Multilingual Education in India

Early Literacy Initiative Resource Book 1

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TATA TRUSTS

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Published by Early Literacy Initiative,
Azim Premji School of Education,
Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Hyderabad.

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Suggested Citation: Menon, S., Sinha, S., Das, H. V., & Pydah, A. (Eds.). (2019).
Multilingual Education in India. Hyderabad: Early Literacy Initiative, Tata Institute of Social Sciences.

Copy Editor: Chetana Divya Vasudev

Cover Photography: MLE+ intervention in Odisha by Ajit Mohanty and Minati Panda.
Courtesy: Shivani Nag, 2014

Layout and Design: Zinc & Broccoli, enquiry@zandb.in

This Resource Book is part of a series brought out by the Early Literacy Initiative anchored by the Azim Premji School of Education at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Hyderabad.

Introduction

That Indian children are not learning to read or write proficiently is fairly widely known. The ASER annual reports document this dismal picture year after year—with little improvement over time. “Fixing” early literacy is not easy. The solutions don’t lie in simplistically finding the “right methods”, or teaching the “right skills”. Early literacy and language learning in India occur in complex landscapes characterised by rich linguistic diversity, and riddled with deep socioeconomic divides, poor teacher education, and a somewhat poorly functioning educational system. Debates related to issues such as medium of instruction, language planning and policy making abound. In this context, there is an urgent need to facilitate conversations around important issues as well as to contribute to knowledge creation and dissemination.

The Early Literacy Initiative (ELI) is a project anchored by the Azim Premji School of Education at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Hyderabad with a view to address the need for building awareness and knowledge related to early language and literacy in India. The initiative is funded by the Tata Trusts.

ELI undertook two kinds of print-based initiatives to address the need for disseminating knowledge in a usable form for practitioners – the creation and distribution of thematic blogs and practitioner briefs. This work is available at the ELI website: http://eli.tiss.edu/, and is also compiled into ELI Resource Books.

Thematic Blogs. Five themes were identified as centrally relevant to the domain of early language and literacy in India (see below). We invited original blog pieces related to each theme from a variety of stakeholders working in the domain—from practitioners to academics. Members of the ELI team also wrote pieces for these themes. Care was taken to address various aspects of each theme through the invited pieces. While putting together the themes, the ELI team created brief annotated bibliographies for each. Talks, presentations, essays and opinion pieces by ELI team members related to each theme were also collected. A total of 45 original blog pieces and approximately 150 annotations were created across the five themes and are represented in the five ELI Resource Books.

The five books are:

ELI Resource Book 1. Multilingual Education in India (this book)

ELI Resource Book 2. Children’s Literature

ELI Resource Book 3. Children’s Writing

ELI Resource Book 4. Decoding the Script

ELI Resource Book 5. Comprehension

Practitioner Briefs. The blog pieces, while written in an easy-to-access style, are more focused on building perspectives. On the other hand, the practitioner briefs are a collection of “How-tos” for people working in the field. The briefs draw upon perspectives to help practitioners imagine relevant practices on the ground. A total of 21 briefs are compiled into seven thematic booklets. Each thematic booklet consists of a set of three to four briefs.

While both blog pieces and practitioner briefs were written originally in English, the intent is to eventually translate them into regional languages to make them widely available to practitioners. We hope that this consolidation of original and accessible writings on early language and literacy for Indian contexts will be of help in your work!

Once upon a time, words began to vanish
from the language of children. They disappeared so
quietly that at first almost no one noticed – fading away
like water on a stone. The words were those that children
used to name the natural world around them: acorn, adder,
bluebell, bramble, conker – gone! Fern, heather, kingfisher,
otter, raven, willow, wren…all of them gone! The words
were becoming lost: no longer vivid in children's voices,
no longer alive in their stories.

Robert Macfarlane (The Lost Words, 2017)

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BLOG PIECES

Introduction to the Theme – Multilingual Education in India

Shailaja Menon

In our first theme, we attempt to comprehensively cover different aspects of multilingualism. In this piece, Shailaja Menon outlines the flow of the pieces and other resources to follow.

India is richly multilingual, home to thousands of mother tongues, only a few of which find mention in official policy documents, or are taught in school (see Figure 1). Practitioners and academics working in the domain of early language and literacy run up first, last, and always into issues related to multilingualism. For many, these pose a deep dilemma.

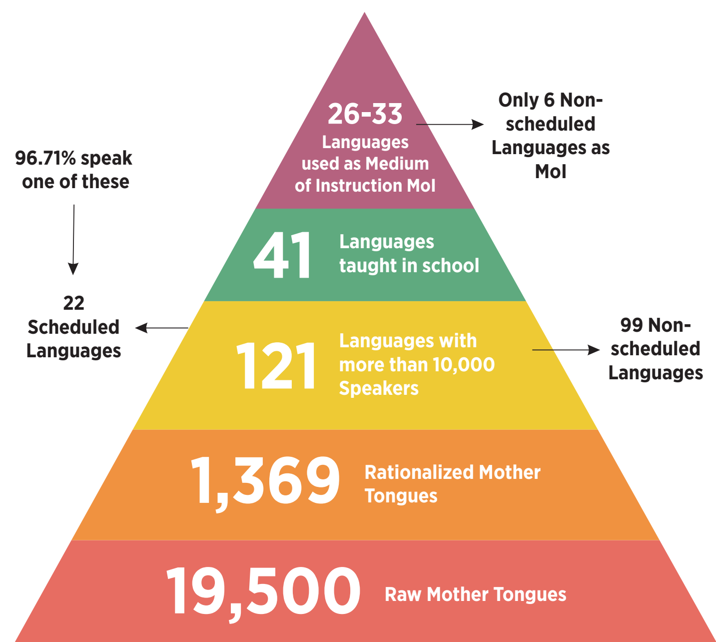

Figure 1. Linguistic landscape of India.*

* Data taken from Census 2011. Retrieved from http://www.censusindia.gov.in/2011Census/Language_MTs.html

Figure 2. Overlapping languages can often be observed in freely flowing classroom conversations.
Image Courtesy: Telugu Intervention Study, ELI, TISS Hyderabad.

The title of Dhir Jhingran's (2009) chapter in the book *Social Justice through Multilingual Education* captures the situation, "Hundreds of home languages and many in most classrooms…" What are educators and those interested in early language and literacy to make of this?

This is a burning issue for both practice and academics and, hence, is taken up as the first theme of ELI's blog and resources sections – describing the contextual realities of linguistically diverse Indian classrooms. Saktibrata Sen describes this complex setting in his blog piece, where several *overlapping* languages leave him wondering exactly which language the child is speaking.

Many related issues get rolled into the topic of multilingualism, such that there is a lack of clarity on what the term means. At their core, each of these issues and their proponents are trying to articulate their sense of how best to teach and learn in multilingual contexts and classrooms, hence the term multilingualism.

Here we describe many issues and concerns that characterise conversations around multilingual education in India.

Multilingual Education

Do we consider multilingualism as simply the context in which we all work (and therefore have to deal with the challenges it poses to education), or do we see it as a goal and resource of our society? Do we wish to remain a multilingual society, maintaining our linguistic diversity, preserving the varied language and knowledge systems? Or do we merely "problem-solve" multilingualism in the classroom?

If we wish to simply problem-solve multilingualism, then our task is to find ways to support learners in the classroom (which, in itself, is a complex issue). But, if we want to consciously remain a multilingual society, we would have to invest a significant amount of time, energy and resources in policy making, teacher education, curriculum development, and so on. This is an issue of normative vision, one which Ajit Mohanty and his colleagues highlight in their book *Multilingual Education for Social Justice* (2009). Devaki Lakshminarayan helps us understand five different models of multilingual education, classified on the basis of their educational intent and pedagogy in her blog piece.

Mother Tongues in the Classroom

All the position papers, experts and committees in our country are united in saying that the mother tongue should serve as the medium of instruction in elementary school classrooms. There are strong pedagogical, psychological and societal reasons for this recommendation. Giridhar Rao's blog piece advocates the use of mother tongues in the classroom, citing compelling research evidence for it.

Yet we know that the reality is that a large number of children are learning in classrooms that use an "other tongue" and not the mother tongue.

What are practitioners to do in such a situation? First, most classrooms favour the use of the regional language (e.g. Hindi) over the mother tongues of children (e.g. Marwari). So, at best, mother tongues can be used as informal supplements in the classroom. Second, even if policy makers gave teachers the permission, curricular materials and time to use mother tongues in early language classrooms, would they be used to help students merely "transition" to the standard (regional) language? Or would they be used with an intent to foster the mother tongues for their own sake? Also, how can a teacher who doesn't know the mother tongues of all the students in the classroom teach through the mother tongues? Is it realistic to expect governments to produce curricular materials and provide teacher education for all the mother tongues in a state?

मातृभाषा की मौत

माँ के मुँह में ही
मातृभाषा को कैद कर दिया गया
और बच्चे
उसकी रिहाई की माँग करते करते
बड़े हो गए।

मातृभाषा खुद नहीं मरी थी
उसे मारा गया था
पर, माँ यह कभी न जान सकी।
रोटियों के सपने
दिखाने वाली संभावनाओं के आगे
अपने बच्चों के लिए उसने
भींच लिए थे अपने दाँत
और उन निवालों के सपनों के नीचे
दब गई थी मातृभाषा।
माँ को लगता है आज भी
एक दुर्घटना थी
मातृभाषा की मौत...।

Death of the Mother Tongue

In the very mouth of mother,
was immured the mother tongue
And children
came of age,
demanding its release from this prison.

A natural death it was not,
the mother tongue was slain,
But to mother unbeknown it remained.
In view of the possibilities,
Luring with dreams of bread and butter,
She had bitten her tongue against
better judgement
For the sake of her children's future.
And crushed beneath those dreams
of a few morsels
Was the mother tongue.
Even today mother believes,
That the death of the mother tongue
Was a mere accident, unforeseen.

Matribhasha by
Jacinta Kerketta*

These are stubborn questions related to societal vision, commitment, policy-making and practice, which don't have easy answers. Nivedita Bedadur describes the pedagogical struggles of children learning in classrooms that exclude their mother tongue, and provides a starter list of ideas that teachers could use to help children *bridge* from home to school languages.

Second Language Learning

Given these complexities, many Indian children are not provided with instruction in their mother tongues. Hence, they are second-language learners in the classroom.

What are the common challenges faced by second language learners in the classroom, and how can teachers, administrators and policy makers help such students succeed? While we do not have a blog piece dedicated to this, some annotated reading resources provided in this book may have answers for the interested practitioner.

* Source: Kerketta, J. (2008). Matribhasha . In *Jadon ki Zameen/Land of the Roots*. New Delhi: Bharatiya Jnanpith.

Teaching and learning based issues in classrooms where children come with many languages, but there is only one medium of instruction:

- Teacher difficulties in communicating with the learners
- Challenges in learner comprehension
- Exclusion of children's prior knowledge
- Exclusion of children's experiences, ideas, thoughts and emotions
- Exclusion of children's social and cultural identities
- Delegitimisation of children's mother tongues and oral language repertoire

English Medium Instruction

An increasing number of parents in contemporary India want English medium instruction for their children. Even if they cannot afford it, they are willing to withdraw their children from government schools and enroll them into private schools to access English.

Under this pressure, many government schools across the country now offer English from the primary grades as a second language; and many are also switching to English as the medium of instruction. What are we to make of this? How are we to navigate it in a context where teachers themselves are ill prepared to teach English and children lack access to spoken English in their environments? While the cognitive, socio-emotional and pedagogical arguments against English as medium of instruction have been articulated over and over again by scholars, educators and policy-makers alike, the political or economic aspiration for English is real and deserves our attention. The Dalit argument, in particular, is a powerful one – can we justify and live with an "English for the classes, mother tongue for the masses" position? At the same time, can we ignore the equally real pedagogical, developmental and cultural arguments against English?

Bourdieu (1991) draws our attention to the fact that while the education system generally fails to provide students from subordinated groups in society with knowledge of, and access to, the legitimate language, it succeeds in teaching them recognition of (or misrecognition of) its legitimacy (1991: 62).

Source: Bourdieu, P. (as cited in Janks, 2009)

Shuchi Sinha describes the argument for English in her piece; while Parthasarathi Misra provides a few strategies for using multilingualism as a resource in the English language classroom.

These, and several other questions, run deep through conversations related to multilingualism. Our goal is not to emerge with one common understanding of these issues, but to develop a shared and evolving understanding of the issues, concerns and positions.

