classrooms for making learning contextual and meaningful, the book reveals that the tribal community looks at these as efforts to restrict their social mobility. Therefore, the book with its critical lens deliberates upon the efforts that wish to acquaint the people in power from these communities with the rationale of MLE.

A significant portion of the book is dedicated to addressing the need for sensitizing teachers to the cultural and linguistic contexts of their students through comprehensive training programmes designed to equip teachers with the necessary skills and knowledge to navigate the challenges of classrooms in tribal areas. The work was not limited to training the teachers in tribal areas, but also to developing a primer with thirty-two lessons. These primers represent a practical application of the training and prove to be crucial tools in making education more accessible and relevant to tribal children.

The next two chapters inform us about the demographic realities and associated diversities, and how MLE gives space to the community

knowledge in the classroom. Folklore, plays, arts and crafts, songs, etc. are elaborated as resources that can be used in teaching of various subjects. A detailed account of the Srujan programme that welcomes storytellers and community leaders is also highlighted. The classroom becomes more learner-centric, as these become the forum for learners to engage with their experiences, emotions, creativity, and imagination. In chapters seven and eight, we see how the teaching-learning strategies from MLE in Odisha are integrated in diverse subjects and topics. The aim was to develop a learning community that was not limited to teachers and learners, but involved the parents, community members and officials of the state as well. This made learning “a joint productive activity.”

The book acknowledges the debate around the language of the children and the medium of instruction. It is also imperative to understand the social conditions and the learning environment of the child. As the book notes, every chore and activity the tribal communities engage in, has inherent utility value. This deeply ingrained connection to their everyday tasks makes traditional schooling, which often detaches them from their native languages and cultural practices, seem unnatural and alien.

The narrative begins in Odisha, where a linguistic survey conducted two decades ago revealed critical insights into the language barriers faced by both children and teachers. For the children, the language of the school was alien, and for the teachers, the language of the child’s home was equally foreign. This mutual alienation created a hostile and ineffective learning environment. So, the book takes us through the process of addressing the ethnic stereotypes and biases that teachers often harboured, which lead to the creation of a supportive and inclusive educational environment.

One of the striking aspects of the book is its emphasis on the practical discourse that the author and his team experienced during the planning and implementation phases of MLE programmes. While the book does not shy away from discussing the theoretical underpinnings of MLE, it is the practical insights and real-world experiences that make it particularly valuable.

Overall, this book is an invaluable resource for scholars, teachers, teacher educators, policymakers, and researchers interested in language

and literacy education. Its rich narrative, grounded in practical experience, offers a realistic portrayal of the challenges and successes in implementing MLE policies in tribal areas. This book showcases how various stakeholders in education can come together to defeat the culture of silence in the classroom. By focusing on MLE, the book highlights that the curriculum should be tailored to the needs of the children, thereby fostering an inclusive and empowering learning environment.

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## Reports

### 1. First Eurasian Congress of Linguists

The First Eurasian Congress of Linguists, organized by the Russian Academy of Sciences and supported by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Russian Federation, took place in Moscow to celebrate the 300th anniversary of the Russian Academy of Sciences. This global event aimed to foster collaboration among linguists and share cutting-edge research in the field of linguistics. It brought together over 1,000 scholars, with numerous plenary sessions, oral presentations, round table discussions, and poster sessions focusing on various linguistic topics.

#### Overview of the Congress

The Congress covered diverse linguistic disciplines, including sociolinguistics, psycho- and neurolinguistics, computational linguistics, language typology, and studies on numerous language families worldwide. Its objectives included:

- Addressing significant linguistic problems globally.
- Introducing young researchers to recent advancements in linguistic studies.
- Facilitating public discussions on linguistic diversity and socially significant topics.

Prominent scholars like Alexey A. Gippius, Ayesha Kidwai, and Johanna Nichols were among the plenary speakers, and presentations were conducted in both Russian and other foreign languages.