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Mohanty, A., Panda, M., Phillipson, R., and Skutnabb-Kangas, T. (Eds.). (2009). *Multilingual education for social justice: Globalising the local.* New Delhi, India: Orient Blackswan.

Which Language do you Speak? – Linguistic Diversity in Sirohi, Rajasthan

Saktibrata Sen

Languages are not as separate from each other as we might think. In fact, they exist along a continuum, where the boundaries between two languages often remain blurred. When this linguistic diversity enters classrooms through children, it presents an interesting and richly complex set of circumstances for thinkers and practitioners of education. Saktibrata Sen describes such a situation in his blog piece.

Sirohi is the district headquarters of Sirohi District in Rajasthan. Abu Road is the biggest city and the financial hub of the district. It is bordered on the west by Jalor, on the north by Pali, and on the east by Udaipur. On the south of Sirohi is the Banas Kantha District of Gujarat.

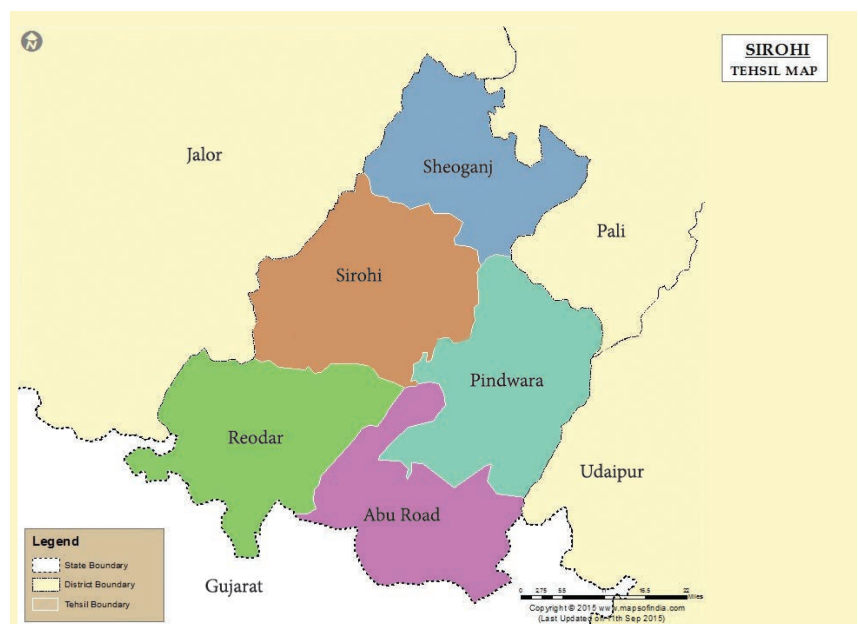

Figure 3. Tehsils and neighbouring districts of Sirohi.[1]

[1] Retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Tehsils_In_Sirohi_District.jpg

Sirohi District is broken up by hills and rocky ranges. The ranges of Mount Abu, running from north-east to south-west, divide the district in two. The south and south-east parts of the district, which lie between Mount Abu and the main spine of the Aravallis, are mountainous and rugged, and drained by the West Banas River. Sirohi has been home to various tribal communities and is historically known for brilliant craftsmanship in sword making.

The organisation I work with, *Room to Read*, got an opportunity to work in a few schools in Sirohi. When we were setting up classes for early language and literacy learning, as well as libraries for children in Sirohi, we encountered a linguistic complexity in the region that was intriguing. It seemed that people in the region seamlessly traversed among three or more languages in their daily social transactions.

If one asked officials in Sirohi, they would claim to speak Hindi, while it was apparent that the regional language was Marwari. And then there were the various home languages which share many linguistic similarities with Marwari and Hindi. It seemed like people there happily situated themselves along a linguistic continuum. I went from school to school, asking myself, "Which language do they speak?"

They switched from language to language effortlessly and often, and perhaps even unconsciously. So I wondered – was I imagining separate linguistic communities? Was it one language or was it a language continuum that I was witnessing, with at least four kinds of variations?

Figure 4. A classroom in Sirohi. **Image Courtesy:** Azim Premji Foundation, Sirohi, Rajasthan.

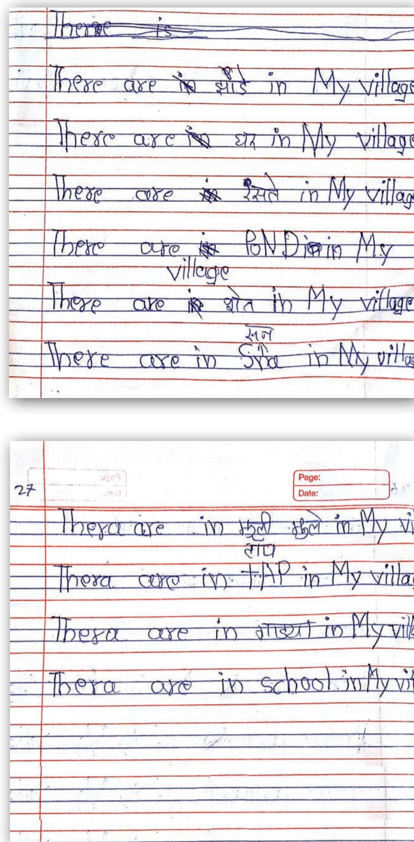

Figure 5. Example of translanguaging where a child uses English and Marathi while writing.
Image Courtesy: Riya Parikh, 2018

To answer this question, *Room to Read* commissioned a research to the Zakir Hussain Center for Education, Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), Delhi. The team, headed by the distinguished Prof. Minati Panda, brought back interesting insights.

The analysis of the data (Panda, 2016) revealed that the presence of multiplicity of languages in different domains generated a dialogical circle where uninterrupted classroom communication between the teacher and children seemed to have become possible by *translanguaging*. What does translanguaging mean? It means that rather than using languages one at a time, multilingual speakers often use their languages as an integrated communication system.

The conversation data clearly showed constant translanguaging among students and between students and teachers in the classrooms. A majority of teachers and students reported that mixing Garasia, Marwari and Hindi was a common practice in schools in rural areas. Garasia and Marwari were used for translation and explanation of subject matter. Teachers reported that children understood better when they mixed languages as opposed to when they taught only in Hindi.

Though translanguaging was a common practice in schools in Pindwara and other parts of Sirohi district, teachers chose to limit this to lower classes. But the children mixed languages as it helped them understand things better. Younger children felt that mixing languages was a good practice.

Translanguaging

Speakers of multiple languages in multilingual contexts have long known that they freely mix languages together as they communicate. For example, a parent and a child may communicate in their native mother tongue of Marwari while discussing food, but switch abruptly to Hindi while discussing the child's homework, and back again to Marwari. Even more interestingly, we import words from one language into another language as we speak. In the past, academics referred to this as code-switching – switching from one language to another and back. Williams (1994) first conceptualised the term *trawsieithu* to describe how Welsh speakers moved back and forth from English in their communication. The term was translated by Lewis, Jones and Baker (2012) to its English equivalent, *translanguaging*. Scholars of translanguaging, like Ofelia García (García, 2009), argue that multilingual speakers are not many monolingual speakers rolled into one, who "switch" from one language to the other and back. Rather, they argue that multilingual speakers use resources provided by the different languages they know in a flexible and blended manner, without thinking of them as separate languages. Hence, they prefer to use the term translanguaging to refer to this phenomenon.

Interestingly, just 14% of the students spoke only two languages; while, the remaining 86% spoke at least three (see Figure 6). Fifty one percent (51%) of the total sample spoke Adivasi Garasia at home whereas they spoke other languages like Rajput Garasia, Marwari, Hindi and Rewadi to varying degrees outside the home. (Table 1 gives linguistic details of Adivasi Garasia and and Rajput Garasia languages.

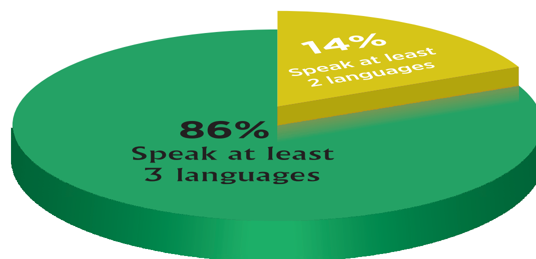

Figure 6. Percentage data of students speaking different languages in schools in Sirohi.

Table 1

Linguistic Details of Adiwasi Garasia, Rajput Garasia and Revadi

Language Name	Alternate Names	Total Number of Speakers (According to Census 2011)	Spoken in
Adiwasi Garasia	Adiwasi Girasia, Adiwasi Gujarati, Girasia	76,749	Gujarat state: Banaskantha district, Danta sub-district; Sabarkantha district, Poshina sub-district; Rajasthan state: Jalor district.
Rajput Garasia	Dhungri Garasia, Dungari Garasia, Dungri Grasia, Girasia, Grasia, Nyar, Rajput Garasia	Data not available as a separate language	Gujarat state: Banaskantha district; Rajasthan state: Pali, Sirohi, and Udaipur districts.

Note. Information taken from Simons, G. F. & Fennig, C. D. (Eds.). 2018. *Ethnologue: Languages of the World (21st ed.).* Dallas, Tex: Summer Institute of Linguistics International. Online version retrieved from http://www.ethnologue. com.

Data on number of speakers has been updated from Census 2011. Retrieved from http://www. censusindia.gov.in/2011Census/Language_MTs.html

The interview data also showed that most respondents changed languages depending on the language of the person they were conversing with. Almost everybody used at least two or three languages in the market (Panda, 2016). However, when asked, everyone said they wanted to learn Hindi as they could reach a larger section of the society around them through it. It was also the language that gave them more economic opportunities. A child in Sirohi is exposed to a continuum of languages where one easily blends into another and linguistic characteristics are shared. Yet literacy instruction, by popular demand, had to be in Hindi, in the Devanagari script.

As *Room to Read* is committed to designing enabling literacy instructions and environments for children, Sirohi was an interesting case study. Once again, the importance of the oral utterances of children was brought to the forefront. We are left wondering how to accommodate not only vocabulary variations in the classroom, but also certain phonetic and syntactic differences. Currently, we are deeply engaged in trying to understand how to use local stories in the classroom and in our libraries.

We also have to ponder upon what kinds of texts should be made available to children while they are learning *aksharas* and are gradually gaining fluency. And we clearly see that many of our popular assumptions about the linguistic experiences of people in India are falling short of reflecting the complexity of the landscape in classrooms. We are acknowledging, yet again, that every Indian in any part of our country is probably a *polyglot* (speaker of multiple languages) – and this must be taken into account in our curriculum and pedagogy.

Room to Read believes that a comprehensive literacy experience must enable children to negotiate through print not only at the surface level, but also must enable an intense, varied, multi-layered interaction. Reading can be about processing dense information to make informed choices, or reading for pleasure; reading can be for various purposes and opportunities, as life unfolds. And we must realise that much of the world, in which literacy is considered so powerful a tool, is multilingual.

The multiplicity of languages in a child's life can be approached in many ways. It could be a simple step-by-step transition from one language to another, following specific societal aspirations.

It could be a situation where a large part of the population is proficient in two or more languages, and the sharing of the languages becomes a bit larger than just sharing common vocabulary or syntactic structures.

Thus, if classroom transaction focuses on one language – the premise on which literacy instruction is currently based – it probably ignores the multiplicity of oral utterances that children bring to classrooms. Moreover, there could be more than one orthography[2] that children may have to deal with. Over and above, they may also have to learn literacy instructions in English in parallel to their mainstream language-orthography instruction.

It is in this context, in large parts of South Asia, that one needs to re-visit popular assumptions about comprehensive literacy experiences for children.

Video resource on a government secondary school for children from the Garasia community in Thandiveri, Sirohi, created as part of the *Good Schools* video initiative by Azim Premji Foundation.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bqk_9PFgovs

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[2] **Orthography of a Script**

The orthography of a script lays down the rules and standards according to which a language is to be encoded into a script. For example, both English and German use the same script: Roman. But they have different orthographies, which is why the rules for reading English and German are different, and an English speaker cannot easily read the German script, or vice-versa. This is because, the symbol-sound mapping, the grammar, syntax and so on, are different for both (see Menon & Sinha, 2018 for a more complete explanation).

Why Mother Tongue Medium in a Multilingual Context?

Giridhar Rao

Giridhar Rao makes a compelling argument in favour of permitting students to gain a strong foundation in their home language, before they make inroads into other languages.

Let's start with the evidence for something commonsensical: children learn best in their mother tongue (MT). The world's biggest study tracked the performance of 2,10,000 students in the United States over eight years. The study found that the longer students learnt in the MT, the better their academic performance was. This included how well they learnt their second language (English) as well. (Skutnabb-Kangas & Dunbar, 2010)

This was found to be true in Ethiopia as well. Some regions there transfer to English medium after four or six years of mother tongue medium (MTM) education. Other regions transfer after eight years. Skutnabb-Kangas and Dunbar have said:

Grade 8 data show that learners who have had 8 years of MTM education plus English as a subject perform better across the curriculum, in mathematics, biology, chemistry, etc., than those who have had English medium education from grade 5 or 7. In addition, their results in the English language are better than the results of most of the early-exit regions... In short, the data show that the longer the students have MTM, the better their overall academic achievement. (Skutnabb-Kangas & Dunbar, 2010, p.98).

Thus, in both well and poorly resourced education systems, developing thinking skills in the mother tongue makes it easier to learn other tongues as well. Figure 7 mentions the cognitive, socio-emotional and cultural benefits of mother-tongue education.

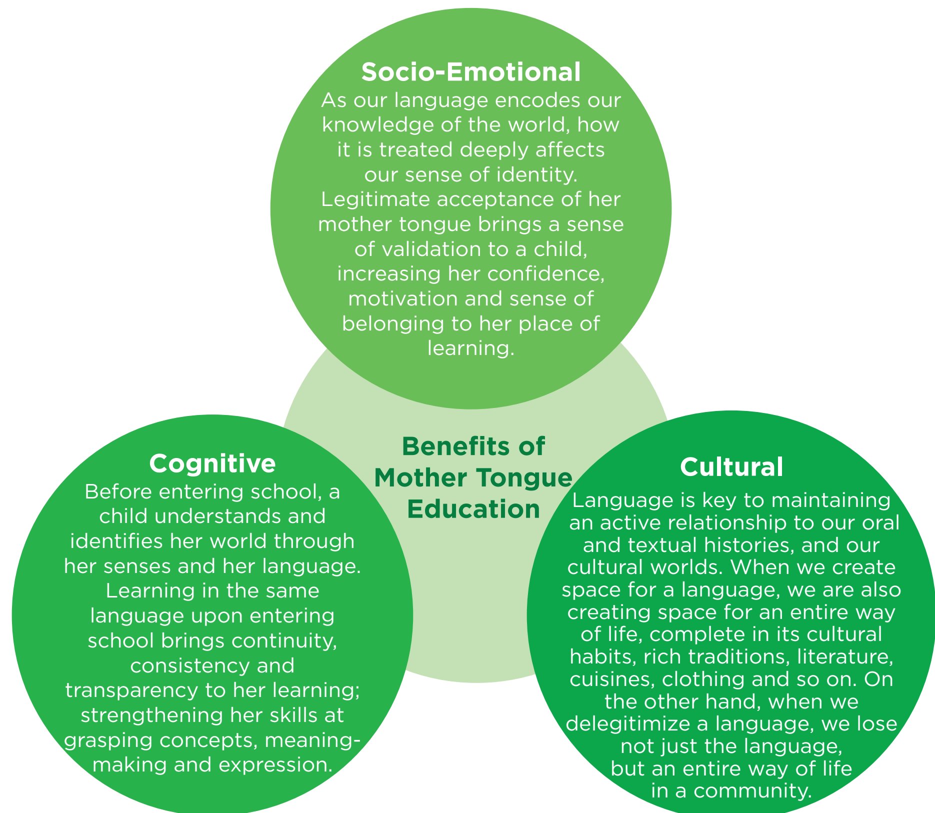

Figure 7. Benefits of mother tongue education.

This research evidence has immediate lessons for education in our multilingual Indian reality. If MTM education leads to better learning outcomes, appropriate MTM textbooks and other learning materials need to be prepared (see Figure 8 and 9). Then, teachers should teach in the learner's MT. Finally, English (or another dominant, non-MT) should be taught as a subject rather than used as the medium of instruction.

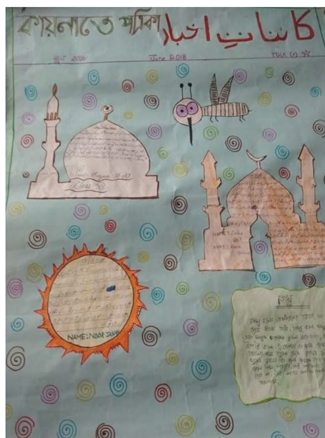

Figure 8. Classroom print in children's languages (Bengali & Urdu). **Image Courtesy:** Vikramshila Education Society, Kolkata.

Figure 9. Classroom print in Telugu. **Image Courtesy:** Telugu Intervention Study, ELI, TISS Hyderabad.

"Appropriate textbooks" means that the content of the textbook needs to be experientially familiar to the learner. Moreover, the language in the textbook should be as close to the everyday language of the learner as possible; it should not be in an inaccessibly formal register (e. g. a highly Sanskritised Telugu for a child in Telangana). Further, the exercises and activities should encourage learners to actively bring their languages into the classroom (see Figure 10 & 11).

Figure 10. Books in regional languages Marathi and Pavri. **Image Courtesy:** Quality Education Support Trust (QUEST), Maharashtra.

Figure 11. Books in English and Maithili. **Image Courtesy:** Aripana Foundation, Bangalore.

Further, teacher training needs to prepare teachers for using the MT resources that learners already possess. To get such teachers, recruitment needs to be flexible. Teachers may have demonstrable ability to teach in the learner's MT, but may not have the required formal certification. The provisions currently in place in Odisha are an indicator of how such recruitment

is possible: “teachers fluent in the children’s language will get priority in recruitment” (Rao, 2014).

Regarding the medium of instruction, the school language, usually the dominant regional language, is often not the MT of the learner: (a) it may be an entirely different language (English for a Gujarati-speaking child); or (b) the school language may be quite a different variety of learner’s home language (Andhra Telugu for a Telangana child).

In some sense, none of this is new. Back in 1938, Gandhi described his educational experience this way:

> Up to the age of 12, all the knowledge I gained was through Gujarati, my mother tongue... Then I entered high school. For the first three years, the mother tongue was still the medium. But the school-master’s business was to drive English into the pupil’s head. Therefore, more than half of our time was given to learning English and mastering its arbitrary spelling and pronunciation…
>
> The pillory began with the fourth year. Everything had to be learnt through English- Geometry, Algebra, Chemistry, Astronomy, History and Geography. The tyranny of English was so great that even Sanskrit or Persian had to be learnt through English, not through the mother tongue. If any boy spoke in the class in Gujarati,

> which he understood, he was punished. It did not matter to the teacher if a boy spoke bad English which he could neither pronounce correctly nor understand fully. Why should the teacher worry? His own English was by no means without blemish. It could not be otherwise. English was as much a foreign language to him as to his pupils. The result was chaos. We, the boys, had to learn many things by heart, though we could not understand them fully and often not at all.… I know now that what I took four years to learn of Arithmetic, Geometry, Algebra, Chemistry and Astronomy, I should have learnt easily in one year if I had not to learn them through English but Gujarati.
>
> My grasp of the subjects would have been easier and clearer. My Gujarati vocabulary would have been richer. I would have made use of such knowledge at home. This English medium created an impassable barrier between me and the members of my family, who had not gone through English schools.… I was fast becoming a stranger in my own home. I certainly became a superior person. Even my dress began to undergo imperceptible changes. What happened to me was not an uncommon experience. It was common to the majority.…
>
> High schools were schools for cultural conquest by the English. The knowledge gained by the three hundred boys of my high school became a circumscribed possession. It was not for transmission to the masses. (Gandhi, 1938/1999, pp. 279-80).

In two paragraphs, Gandhi presents a diagnosis as valid today as it was in 1938. MTM education facilitates learning; English medium teaching makes learning difficult for most Indian students; and English medium schooling creates a separate class of citizens. Nevertheless, English is widely perceived today as the great enabler for social mobility.

But in thinking about language and exclusion in the Indian education system, we need to broaden Gandhi's definition of a "foreign medium". For children of indigenous people, linguistic minorities, and speakers of dialects not considered the "standard language", the language of the textbook and the classroom might well be the foreign medium. Indeed, Dhir Jhingran (2005) estimates that for at least 25% of school-going children in India, the home language and the school language are different.

In order to plan for multilingual education in India, we need to keep all these aspects in mind:

- Good data on who speaks what language and what language-variety
- Teachers who can teach in the language or language-variety of the learner
- Teacher training that sensitises teachers to the multilingual nature of their classroom
- Multilingual pedagogy that builds the capacity of the teacher
- Textbooks that actively encourage learners to use their own language resources
- Societal aspirations for a particular language, or against others

The complexity of multilingual education is such that one can only reiterate the wise words of Lachman Khubchandani: "When dealing with plural societies, we shall do well to realise the risks involved in uniform solutions" (Khubchandani, 2001, p. 43).

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Does the Home Language have a Place in the School System?

Nivedita Bedadur

In earlier pieces we have focused on the complex nature of multilingualism and the importance of bringing children's home languages into classrooms. How can this be done, given the challenges on ground? Nivedita Bedadur suggests strategies that can be employed to bring in children's languages into classrooms.

In my travels as a teacher educator, I have often found children in the classrooms away from others, baffled, quiet and isolated. Look at the case of Jamru.

Jamru is from the Tharu* community. She enters a school for the first time in a village in Uttarakhand. She speaks Tharu at home. She has heard Punjabi spoken on the streets. She is baffled when the teacher speaks to her in Hindi. She does not understand anything the teacher says. Amongst the forty children in the class — some of whom speak Tharu, some Bengali, some Punjabi, and only some speak a little Hindi — she is completely lost. (Table 2 provides linguistic details of the Tharu language).

She becomes more withdrawn day by day. The teacher thinks she is dull. Soon she drops out of school and helps her mother take care of her newborn brother.

Jamru is not alone. Mini Srinivasan, in her research titled *Confronting Stereotypes* (2009), talks of the Lamani tribal girls near

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* Tharu is an indigenous population of Nepal's lowlands living along the Indian border.

Figure 12. Tharu is an indigenous population of Nepal's lowlands living along the Indian border.[3]

Figure 13. A Lambani woman in traditional costume.[4]

Pune. The Laman tanda (community) lives on the outskirts of Pune. They are a migrant community, but they have been living on the outskirts of Pune for the last thirty years. They speak Lamani.[5] In the current generation, at least one parent is educated. They are eager to send their children to school. However, the only school which will accept them and which they can afford is the municipal school where Marathi, the regional language of Pune, is the medium of instruction. Table 2 provides linguistic details of the Lamani language.

The children have picked up a little Marathi on the streets, but this is not the standard Marathi of the school. The teachers consider the Laman's language to be vulgar and uncivilised. The children do not understand the teacher's instruction yet they are very supportive of each other and manage to escape punishment by helping each other. Are these children really learning anything? (Based on *Confronting Stereotypes* by Mini Shrinivasan)

Table 2
Linguistic Details of Tharu and Lambadi[5] Languages

Language	Alternate Names	Total Number of Speakers (according to Census 2011)	Spoken in
Tharu	Tharu, Tharuwa	53,575	Mahakali zone: Kanchanpur district; Seti zone: Kailali district.
Lamani / Lambadi[5]	Bangala, Banjari, Banjori, Banjuri, Brinjari, Gohar-Herkeri, Goola, Gormati, Gurmarti, Kora, Labhani, Labhani Muka, Lamadi, Lamani, Lambani, Lambara, Lavani, Lemadi, Lumadale, Singali, Sugali, Sukali, Tanda, Vanjari, Wanji	32,76,548	Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, and West Bengal states.

Note. Information has been taken from Simons, G. F. & Fennig, C. D. (Eds.). 2018. *Ethnologue: Languages of the World (21st ed.).* Dallas, Tex: Summer Institute of Linguistics International. Online version retrieved from http://www.ethnologue.com. Online version: http://www.ethnologue.com. Data on number of speakers has been updated from Census 2011. Retrieved from http://www.censusindia.gov.in/2011Census/Language_MTs.html

[3] Retrieved from https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tharu_Mahila.jpg
[4] Retrieved from https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Lambani_Women_closeup.jpg
[5] Lamani tribe and language are alternatively called Lambadi in different parts of the country.

I have had several conversations with teachers who believe that it is not their duty to teach in the child's language, as the medium of instruction is one of the "standard" languages. Naturally, children acquainted with the standard languages do well in classrooms, and those who begin schooling with the burden of incomprehension are marked by the threat of becoming push outs of the system.