#### Dr. Mishra's Contribution

Dr. Mahendra Kumar Mishra, a trustee and National Advisor of the Language and Learning Foundation (LLF), represented India with his presentation titled, "**Overcoming Linguistic Challenges in Multilingual Societies: The Case of Odisha's MLE Initiative.**" His session highlighted the transformative role of Multilingual Education (MLE) in overcoming linguistic challenges in diverse societies, using Odisha as a successful case study.

**Key Points from Dr. Mishra's Presentation:****1. Challenges in Multilingual Societies:**

- Language barriers in education often lead to high dropout rates, cultural marginalization, and a decline in linguistic diversity.
- Tribal children in India, especially in regions like Odisha, face significant challenges when their home languages are not used in classrooms.

**2. MLE as a Transformative Approach:**

- MLE involves initiating instruction in a child's mother tongue before transitioning to other languages. This methodology fosters better understanding and improves educational outcomes.
- It empowers marginalized communities by preserving linguistic and cultural heritage.

**3. The Odisha Model:**

- Dr. Mishra showcased the success of MLE in Odisha, where it led to increased enrollment and retention rates, revitalized tribal languages, and enhanced the self-esteem of tribal children.
- Odisha's MLE initiative exemplifies how integrating local languages into education can yield tangible benefits for both individuals and communities.

**4. Broader Implications:**

- The Odisha model serves as an inspiration for similar multilingual regions worldwide. It demonstrates how MLE can address systemic challenges in education while preserving cultural identities.

**Broader Impact and Recognition**

Dr. Mishra's insights have significant implications for global education systems facing similar linguistic and cultural challenges. The Indian government, with LLF's support, has expanded MLE initiatives to seven states, showcasing its commitment to promoting equitable and inclusive education.

**Conclusion**

The Congress provided a platform for experts like Dr. Mishra to share innovative approaches to complex linguistic challenges. The Odisha

MLE initiative, presented as a case study, highlighted the importance of linguistic inclusivity in education, inspiring potential adoption in other multilingual regions globally. This aligns with the broader goals of the Congress to address pressing linguistic problems and celebrate the diversity of languages as a vital component of human heritage.

## **2. Writing Centre Initiative Report**

### **University of Delhi, 2023-2024**

The Writing Centre was established at the Institute of Life Long Learning (ILLL), University of Delhi, through the collaborative efforts of Professors Veena Kapur, Minakshi Lahkar, and Tasneem Shahnaaz. The initiative, fully funded by ONGCF, conducted two rounds of 8-week Academic Writing Programmes in both English and Hindi for University undergraduates during February 2023 and February 2024. The innovative writing skills development program emerged as a groundbreaking educational initiative that strategically addressed critical gaps in public education, seamlessly aligning with both National Education Policy 2020 and UN Sustainable Development Goal 4. By leveraging an accessible online delivery model and implementing nuanced multilingual approaches, the program successfully transcended traditional educational barriers, empowering marginalized students across diverse caste and gender demographics throughout the National Capital Region.

Multiple online meetings and an offline orientation session were conducted to train tutors on Writing Centre concepts and tutoring methodologies. Forty students (in two batches) joined the course. They were supported by 24 tutors. The weekly schedule included two interactive online classes (Monday and Wednesday) along with individual half-hour tutoring sessions for each student. There were weekly assignments for the participants with detailed feedback by the dedicated tutors. The feedback mechanism comprising of one-on-one tutoring after each session proved to be highly successful. The flexible scheduling and the small classroom size accommodated diverse student needs.

This 'Beyond the Classroom' initiative, holistically enhanced students' writing capabilities, critical thinking skills, and scholarly competencies,

ultimately fostering enhanced job-readiness and creating pathways for academic growth. At least three students published papers in different journals after completing this course. The program's profound impact and success was eloquently celebrated through valedictory functions at the Institute of Life Long Learning (ILLL), University of Delhi in April 2023 and April 2024, marking a significant milestone in inclusive and transformative education.