Linguistic Minorities in India

1. Speakers of minor languages in a state with a different regional language; all tribal languages suffer from this status, as well as languages like Marwari and Bhojpuri
2. Speakers of modern Indian languages living in a state where the official language is different from the regional language
3. Speakers of religious minority languages like Urdu
4. Speakers of languages belonging to displaced communities, like Sindhi, who do not have a state where their language is the regional language

As you know, most states have implemented the three language formula, making the standard regional language of the state or English as the first language, and the second or third language typically Hindi.

Three Language Formula

The Three Language Formula integrated into the National Education Policies of 1968 and 1986 sought to strengthen the linguistic diversity of the country by recommending the teaching of three languages in schools. The mother tongue is the first language of study. The second and third languages would be modern Indian languages (preferably a south Indian language) and English in Hindi speaking areas; and Hindi and English in non-Hindi speaking areas (GOI, 1968).

A child whose home language is different from the regional language finds himself in an alien world in school. A teacher has to think about this and take steps to bridge the gap between the home language and school language.

Most children acquire many languages in the first three years of their life, at home surrounded by neighbours, friends and markets where many languages are spoken and heard. They acquire language from the media. In school, they encounter the regional language which may or may not be their home language or street language. Some children benefit from their multilingual surroundings and others do not.

In his essay, Telling Tales (1989), noted poet and littérateur, A. K. Ramanujan wrote about speaking in one language to his mother, grandmother and friends in the kitchen; while talking in another language to his learned father in his study. The languages spoken to the intimate he referred to as "kitchen languages" or "mother tongues", while the formal language he used with his father to discuss astronomy, physics, and so on, he referred to as "father tongues". In contemporary Indian contexts, it is imaginable that children would speak one language to their grandmother (e.g., Garasia), a second one to their parents (e.g., Marwari), a third one with friends (e.g., Hindi), and a fourth one at school (e.g., English).

Moreover, the school language is a standardised version of the regional language. This makes it almost a different variety of language. For example, in a text book water is called *jal*, while children might be used to the word *pani*. Even stories in text books use a standard vocabulary and syntax alien to children.

The school does not always build bridges between children's home languages and the standard language spoken in school. Often, teachers do not recognise the multilingual abilities of the child. Our education policies have stressed that the home language of the child should be the language of instruction but we know that in most schools the medium of instruction is the regional language or English. Due to the huge industry that English spans across the world, it has been valourised as the language of economic growth and represents the aspiration of the people. This has resulted in a vicious circle of marginalised languages being further marginalised.

The home languages of migrant, marginalised, minority-language speaking children are not represented as the medium of instruction in school, not even in the early years. Some of these languages are very different from street or school languages. Most do not have a written form. This causes a double divide (see Figure 14) between those who attend school with literate

traditions already in place, who have some acquaintance with school languages and those who come with rich oral traditions and languages which are further denied in school. This double divide pushes back those very children who need more support in school. The future of our country lies threatened due to this divisive politics.

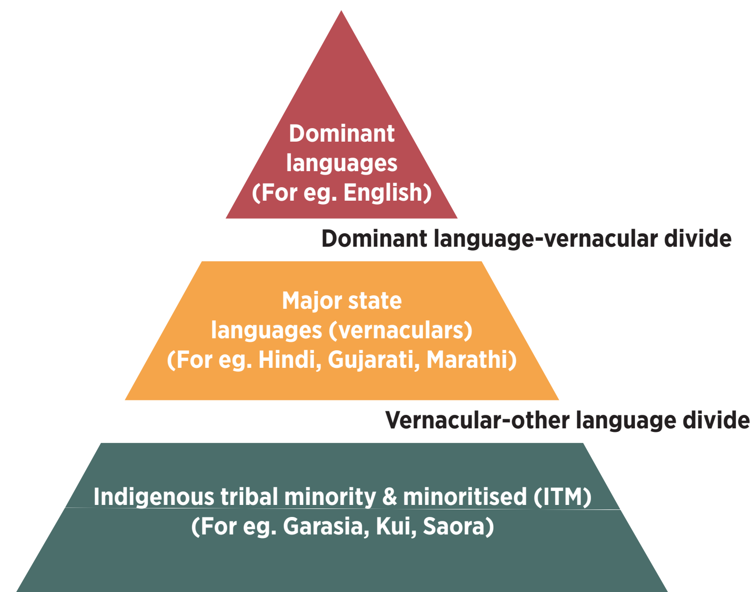

Figure 14. Double divide between dominant and indigenous tribal languages.[#]

What Steps Can a Teacher Take to Make Classrooms Multilingual?

Psychologists, linguists, educationists and researchers recommend that the medium of instruction in the first three years of schooling should ideally be the mother tongue. However, this is not practically possible due to compliance to curriculum, syllabi and text books. What is it then that a teacher can do alongside teaching the standard language?

Step 1: Create a language profile of the children in the class. This profile helps the teacher reach out to every child. It has information on: the home language of the child, other languages the child is acquainted with, languages the child is comfortable in, whether the home languages have a script, what the child's acquaintance with written language is at home (see Table 3).

[#] Adapted from Mohanty, A. K. (2019). *The multilingual reality: Living with languages.* Bristol: Multilingual Matters.

Table 3
Language Profile of Children

Language Profile of Children	
Name	
Home language	
Does the home language have a script?	
Other languages in the child's home environment that the child is familiar with.	
Forms of print in the child's environment.	

Step 2: Learn basic phrases in the children's languages. Use them in conversation with children. Encourage children to talk, tell stories, sing songs and name things in their languages, along with the school language.

Step 3: Bring in parents and the community to teach children folk songs, poems and tell stories in their languages. When parents talk to children in their language in school, the community feels accepted in school, the children's identity and language is maintained while parents build confidence in the children to learn school languages (see Figure 15).

Step 4: Introduce concepts through examples from the children's homes. For example, while talking about trees or festivals refer to local terms for these, along with text book names. Reproduce the text book page with the local name and text book name (see Figure 15).

Figure 15. Interlinkages between the school and the community are created during MLE+ intervention in Odisha by Ajit Mohanty and Minati Panda. **Image Courtesy:** Ajit Mohanty, 2017.

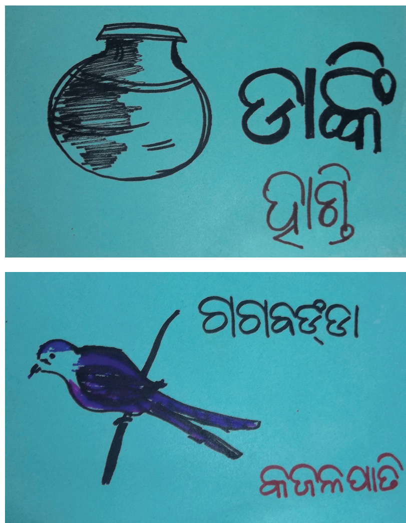

Figure 16. TLM created in regional language Odia and local language Saora during the MLE+ intervention in Odisha (Ajit Mohanty & Minati Panda, 2007-2009). **Image Courtesy:** Shivani Nag, 2014.

Step 5: Aid the understanding of concepts through multilingual articulation. For example, say you want to introduce basic hygiene and talk about washing hands before meals. Take the children to the tap, where they wash their hands. Then you introduce the word water and ask them to draw. Children will usually draw different things: taps, streams, puddles, rain, bottles etc. Ask them the names of the things they have drawn in their languages. Write these in the school and children's languages on the sheets.

Human beings are learning individuals, and children are naturally inclined to acquire the languages they are exposed to. However, they need a supportive environment to do so. This support comes from respecting their identity and prior knowledge, couched in their home languages. If we recognise this, we will save many a child from becoming a push-out of the system.

Ideally, as mother tongue is the foundation of the child's early cognition, schools should make provisions for that as the medium of instruction, at least for the first three years to bridge the home and school, the mother tongue and school language. This would result in long-term advantages for Indian multilingualism and economic growth. More human resource would become critically literate and more languages would be maintained and developed.

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Use of English as a Resource in a Multilingualism Classroom

Parthasarathi Misra

English is an important language adding to the multilingual complexity of India. Parthasarathi Misra, describes the particularity of teaching English in Indian contexts in this piece, and suggests a few pedagogical practices that could be helpful to teachers in using English as a resource in a multilingual classroom.

Reading academic articles on multilingualism can be a frustrating experience for a teacher who is likely to be bombarded by expressions like individual multilingualism, social bilingualism, territorial multilingualism or institutional multilingualism. Discussions on multilingual pedagogy also often tend to be highly theoretical providing little help to a practicing teacher who grapples with the problems faced by her in a multilingual classroom in which the children speak a variety of other languages but cannot use English even for basic communication.

Therefore, keeping aside theoretical discussions on the merits and demerits of a multilingual pedagogy, this paper aims at exploring a few pedagogical practices that can be used in multilingual English classrooms of India.

Understanding Indian Multilingualism

Multilingualism is a word more sinned against than sinning. Its meaning, usage and pedagogical relevance is highly context embedded. Multilingual classrooms in India cannot and should not be equated with multilingual classrooms in the USA or Canada. In a typical multilingual classroom in the USA, there is no common first language amongst the learners of English, the learners are from vastly different countries and cultures and they make different mistakes in structure and pronunciation depending on their specific foreign language origin. Besides all these factors, the target language English is all pervasive in the school and the learners have no choice but to communicate in English with their classmates, as they cannot discuss or express their ideas in their home languages. But in an Indian multilingual classroom, a majority of the children have a first language in common, their first languages have a lot of similarities with the first languages of their classmates, and they have a bond of a common cultural heritage which makes linguistic assimilation an unconscious process among the children speaking numerous Indian languages. Unlike the immigrant children of the USA attending a multilingual class, Indian children learning English in a multilingual class can converse and communicate with their friends in languages other than English.

Another important difference between the environment of the American multilingual classroom and the Indian multilingual classroom is the quality and expertise of the English teachers. The teachers of English in the USA are not only fluent in English, they are certified to be English teachers. In India, unfortunately, a teacher teaching English at the primary level is often neither fluent in English, nor is she sufficiently trained to teach English or any other language. As the onus of using the multilingual pedagogy rests with the teachers, the ill-equipped Indian English teacher does not venture to use it.

I have started the discussion on the use of English as resource in a multilingual classroom by making a distinction between an Indian multilingual classroom and an American multilingual classroom because the theories of multilingualism and multilingual pedagogy advocated by English Language Teaching (ELT) experts and practitioners across the globe are contextually irrelevant for an Indian English teacher. Indian learners of English are neither immigrants nor bilinguals who want to be totally immersed in English at the cost of their own languages. English cannot usurp the place of a dominant language in a multilingual English classroom; therefore, an Indian multilingual ELT pedagogy should make judicious use of the Eurocentric multilingual pedagogy in light of Indian realities.

Multilingual Pedagogy for India

The NCF Position Paper on *English Language Teaching* strongly advocates a multilingual pedagogy for teaching English in India and suggests that at the lower primary stage or at least in classes I-III, English should occur in tandem with the first languages(s) for learning activities (NCERT, 2006). Taking a cue from this suggestion, we may say that for a multilingual pedagogy for India at the primary level, the artificial barriers between languages like English and the school language and between "languages" and "subjects" should be removed from the class routine of the primary schools. Languages are languages for the child, call them by whatever names you like! Be it school language or English, the vocabulary, structures and discourse patterns of any language will appeal to a child if they are presented naturally in consonance with the needs and expectations of the child.

An English teacher using a multilingual pedagogy in her classroom should be aware of the fact that the first language (L1) and the second language (L2) do not reside in two separate compartments in the mind of the bilingual child when she is exposed to a second language. L1 and L2 are interwoven in the L2 user's mind in vocabulary, in syntax, in phonology and pragmatics (see Figure 17). Therefore, "learning an L2 is not just

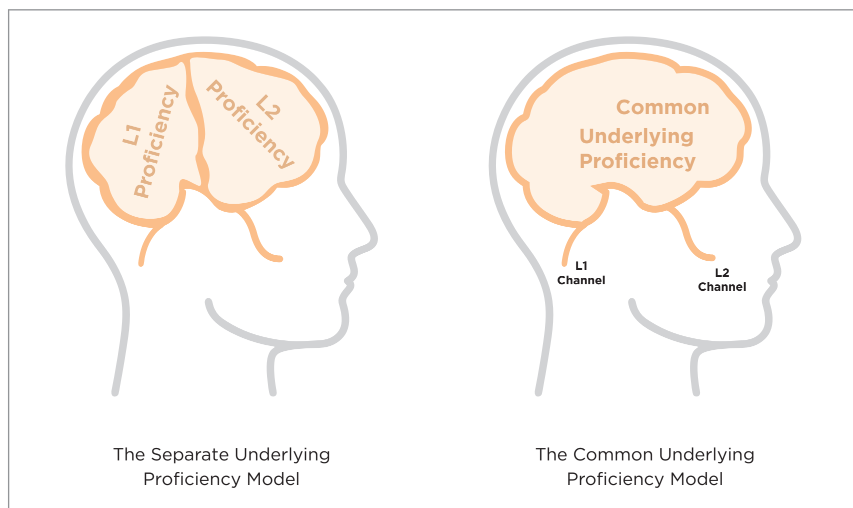

Figure 17. The picture represents two models of bilingual proficiency: Separate Underlying Proficiency (SUP) Model and the Common Underlying Proficiency(CUP) Model.[6]

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[6] Adapted from Cummins, J. (2005, September). Teaching for cross-language transfer in dual language education: Possibilities and pitfalls. In *TESOL Symposium on dual language education: Teaching and learning two languages in the EFL setting* (pp. 1-18). Estambul: Universidad BogaziciTurquía.

adding rooms to your house by building an extension at the back, it is the rebuilding of all internal walls." (Cook, 2001, p. 407).

Using L2 along with the child's L1 reinforces a child's repertoire in both the languages, making the learner sensitive to his first language while also introducing him to the target language and therefore, a multilingual pedagogy is a double-edged tool from a pedagogic point of view. In Indian contexts, we must remember that a child may come to school with exposure to several different languages, and not just a single L1 as assumed in the Western literature. If English is to be considered as L2, this L2 needs to be integrated with the repertoire of several languages that the child already knows to varying levels of competence.

Exploiting the Child's Underlying Competence with Languages

A child growing up in a multilingual environment acquires the various languages of her environment in just the same way as a monolingual child acquires her home language.

Therefore, a teacher teaching English and the regional languages at the primary level should try to find ways of creatively exploiting the different languages available in a given classroom. The teacher should tap into the pupils' familiarity with more than one language to advance the learning of the target language. By using cognitively challenging tasks in multiple languages, the English teacher may generate enough linguistic inputs for the pupils to reflect on and acquire the usages of the target language.

Strategies for a Multilingual Pedagogy

The multilingual pedagogy should be in consonance with an approach to language teaching that treats language as a meaning-making system.

Greetings and polite expressions. Select three pictures. In one picture, there is a conversation between a teacher and her pupil, in another two children are talking with each other in the playground and in the third, two workers on a plantation or a paddy field are exchanging greetings and day-to-day information. Ask the pupils to imagine and enact the dialogues in their mother tongues; and then you enact the dialogues in English.

As the pupils are already familiar with the usages of their own languages in specific contexts, they will be interested to hear your usage of English in these same contexts. By introducing dialogues in natural situations, you are prompting them to see how the vocabulary, syntax and the usage vary from context to context in English, as well as in their mother tongues. Initially, they may find it a bit challenging linguistically, but the task is not at all challenging cognitively and contextually. A Kannada speaking child knows when to say, "*Neevu hEge iddeeya*" and "*Neevu hEge iddeera*" (How are you?), she knows when to say "*bartheeya*" and when to say "*bartheera*". Though both "*Neenu yaaru*" and "*Neevu yaaru*" mean "Who are you?" in English, a Kannada speaking child knows the context in which the former and not the latter should be used. In English, "Hello" can go with "How do you do?" but "Hi" cannot. "Hi" is followed by "How are you?". Present all the formulaic expressions of greetings in English contextually and see how the children use them for communicative purposes. The same exercise can be done with the help of greetings used in Hindi or any other language.

> "*Neevu hEge iddeeya*" (How are you?) ,"*bartheeya*"(are you coming) and "*Neenu yaaru*" (Who are you?) are used to casually address a friend, a person of our equal status or a junior while "*Neevu hEge iddeera*" (How are you?), "*bartheera*" (Are you coming?) and "*Neevu yaaru*" (Who are you?) are used when addressing an elderly person or someone senior to us.

How do your children use polite expressions for interpersonal communication in their home languages? Present stories in pictures in which polite expressions are used in English as well as in the home languages of the pupils and let children be exposed to them in the guise of telling them stories. *Help! Help me, please. Can you help me, please? Could you help me, please? Will you help me, please? It would have been nice if you could help me. I wonder if you could help me, please*. Children can understand the nuances of all these sentences in their home language and therefore, if you present these sentences in English in suitable contexts, the children will be in a position to practice the usage creatively.

Print rich environment in multiple languages. A number of English words are used in almost all the Indian languages. Present those words in multiple languages along with their pictures. Ask the children to use those words in contexts of their home languages and listen to the English sentences in which they are used. As many children may be without any print rich environment at their homes, the classroom should provide them multilingual print rich environment in which they can explore

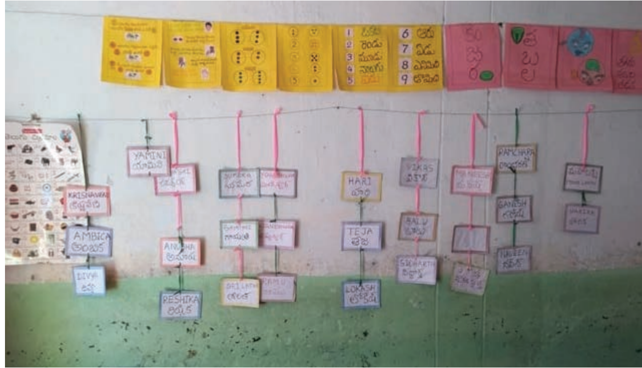

Figure 18. Classroom print environment. The picture shows children's name cards written in English and Telugu. Also shown are numbers represented in different forms. **Image Courtesy:** Telugu Intervention Study, ELI, TISS Hyderabad.

Figure 19. Word and picture cards for commonly found objects in the child's environment. **Image Courtesy:** Gubbachi Learning Community, Bengaluru, Karnataka.

English along with their home languages (see Figure 18 & 19). Words like doctor, nurse, hospital, station, bus, train, tickets, balloons, balls, cricket can initiate conversations in multiple languages.

Caution, however, has to be taken so that the words are not used in isolation. Children should use these words in their home languages first and listen to the teacher who uses them in English sentences. Simple sentences written in multiple languages can be displayed in the classroom showing the use of the same English word in their home languages as well as in English.

Language games. A language is learnt quite easily when the focus is not on the form, but on the meaning. The multilingual repertoire of the Indian children in their homes and other Indian languages spoken in or around them can be a resource for teaching them English (see Figure 20).

Figure 20. A language based game.[7] **Image Courtesy:** Nabarun Mookerjee, Adharshila Learning Centre, Sakad, Madhya Pradesh.

[7] In this game, children walk around a set of word cards. They are allowed to take the next step only when they can read out the word card kept on that step. Adapted from *Organization for Early Literacy Promotion (OELP)*, Ajmer.

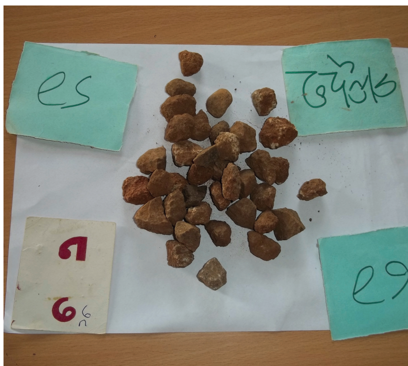

Figure 21. TLM created in regional language Odia and local language Saora during the MLE+ intervention in Odisha by Ajit Mohanty and Minati Panda. **Image Courtesy:** Shivani Nag, 2014.

Using numerals in multiple languages including English while playing games can be a good resource for introducing English numerals in suitable contexts (see Figure 20). In Kannada, "three" means ಮೂರು (mooru) while in Telugu it is మూడు (moodu). The wrong production of the "r" sound may make the Kannada "r" a Telugu "r". Ask the children to count from 1 to 100 in their own languages, then supply them 1 to 100 in English using visuals and see how they develop language sensitivity and linguistic competence in English. You can ask them to sing songs using numerals in various languages.

Letters and sounds of English in the context of the home language. Teachers often complain that the lack of correlation between the English letters and their sounds pose a serious problem for Indian learners. In Hindi and Kannada, "ch" is always /ch/, it is never pronounced as /k/. Well, present the following Kannada words in sentences and see if the Kannada speaking children can understand the meaning. *Odu* (read), *oDu* (run), *kaalu* (leg), *kaaLu* (cereals), *Hallu* (teeth), *Haalu* (milk), *HaaLu* (spoilt), *anna* (rice), *aNNa* (brother). Then ask children speaking other languages if they can think of similar words that lead to confusion due to wrong pronunciation, but whose meaning becomes clear if used in appropriate contexts. Once you develop the language sensitivity that all languages have their particular challenges, they can explore the difficult terrain of inconsistencies in the English script without inhibition.

Providing space for two or more languages. Language is a performing art for the children, they enjoy playing with words and expressions and, therefore, the English teacher should not compartmentalize different languages. It has to be kept in mind that learning English in a multilingual context does not mean just to make the children social and interactive in English; it affects their cognitive domain too.

While learning English along with their home languages, children start looking at things from multiple perspectives. By providing space for exploring two or more languages together and prompting the children to examine the resources of their home languages in the English classroom, the English teacher becomes instrumental in developing the multilingual awareness of the children.

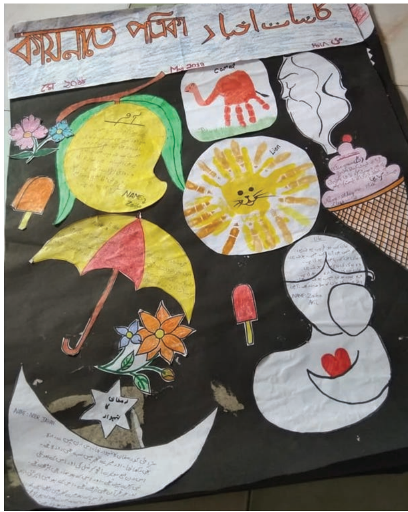

Figure 22. An example of art coming together with multiple languages in classroom print. **Image Courtesy:** Vikramshila Education Society, Kolkata.

The Pivotal Role of the Teacher in a Multilingual Class

Teaching English in the multilingual classroom presupposes the teacher's competence in English. Teachers should be familiar with the Whole Language approach, Physical Response theory, methodology of situational language teaching, techniques of using authentic materials, realia and props in the classroom, and so on.

Visual reinforcements using labels from multiple languages may be used in the early language classrooms. All the classroom furniture and classroom features can be labeled in English and the other languages known to the children. Signs with specific vocabulary items in contexts, such as, weather, months and days used in different languages can be used as a part of the activities.

But all these activities presuppose the English teacher's competence in English. Are our teachers comfortable with their own use of English? If not, it's time to go for a professional development course in English language teaching. Can't we think of a professional body like *Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages* (TESOL) in our country too? Teaching English is a technical enterprise and therefore, you need a license issued by a competent authority to become an English teacher!

Figure 23. An example of a print-rich environment in English.

Conclusion

In order to maximize communicative potential, the switching between the home languages and English (technically called *translanguaging*)[8] should be encouraged in an English class. Mixing words and expressions from various languages in the same utterance or in the same discourse is quite natural to Indian children who are exposed to more than one language from early childhood, thanks to growing up in a multilingual ethos, bolstered by the influence of cinema and television. Multilingual pedagogy, therefore, should not be an alien strategy for the Indian English teachers; it should be an integral part of their curriculum transaction.

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[8] Translanguaging has been explained in Saktibrata Sen's piece, "Which language do you speak?-Linguistic diversity in Sirohi, Rajasthan" on page 7 of this book

The Question of English

Shuchi Sinha

The English versus Mother Tongue debate has raged on for over half a century now. Shuchi Sinha emphasises the necessity of acknowledging the aspiration of the masses for English.

In an interview in 2016, Dalit activist and writer Prof. Kancha Ilaiah said:

> English should be introduced in all schools and colleges by Telangana government as that is the only way to bring equality among all sections of society and empower people from downtrodden sections. Also, only English education can provide employment opportunities to youth in an era of modern technological developments (Ilaiah, 2016).

Figure 24. The Dalit goddess of English. **Image Courtesy:** Chandra Bhan Prasad.*

Prof. Ilaiah made this statement while demanding that the Telangana government introduce English medium education in all schools and colleges, and urged parents to send their children only to English medium schools.