### 3. A Talk by Dr Anita Charles

The Writing Centre, in partnership with FORTELL, hosted an online talk titled "What's a teacher to Do? The Impact of Artificial Intelligence on Teaching and Learning Language" on May 23, 2024. The speaker was Professor Anita Charles, Director of Teacher Education at Bates College, Maine, USA. Her presentation was a thought-provoking exploration of the various dimensions of artificial intelligence's transformative impact on language education.

Professor Charles's presentation addressed the ongoing debate surrounding AI technologies like ChatGPT, Cognil, and OpenAI in education. She emphasized the crucial role teachers play in guiding students toward ethical and judicious use of AI tools in their academic pursuits. Professor Charles illuminated the delicate balance between embracing technological innovations, while preserving the human elements of teaching and not becoming overly dependent on these tools. The speaker masterfully navigated the complex terrain of AI integration, offering nuanced pedagogical recommendations that emphasize ethical tool usage, strategic implementation, and the critical importance of maintaining students' independent learning and critical thinking skills.

The event attracted an audience of 80 English language and literature teachers of schools and colleges, who are mostly members of FORTELL. The session was moderated by distinguished professors Tasneem Shahnaaz, Veena Kapur, and Minakshi Lahkar. It underscored the urgent need for educators to proactively shape AI's role in academic settings, ensuring that technology empowers rather than replaces the fundamental art of teaching. The presentation concluded with an engaging question-and-answer session, allowing participants to delve deeper into this timely and relevant topic.

# Call for Papers

*Fortell*, Issue 52 (January 2026)

## Special Issue on

### **Drama and Theatre in India: Performance and Pedagogy**

Exciting new developments are taking place in the field of drama and theatre that explore theatrical spaces, dramatic genres, styles and techniques. However, scholarship in these fields has been slow to take off, particularly with regard to modern and contemporary drama and theatre practices though a spate of recent books and articles are attempting to remedy that situation. Moreover, drama is an integral part of the syllabi of almost all literature courses in India, yet we do not have well defined strategies for teaching it in our schools and colleges.

It is said that a play comes to life only in the theatre and yet drama and theatre seem to live in separate compartments. Can we bring the two together? The role of media and technology and new forms like online theatre, installation art, performance events and stand-up comedy have also changed the nature and scope of theatre. Also, theatre is, more and more, being used as a pedagogic tool, shifting the focus from its performative aspect to concentrate on its ability to enhance verbal and non-verbal communication, collaborative working and an awareness of the body, things which are mostly ignored in conventional teaching methods.

The January 2026 issue of *Fortell* invites original and unpublished papers that look at new developments and debates in drama and theatre; consider the complex relationship between text and performance and the literary and performative functions of plays and their pedagogic implications. Submissions need not be restricted to some sub-themes mentioned below:

- Drama, Theatre and Communication
- Performance, Process and Pedagogy: Drama/Theatre in Education
- Dramaturgy and Technology
- Drama and the Politics of Representation
- Theatre and the Politics of Presentation
- Acting and Acting out: Psychoanalysis and Drama
- Theatrolgy/ Dramaturgy: Semiotics and Syntax
- Evolving Genres: From Folk to Urban, Physical to Virtual, Poetic to Non-verbal
- Modes of spectatorship

- Metatheatre

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**Guidelines for submission**

Soft copies of research papers not exceeding 4000 words inclusive of abstract in 100-150 words, 5-6 key words and references, book reviews (750-1000 words), language games/activities (400-500 words) should be sent along with a brief bio-note of about 30 words; to be submitted through the Google form link <https://forms.gle/it9LXe7EwMUxY2ft8>

A copy of the submission should also be mailed to the Coordinating Editor at [fortell.journal@gmail.com](mailto:fortell.journal@gmail.com). Articles should conform to the 7th edition of APA style sheet in format, citations, and references. Please look up the website <https://www.fortell.org/> regarding guidelines for submission. Any manuscript not following the submission guidelines or incomplete in any respect will not be considered for publication. The contributors should also give a declaration (as per the Contributor's Declaration Performa) that (i) the paper is original and does not violate the copyright law; (ii) it has not been published in any form elsewhere before; (iii) it has not been submitted for publication elsewhere. The contributors should clearly indicate their name, email address, mobile number and complete mailing address with the pin code in the google form.