Anyone who has interacted with the linguistic reality of India — I am guessing most of us have — cannot deny the validity of this aspiration for English. English has, fortunately or unfortunately, become the most compelling way of giving children access to knowledge and power in the economies that we have created in modern-day societies. As a third generation user of the language, I have exploited it at every point in a bid to not be excluded. At youth gatherings, malls, banks, restaurants, universities, new-age book stores, college festivals, social media. Everywhere I went. The English card has hardly ever let me down.

I cannot begin to imagine thus the ways in which it excludes those who have historically been refused entry into the realms of this language due to barriers of caste, class, religion and gender.

* Retrieved from http://www.ipsnews.net/2010/11/india-dalits-turn-to-the-goddess-of-english/)

"She is the symbol of Dalit renaissance," says Chandra Bhan Prasad, a Dalit writer who came up with the idea of the Goddess of English. "She holds a pen in her right hand which shows she is literate. She is dressed well and sports a huge hat - it's a symbol of defiance that she is rejecting the old traditional dress code. In her left hand, she holds a book which is the constitution of India which gave Dalits equal rights. She stands on top of a computer which means we will use English to rise up the ladder and become free for ever." (see Figure 24).

Chandra Bhan Prasad (as cited in Geeta Pandey, 2011)

As has become increasingly evident, the higher-education system in India as well as the formal job sector are highly alienating towards the non-speakers of English. As an English teacher at an *adivasi* school, I have often struggled with the question of what form of education could be relevant for my students. My students, however, are marred by no such conflict. They are clear about what they want from me. They are certain they must learn English while I am around.

Figure 25. Students working on their classroom print environment. **Image Courtesy:** Shuchi Sinha, Adharshila Learning Centre.

Their reasons are varied. Some want to learn it to go to cities; some for jobs; some to read the English books in the library; and many so that they can understand what the volunteers who come from different cities speak amongst themselves. The last reason is especially compelling to them.

Alongside, the presence or the lack of knowledge of English has also resulted in the creation of rigidly divided social groups. I have realised in the last few years that my life in a metropolitan city hardly required me to interact with non-English speakers on an equal footing. Apart from mixed forms of interactions in university spaces, and unequal interactions with those who provide different services to us in our homes, streets and workplaces, the interactions of the urban middle-class in cities are largely insulated and limited to those dressing, speaking and thinking rather like themselves.

My understanding, thus, is that the aspiration for English amongst the non-elite is not just to be included within the realms of economic and social progress, but also represents a very real desire to be acknowledged, to not be sidelined, silenced or shamed by this prosperous quarter of the population.

Does an acknowledgement of this aspiration mean a movement towards English medium education? In that case, one also cannot ignore the compelling reasons supporting the cognitive and cultural arguments of mother tongue education. A child's natural learning trajectory requires that she be surrounded by a linguistic environment that is expressive of her experiences and culture. The absence of this and the insulation of the child in an alien linguistic setting are bound to cause grave cognitive and cultural loss to her.

Both sides of the argument are articulated here by noted linguist Ganesh Devy:

> English is a powerful language. Yet, it is an established scientific principle that early education in the mother tongue helps in the proper development of cognitive faculties and the ability for abstraction. The cumulative effect of the rise of English schools in India on Indian languages is going to be negative. That would lead us into difficulties while conceptualising our cultural history. When a large number of such children get into positions of authority, their collective amnesia about cultural history can pave an easy way for false historical narratives and a fascist political environment. (Devy, 2017)

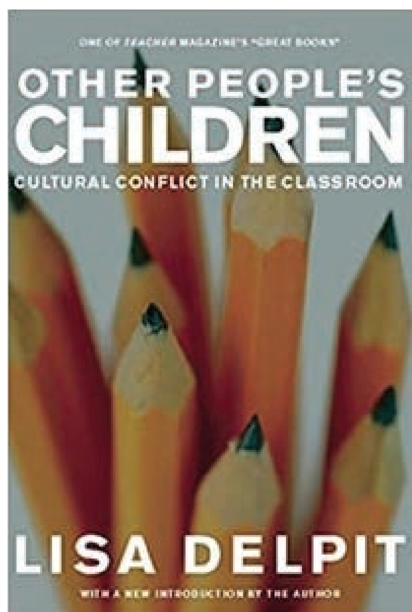

Figure 26. Other People's Children. (Lisa Delpit, The New Press, 2006.)

Why is it, then, that despite the advantages of mother tongue education, there has been a surging demand not just for English but an English medium education? This demand is most acutely reflected in the rising percentage of the number of children being admitted into a range of private English medium schools, from low-fee to elite high-cost ones.

I am perplexed, however, about why these two ideas have come to be so strongly pitted against each other. Why is it that in the minorities' argument there is not merely a disagreement with the proponents of Mother tongue education, but an intense hostility and distrust too? The effort to find answer to this question often takes me back to this quote featured in noted black educator Lisa Delpit's book *Other People's Children* (2006), "My kids know how to be Black — you all teach them how to be successful in the white man's world" (Delpit, 2006, p. 29).

This quote has represented to me the voice of a relatively disempowered parent who is often told what is best for her child with the well-intentioned assumption that she wouldn't know better. Has the English-speaking decision-making group also, in a similar sense, caused grave alienation to the masses, whose primary hopes of progress lies in access to the dominant language? It often appears as if the burden of cultural preservation and mother tongue maintenance has fallen on the shoulders of those who have already been left on the margins of economic and social development. Is it not essential, then, that the speakers of English do not assume the sole guardianship of English, taking decisions in isolation of the voices of those whose lives they don't lead?

Figure 27. English as a double-edged sword.

In the middle of this linguistic clash, can we begin to imagine ways of thinking that are accommodative of both the sides of this argument? Where the maintenance of the Mother Tongue is no longer the burden of a particular group, but rather a necessity for all, especially for those who have been privileged into treading far into the realms of cultural and linguistic amnesia?

There are no easy solutions. This piece, however, hopes to invite dialogue on the subject, with the appeal that we recognise the indispensability of English to attaining progress in the national economy, yet find ways of dialoguing on efficient multilingual systems, where English as a subject and a skill finds sharp and committed focus.

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Different Ways of Dealing with Linguistic Diversities

Devaki Lakshminarayan

Devaki Lakshminarayan writes about the different forms of engagement with linguistic diversities within classrooms, ranging from using Mother Tongue as a bridge to acquire the dominant language to a more sustainable engagement with multilingualism which aims to socially and culturally support and strengthen diversity.

Linguistic diversity is a worldwide phenomenon. Every country houses multiple languages. At the societal level, education is one strategy that countries use to deal with linguistic diversities. This piece of writing attempts to give a glimpse into the ways education is used to deal with linguistic diversity. Specifically, it looks at what the strategy is, the goals of the strategy, whose needs the strategy serves, and the underlying perspective it holds about linguistic diversity.

Most strategies discussed here are either at the policy level or at a programmatic level, with the intention of feeding into policies, while we also touch upon an informal strategy. One also should note that many countries follow some of these strategies while others have changed their strategy of dealing with linguistic diversities over time.

It is not the purpose of this paper to go into the historical details for changes in strategies. This discussion is limited to the strategies currently followed. The discussion is also not intended to highlight all the strategies; it is limited to giving a flavour of the substantial ones.

The Use of Multiple Languages in Education

Colonised continents like Africa and Asia house a variety of languages within individual countries. For example, India, Malaysia and Singapore have many languages each. Hence, these countries are generally referred to as multilingual countries.

Such countries also typically use multiple languages in education to accommodate their linguistic diversity. The three language formula of India is a policy level example of addressing multiple languages. The policy (National Policy on Education, 1968; 1986) advocates the use of the mother tongue as the educational medium along with the study of English as a subject (second language) and another language (e.g., Hindi, Sanskrit etc.) depending on the geographical region within the country.

The situation in other colonised countries is more or less the same. For example, in Singapore – Malay, Chinese Mandarin, and Indian Tamil are recognised as the official languages. Every child is expected to learn two languages, namely English (which is considered to be the first language) and either Malay or Mandarin or Tamil (which is treated as the second language).

In Malaysia, from the time of gaining independence, Malay was the sole national language, and English was used for official purposes. In 1967, the government passed a declaration of using the national language as the medium of instruction in schools. By the end of 1982, all schools followed Malay as medium of instruction, and the hitherto English medium schools were converted to Malay medium schools. Malay medium schools teach English as a subject. The National type schools follow Mandarin and Tamil medium and teach both Malay and English as subjects (Chan and Abdullah, 2015).

In Kenya, according to the language policy, Kiswahili and other indigenous languages are used as the medium of instruction from Classes one to three. English is used as the medium of instruction at all other levels of education, while Kiswahili is taught as a subject.

There is an informal strategy that is used in some of these countries that deserves a mention. In both India and Kenya, in the English medium schools, teachers use mother tongues to explain concepts in mathematics and science. The reason for the informal strategy of multilingual education is two-fold. The first relates to teachers' inadequate competencies in English. The second is that most teachers feel that explaining concepts in the mother tongue facilitates student understanding. This practice is prevalent in public schools, particularly in rural areas. Oduor (2015) refers to this practice as a *pragmatic approach to teaching*.

In all these countries, the goal of the language policy is, on the one hand, to foster a sense of nationalism and unity, and, on the other, to ensure access to social and economic opportunities associated with learning of English. There is a constant tension between the two goals with the balance often tilting in favour of English.

There is a shared understanding that when children are taught through a dominant language (generally English) learning does not take place because children do not understand the dominant language. One way of addressing this problem is to initiate literacy through the mother tongue. In the second year, the dominant language is introduced and used to the extent of 25% and the mother tongue is used for 75% of the time. In Year 3, the proportion gradually tilts in favour of the dominant language. It culminates with the use of the dominant language as the sole medium of instruction (second language is used 100% of time). Such a strategy is called the *transitional bilingual education*.

Countries like Mexico, Peru, Guatemala, Bolivia, and Ecuador are known for large scale transitional bilingual education programmes. Let us see how this works taking the example of Guatemala in South America. Here, children whose mother tongue is Mayan (an indigenous language) begin literacy through Mayan. By Grades 3 or 4 they transition to Spanish-only as a medium of education. Similarly, in Mexico, children study through Hispanic or other indigenous mother tongues and gradually transition to Spanish medium (Rainer, 2015).

There are two versions of this programme, the early and the late exit programmes. The difference between the two is the duration of studying through the mother tongue. In the early exit, the transition to the dominant language is completed by the end of grade 3, whereas in the late exit model, children have access to their mother tongue for 5 to 7 years.

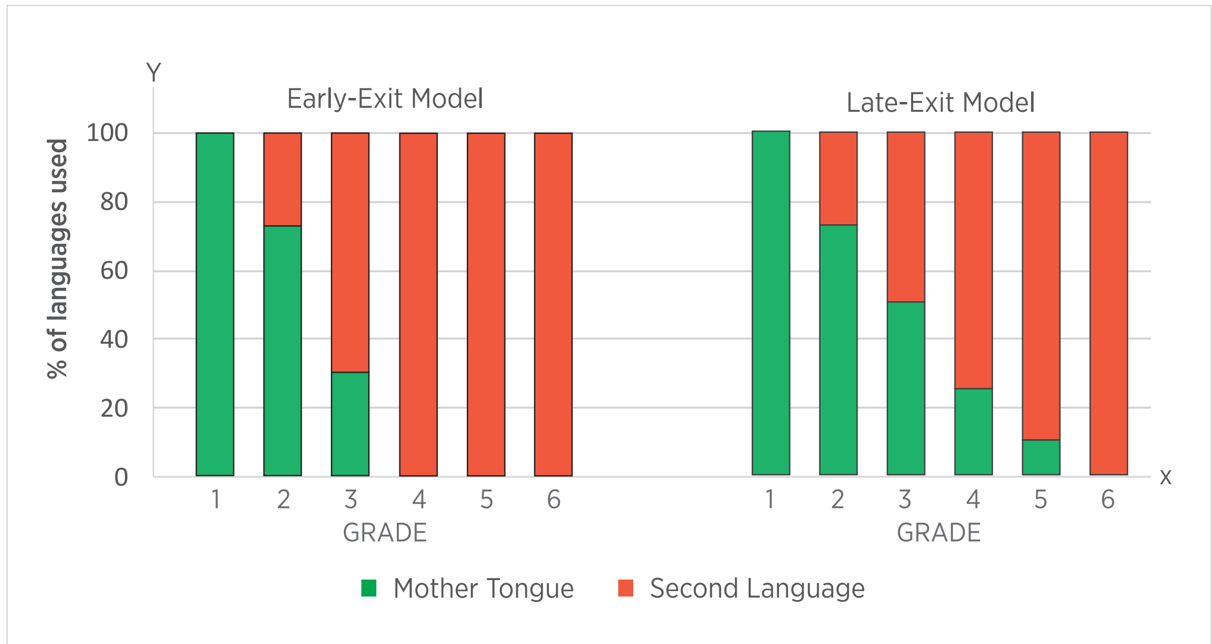

Figure 28. Graphical representation of early-exit and late-exit models.

On the face of it, such a strategy is problematic because access to mother tongue is limited. Nevertheless, findings from research show some advantages of this strategy.

1. If one compares learning of children who study only through the dominant language (which is not their mother tongue) to children who learn primarily in their mother tongue, and to children who learn in both languages, but transition gradually from their mother tongue to the dominant language, findings show that the second and third group of children do not differ much, while the first group of children differ a lot from these two groups.
   - Another finding is that studying through the mother tongue does not hamper the third group's learning of the dominant language.
   - On the other hand, a comparison between the early and late exit programme shows that children who have a longer period of access to multilingual education show better learning compared to children in the early exit programmes.
   - The findings show advantages of the prolonged use of the mother tongue as medium of instruction.

The Use of Mother Tongue as a Bridge to a Dominant Language

There are four approaches to dominant language – the Submersion approach, the transitional approach and the Immersion approach and the mother tongue based bilingual education approach. The difference rests on questions like whom does the program address; and, what is the goal of the program. Of these, the submersion and the transitional approaches are considered to be weak forms of bilingual education and the remaining two are recognized as strong forms of bilingual education. The Submersion approach is targeted at language minority students and uses the dominant language (generally English) only approach (see Table 4).

Table 4[9]

Summary Table of Submersion and Transitional Model of Multilingual Education

Approach to Multilingual Education	Characteristics	Examples
Submersion Models This is the typical model used in classrooms in India. Children who speak one language are made to study in classrooms that use a different language as the medium of instruction(MoI). They are "submerged" in the new language. Jhingran (2009) has listed variations of this model in terms of classroom transaction.		• Children who speak Chattisgarhi study in a Hindi medium classroom. • Children who speak Chattisgarhi study in an English medium classroom.
No MT in Classroom	A strict requirement that only target language be used, and no MT, within the school/classroom.	
Some MT	The Medium of Instruction is largely used for classroom transaction, but the teacher explains certain concepts to children in their MT.	
Free Use of MT	The teacher uses the local languages freely in classroom transactions.	
Transitional Models In these approaches, the mother tongue is used along with the more dominant language(s) for a given duration as a bridge to facilitate better learning of the dominant languages. The aim is to transition children to the other languages, and MT is simply a means of doing so.		

[9] All the summary tables, except for Table 6, have been introduced by ELI and not the author.

Approach to Multilingual Education	Characteristics	Examples
Early Exit Transitional Models	In the early exit transitional model, the transition to the dominant language is completed by the end of Grade 3.	Implemented in Orissa, Andhra Pradesh, and Assam. These programmes emphasise the importance of beginning literacy learning through the MT in Grades 1-3, on the use of two languages (MT and the dominant language) as media of education, and also teaches a third language as a subject. Children transition to the state language between Grades 4 and 5.
Late Exit Transitional Models	In the late exit model children have access to their mother tongue for 5 to 7 years in school.	

Mother Tongue Based Multilingual Education (MT-MLE)

The transitional bilingual education programmes are aimed at indigenous language speakers. Its purpose is to use the mother tongue as a bridge to facilitate better learning of the dominant language. The goal of these programmes is to help children transition to the mainstream. This strategy holds an instrumental value of the mother tongue, because mother tongue is seen as a bridge to reach the second language (see Table 4).

The orientation of the programme is to assimilate indigenous mother tongue speakers to the mainstream. There is almost no attempt to ensure that the many mother tongues are maintained. There is a danger that the continued use of this strategy will eventually minimise linguistic diversity.

The strategy of using mother tongue based multilingual education is supported by *SIL International*, a non-profit organisation, whose main purpose is to study, develop and document lesser known languages. This strategy is different from earlier strategies. It emphasises beginning literacy learning through the mother tongue, on the use of two languages as medium of education, and also teaches a third language as a subject. It addresses some concerns raised by the previous one.

Distinction between MLE and MLE+

Shivani Nag (2015), citing Panda and Mohanty (2009, p. 296), distinguishes the MT based MLE programmes (influenced by SIL international's framework and implemented by different state governments) from the MLE-plus programmes that they ran in eight schools in Odisha in the Kui and Saora tribal languages. According to Nag, the former programme has resemblances to transitional approaches aiming at using mother tongue as a bridge to acquire the dominant languages. On the other hand, the MLE+ intervention "envisages good MLE practices to be holistic, culturally situated and historically informed of culturally embedded social, mathematical, literacy/oracy and science practices" (Panda & Mohanty, 2009, p. 296, as cited in Nag, 2015, p. 135) (see Table 5).

Note: The distinction between MLE and MLE+ has not been made by the author of the original blog piece. This distinction has been added by the ELI team.

The strategy is followed in parts of Africa, Eastern Europe, North and South America, and several countries in Asia. In India, this programme is followed in Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, and Assam. In Odisha, the programme was piloted in 2007 in some blocks and implemented in 10 tribal languages, namely, Sura, Juang, Munda, Santhali, Bonda, Koya, Munda, Kissan, Oram, Kuvi and Kui.

Since 2012, the programme has been extended to preschool education in the Anganwadis serving tribal children. This strategy is aimed at tribal languages. Detailed documentation of the programme is available in addition to the evaluation report by NCERT (2011).

Table 5
Summary Table of MLE+ Model

Approach to Multilingual Education	Characteristics	Examples
Mother Tongue Based Multilingual Education (MLE "Plus") This model emphasises long-term teaching in mother tongue for its cognitive, emotional, cultural and social advantages (as mentioned in *Figure 21*).		
MLE +	Unlike other MLE programmes, a key goal of MLE plus programmes are to enrich the MT learning, and not to use the MT to transition learners to the dominant language. Since learners need access to more than one language in multilingual societies, students are taught the dominant regional language and English along with their MT.	The term *MLE Plus* was coined by Ajit Mohanty, Minati Panda and their colleagues (2008) in the course of their work in eight schools in Odisha using the Kui and Saora languages as MTs.

The mother tongue education programme is noted for four features:

1. Use of two or more languages as media of education
2. Curriculum
3. Pedagogy
4. Recruitment of teachers
5. Involvement of the community

a) Multiple languages are taught in the programme. The tribal language and Odia are used as the medium of education and English is taught as a subject. Mother tongue education follows the plan of teaching shown in Table 6.

b) The curriculum plays a significant role in mother tongue education. Two features of the curriculum – the content and the way it is developed — provide important insights into the nature of mother tongue education. The content is contextualised in the local language – so that children are able to connect to it and find education relevant.

c) The curriculum is based on thematic approach. A theme web was designed for each tribal community to ensure that the curriculum was culture-based and contextual. The themes to be taught were selected from this and the curriculum was

Table 6
Plan of Teaching for Mother Tongue Based Multilingual Education

K1	K2	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6
Build fluency in oral L1 (Mother tongue)	L1 for teaching. Continue oral L1	L1 for teaching. Continue oral & written L1 and Oral L2	Continue oral & written L1, L2	Continue oral & written L1, L2	Continue oral & written L1, L2, oral L3	Continue oral & written L1, L2, L3	Continue oral & written L1, L2, L3
	Begin written L1	**Begin written L2 (late in the year)**		**Begin Oral L3 (English)**	**Begin Written L3**		
	Begin oral L2 (Odia) (late in the year)						
L1 for teaching	L1 for teaching	L1 for teaching	L1 for teaching	L1-L2-L1 for teaching	L1-L2-L1 for teaching	L1-L2-L1 for teaching	L2-L1 for teaching

woven around these. The curriculum, teaching and variety of learning materials (word web, alphabet book, picture dictionaries, grammar books, big book, small book, story charts, with stories on community life, etc.) were developed as a package in both tribal languages and in Odia.

d) The second language is not developed in isolation, but is integrated with the mother tongue through bilingual big and small books, and text is integrated with rich illustrations. The programme follows two approaches. First, it aims at promoting the use of languages as a medium of expression. This is done through the use of the experiential knowledge of children in social context. Second, it also aims at promoting language as an object of thought through the skills of reading, writing and numeracy.

e) Emphasis is placed on making the classroom a dialogic space, with both teachers and students contributing to the pedagogy. The teacher explains a concept, provides concrete examples from everyday lives of children and reinforces the concepts through questions. The process of learning is also localised by children.

f) Teachers play a critical role in implementing curriculum. Where tribal teachers were inadequate or not available, teachers were recruited from the pool of unemployed youths from the tribal community to teach the learners in their own language. These language teachers, called *Bhasha Shikshaks*, work with primary teachers in tribal areas. Where tribal language teachers were available, they were deployed from existing primary schools to act as the mother tongue language education teachers. A training programme was created and implemented to develop skills among mother tongue teachers.

g) The tribal community was closely involved in the decision making of the programme and its implementation. The community participated through the involvement of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRI), whose opinion about the use of the mother tongue and the programme was sought.

h) Members of the community were involved in preparing culturally and contextually relevant theme-based curriculum. They were also involved in the functioning of schools through programmes like *Srujan*, a community-based child-centered teacher-supportive, culturally appropriate programme for retention and achievement of the tribal child. As part of this, the community was involved in organising events like

story-telling, songs, dance, art and craft, quizzes and debates. Community participation was not limited just to acceptance, but extended to include an active engagement to promote the programme.

The programme has had implementation issues in some districts (e.g., materials have been delayed on some occasions). On the whole, the confidence of children was shown to increase during the study period (in addition to increased enrolment and decreased drop outs), such that the government of Odisha is planning to extend the programme to other blocks and include other tribal languages.

The programme is aimed at promoting non-dominant or indigenous languages. Unlike the transfer approach, which uses the mother tongue as a bridge until students can transition to the dominant language, the mother tongue based MLE programme aims at developing children's proficiency in their mother tongues. The mother tongues are used along with the second language and not abandoned once the second language is acquired. The aim of this programme is to promote the growth of the two languages through their use as media of education.

This brings us to another difference between the two strategies. Even though the transitional or transfer model is called a bilingual model, many scholars do not consider it such because of its goal. At best, it is considered to be a weak form of bilingual education. The mother tongue based MLE strategy, on the other hand, is a strong form of multilingual education because of the continued use of two languages as media of education. The larger aim of this strategy is to promote linguistic diversity among non-dominant language speakers.

Neither the first strategy nor the second talks about the curriculum. These strategies follow a curriculum similar to that of the dominant language. In the Indian context, both mother tongue medium (Kannada, Gujarati etc.) and English medium follow the same curriculum. The mother tongue-only pedagogy does not leverage the knowledge of the language that children bring – even if it is Kannada-speaking children studying through Kannada medium. The pedagogy of literacy does not make any cognitive demands on children. Consequently, regardless of the medium, the mother tongue or the second language, learning is poor. In contrast to this practice, in the mother tongue based MLE, the notion of linguistic diversity is expanded to take cognizance of cultural diversities through the contextually relevant curriculum.

Multiple Languages as Resources

Now, we shift our attention to a similar strategy implemented in many countries of Europe and at the formal policy level. Like the mother tongue based multilingual education, this strategy is also aimed at fostering mother tongues while also promoting diversity. It is formal because the policy is binding on all signatory countries.

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages — learning, teaching and assessment (CEFR) is an instrument that assists member states in developing a policy of pluralilingualism. Spain is one of the signatory nations. The bilingual education in Andalusia in Spain is an example of how linguistic diversity is promoted as part of this policy. Schools in Andalusia offer Spanish-only, French- Spanish and German –Spanish medium of education in a graduated manner. A minimum of 40% instruction is through Spanish. In these schools, English is studied as another language. The bilingual sections/schools have assistants who are experts in the second language. They work with subject teachers to teach those subjects through the second language.

An important feature of multilingual education in Andalusia (and other signatory countries in Europe) is the curriculum — the Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL). Its main feature is its dual focus on two languages. It aims at developing content and language in both languages, without a preference for either. For instance, in the French-Spanish classes, students learn Spanish and French. Some subjects are taught through Spanish and some through French. The method of learning is integrated and holistic. In the process of integrated learning, learners learn to zero-in on content-focussed and language-focussed aspects. In engaging with tasks that require complex language to deal with complex curricular concepts and relationships, learners learn to use language for complex thinking (see Table 7).