If the submission is selected for publication, the author will have to submit a plagiarism report as and when asked. Select articles of general interest to teachers of language and literature will be published. The decision of the editors/reviewers would be final.

**NOTE: Beware of any fraudulent advertisement/person charging fees for guaranteed publication in fortell. Please note that FORTELL does not charge any publication/processing fees and follows a stringent blind peer review process.**

**Last date for submission: May 1, 2025 to June 30, 2025**

**Guest Editors**

*Dr Gitanjali Chawla*, Professor, Department of English, Maharaja Agrasen College, University of Delhi.

*Dr Promodini Varma*, Professor (Retd.) Department of English, Bharati College, University of Delhi.

## About FORTELL

**FORTELL** (Forum for Teachers of English Language and Literature), an autonomous organization was set up in 1989 in Delhi by about a hundred teachers of English. From its humble beginnings three decades ago, it has grown to nearly 500 members from schools and colleges across the country. It is an internationally recognized body and is an affiliate of TESOL (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages), USA and an associate of IATEFL (International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language), UK.

**FORTELL** has organized numerous workshops and seminars over the years in areas of teaching methodology, materials development and curriculum design for professional development of teachers of English. Its resource persons are academically recognized for training programmes in English Studies. Moreover the journal published by **FORTELL** is its most visually recognized face in academia. *Fortell* is a bi-annual peer-reviewed journal available in both print (ISSN 2229-6557) and online (ISSN 2394-9244) versions and is included in the UGC CARE list. It has published 48 issues so far, and the entire archive through its open access policy is available on the website ([www.fortell.org](http://www.fortell.org)). The journal, with its thrust on pedagogical issues, is a pioneer in attempting to bridge the fields of literature and language and in linking theoretical concerns with classroom practices. Catering to both college and school teachers, it plays a significant role as an interface between school teaching and higher education.

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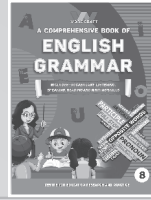
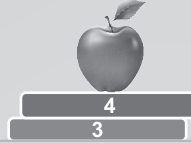
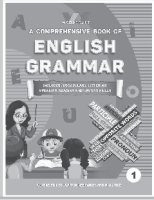
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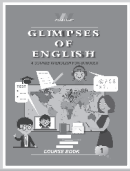
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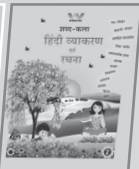
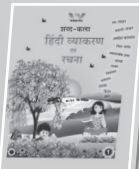
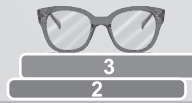
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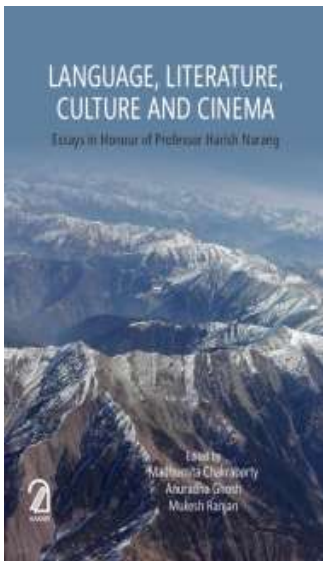
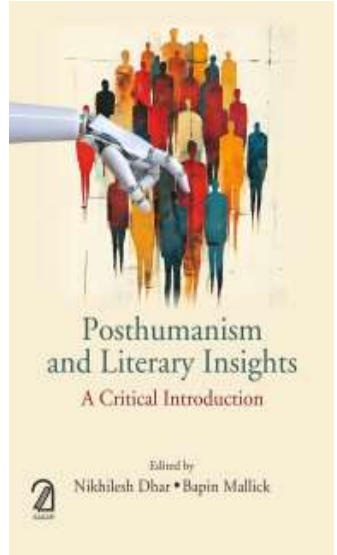
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