This strategy of dealing with diversity recognises multilingual education as the use of two or more languages as media of instruction. The strategy explicitly promotes linguistic diversity. The European Commission and the Council of Europe see diversity and knowledge of multiple languages as assets. The strategy is influenced and informed by two shifts in multilingualism. The first shift relates to the way in which one looks at multilingual education. For long, bilingualism or multilingualism was considered in the quantitative sense — additions of language(s). In this perspective, a bilingual consists

of a native speaker of language one (L1) and a native speaker of language two (L2). Several research studies that looked at learning of two and three languages note that this is not a tenable position. These studies highlight the view that multilingualism is qualitatively different from monolingualism.

Table 7
Summary Table for using Multiple Languages as Resources

Approach to Multilingual Education	**Characteristics**	**Examples**
Multiple Languages as Resources This strategy is aimed at fostering mother tongues, while also promoting diversity.		
Multiple languages as resources	This is a formal policy followed by the signatory countries of the *Common European Framework of reference for languages* — learning, teaching and assessment (CEFR).	Schools in Andalusia (Spain) offer Spanish-only, French- Spanish and German –Spanish medium of education in a graduated manner. A minimum of 40% instruction is through Spanish and English is studied as another language.

Using the *qualitatively different notion*, the second shift looks at the multilingual repertoire not as compartmentalised knowledge of each language, but as a linguistic repertoire where language boundaries are extremely fuzzy with code switching as a norm of language use. This view led to the second shift and the idea of translanguaging (Lewis, Jones & Baker, 2012) – a process that indicates that multilingual speakers utilise their languages as an integrated system.

There is very little philosophical difference between mother tongue based multilingual education and multiple languages as a resource approach to linguistic diversity. Both are aimed at promoting linguistic diversity and both follow an approach that integrates content and language. The main difference is that mother tongue based MLE was developed with tribal populations, whereas the multiple languages as resource is meant for all those who reside in countries that have signed up for CEFR. This difference has implications in the curriculum and teacher recruitment and deployment. Since mother tongue based multilingual education has emerged from a cultural perspective; the emphasis on cultural elements is very high. In the CEFR approach, cultural elements are not identified and included specifically; rather these are a natural part of the curriculum.

The Immersion Strategy

The immersion strategy is among the most widely used for dealing with linguistic diversities. Fortune and Tedick (2008) discuss immersion strategy succinctly. In immersion strategy, about 50% of instruction time is for the use of L2 from preschool to Grade 5 or 6. The curriculum focuses on both content and language components.

Immersion programmes are not to be equated with any programme that use second language as medium of education. It is a choice-based public education system where the first language or mother tongue is developed. For example, the English speaking in Canada could opt to have their children learn in an English-French immersion programme. It is a choice that can be made by parents, not one enforced by economic or social conditions. In this sense, immersion programmes are additive, that is aimed towards building bilingual proficiencies. This aspect distinguishes immersion programmes from those that use second language as a medium without any thought to developing mother tongues(see Table 8).

Table 8
Summary Table of Immersion Strategy

Approach to Multilingual Education	Characteristics	Examples
Immersion Strategy Immersion programmes are different from all other programmes that use second language as medium of education. The key difference is that parents (typically middle-class, educated) choose to have their children learn in a bilingual programme. The child's first language is well acknowledged and has a high status in society; but the child also learns a second language alongside. About 50% of instruction time is for the use of L2 from preschool to Grade 5 or 6. The curriculum focuses on both content and language components.		
One-way Immersion Strategy	All the students in the class speak the *same* (usually powerful) first language, and acquire the second language together.	English-speaking Canadian children learning French alongside Or, Finnish speaking children learning Swedish as a second language.
Two-way Immersion Strategy	Native language speakers of two different languages acquire academic content through both the languages.	Native Spanish and native English speakers study together – some subjects through Spanish medium and some through English medium.
Indigenous Language Strategy	Like the one-way immersion, in these classrooms, too, all the children speak the same first language. However, their first language is an indigenous (not powerful) language. Indigenous language speakers are educated through their mother tongue, with English as a subject.	This practice is seen in several parts of United States. For example, the Navajo Community School, Rough Rock, Arizona.

Three models of education are associated with the immersion strategy. The first is the one-way immersion where students are educated through the second language. This is followed in Canada, Finland and parts of the United States. Finland has two national languages — Finnish and Swedish. About 6% of the population speaks Swedish. There has been a gradual decrease in Swedish language proficiency and this has become a matter of concern for Finland. Recognising the value of Swedish and the role that education could play in increasing the vitality of language, the Finnish government took steps to promote education through Swedish. Provisions were made for Finnish children to study through Swedish medium right from preschool. These children develop literacy in both Swedish and Finnish. Underlying this practice is the notion that deliberate attempts need to be made to stop languages from dying.

The second model is the two-way immersion programme (or the dual language immersion). In this strategy, native language speakers of two different languages acquire academic content through both the languages. Native Spanish and native English speakers study together – some subjects through Spanish medium and some through English medium. This strategy is used in several parts of the United States. While English-Spanish combination is predominant, other languages like Arabic, Chinese, Hawaiian, Japanese and Korean are also used with English. The strategy recognises the value of knowledge of multiple languages for all and not just a section of a population, like the speakers of indigenous, minority languages or non-dominant languages. The purpose of this practice is enrichment.

The third model is the indigenous language immersion, in which indigenous language speakers are educated through their mother tongue, with English as a subject. There are variations in the level of schooling at which English is introduced and the duration of its study. Like the mother tongue based multilingual education, the indigenous immersion also emphasises the importance of a culturally relevant curriculum. This practice can be seen in several parts of the United States, for example, in the Navajo community school of Rough Rock in Arizona. The school is organised by the native family groups and elders.

Total Physical Response (TPR) is the primary methodology for native language immersion classrooms, camps and projects. The schools are built and furnished after ‘gramma’s home’ (Pease-Pretty On Top, 2003). The emphasis is on using the native ways of learning and knowing. Learning by doing, learning through oral literature and history, learning through naming traditions, learning from older siblings, learning from apprenticeship with a master to acquire special knowledge,

intergenerational workshops and so on. The teachers come from diverse backgrounds — ranchers, drivers, teachers, activists. The indigenous language immersion programme is meant for indigenous people. Its purpose is to reverse the trend from dying languages to language revival. At the level of student, the kind of learning is seen as affirming, validating and giving expression to indigenous identity and shared knowledge.

Conclusion

This discussion has touched on only a few major models used to deal with linguistic diversities. The differences in strategies in these models are insightful. A critical question for us to reflect on is our view on linguistic diversity — do we see it as a burden, as a fact we have to live with, or as a valuable asset? This will help us arrive at the models we wish to adopt.

Another important learning is that linguistic diversity is not just about diversities in language, and so it cannot be dealt with in isolation. The educational, cultural and the socio-political contexts in which diversity is embedded need consideration too.

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Multilingualism: Concluding Thoughts

Harshita Das and Shailaja Menon

Is it possible to "conclude" a theme that is foundational to every conversation related to language and literacy in India? No. Therefore, we don't conclude this theme as much as pause to evaluate what we have learned through this brief exploration, and look at where that might lead us.

Understanding multilingualism is critical for educators working in different Indian contexts; the nature of this phenomenon shifts according to the region and contexts one works in. The more closely we look at it, the more the categories begin to slip away. In an early contribution to this theme, Saktibrata Sen challenged the very idea of "language", pointing to the permeability and fluidity of linguistic boundaries in many Indian contexts. Trying to determine an individual's *first, second* and *third* languages in contexts where linguistic boundaries overlap can be challenging, especially when the speakers identify themselves as simultaneously being native Garasia, Marwari and Hindi speakers.

Linguistic identities are fluid in multilingual societies like India. Even if a multilingual speaker clearly identifies their first language as, say, Marwari, it is likely that she uses several languages in an overlapping manner in her daily dealings. For example, she may mix in English words while talking to her school-going child; or Hindi while talking to her neighbour from a different region; or Garasia while talking to her parents. This ability of people to meet daily needs in two or more languages (sometimes mixed in together) is how multilingualism can perhaps be best defined within the Indian context (Mohanty, 2018).

From a cognitive, emotional and minority-rights perspective, it is clear that, to the extent possible, children should be taught

Questions to think over:

What role can you play in your own surroundings and workplace – as a reader, teacher, parent, policy-maker – to create an environment that is not just tolerant of, but actively fostering of multiple languages?

primarily in their mother tongues (MT), although what mother tongue is can be confusing. Skutnabb-Kangas (2008) asks, what is a mother tongue? Is it the language that you learnt first? Is it the language that you identify with the most? Is it the language that you know best, or use most? For the linguistically powerful, some of these definitions may converge on the same language; while, for linguistic minorities, the language they are forced to know best or use most may not be the language of their homes or origins. Considering various complex arguments, Giridhar Rao, in his piece, advocated an approach where the MT is the medium of instruction, and all other languages, including English, are taught as subjects.

Shuchi Sinha, in her blog, approached the issue from another perspective — that of power and choice. Drawing upon Lisa Delpit's (2006) arguments, she asked, who gets to determine the language that "other people's children" should be educated in. Do the elite get to push regional language education on the masses, while their children have access to English language education? Is the burden of maintaining the regional languages the downtrodden's?

English makes it much easier for all Dalits to leave caste-based occupations. Will English-speaking Dalits, for instance, be asked to skin dead cows? Will English-speaking Dalits be expected to clean gutters and roads? Will English-speaking Dalits be content to work as menials at landlords' farms? The Goddess English can empower Dalits, giving them a chance to break free from centuries of oppression.

(Chandra Bhan Prasad, 2006)

Various Dalit accounts and biographies, such as Kancha Illiah's (2016), have recounted the alienation that Dalit children often experience in supposedly "mother tongue medium" classrooms, where the upper-caste dialects are so different from the children's home dialects that it seems like a completely different language to them. The social rights argument cuts both ways. On the one hand, it raises the right of linguistic minorities to educate children in their own languages. On the other hand, it also raises the issue of equal access to languages of power and privilege, such as English. It should be noted that Giridhar Rao is not arguing for a position that denies English to the masses. Nor is Shuchi Sinha arguing that English should be used as the medium of instruction. They are simply unpacking the complexities of the arguments around educating children in economically and socially stratified multilingual societies.

Perspectives aside, those working in the field also need practical suggestions on how to approach multilingualism in their classrooms. Nivedita Bedadur and Parthasarathi Misra each have given very useful pedagogical suggestions for providing versions of multilingual education. Bedadur's piece provided pedagogical arguments and methods for including mother tongues of all children in the classroom; while Misra's recommended simple approaches and strategies for teaching English in Indian contexts.

Perspectives and practice are incomplete without policies. Devaki Lakshminarayan's piece took an in-depth look at linguistic policies and models in different educational contexts. Through a detailed description of different strategies for multilingual education, describing their underlying principles, curricular intent and pedagogy, the piece helped us see how education is used to engage with varying types of linguistic diversities across the globe.

We have barely scratched the surface of understanding the complexities of multilingual education. All the authors of this theme advocate some version of multilingual pedagogy for Indian contexts, with not a single one arguing for English-only or regional-language-only education. Policy makers and educators should make it a priority to ensure that young children are given access to mother tongue medium multilingual education, with access to the dominant languages. These ("other" tongues) can be introduced orally initially, while, written forms of these languages could be introduced more gradually. In the absence of policy or support for making the mother tongue the medium of curricular transaction, every effort should be made to use learner-friendly strategies that welcome the child's words and worlds into the classroom.

There are several lacunae in this brief and hurried look at multilingualism in India. We have not touched upon the issue of teacher education in these blog pieces. It goes without saying that teachers need a robust education in understanding the rationale behind multilingual education, and a good repertoire of strategies to support this. Finally, clear-sighted policy making at different levels is critical. But, policy does not spring from a vacuum. It springs from conversations, dialogues, exchanges of ideas—modest conversations that seed ideas, and grand conversations that harvest them. This blog discussion has been an example of the former—a modest exchange of ideas that keep seeding the domain. Perhaps, someday, we will live to see the harvest.

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TALKS, ESSAYS & OPINION PIECES

English for All: Is it Desirable? Is it Possible?

Maxine Berntsen

This article was originally delivered as the keynote address at the International Conference organised by the Department of English, GITAM University, in August 2017. It was published in 2017 by GITAM University Press in a volume titled *English Language and Literature: Critical Perspectives*, edited by Ruth Z. Hauzel and M. Lalitha Sridevi.

ERIK ERIKSON
YOUNG MAN LUTHER

Someday, maybe, there will exist a well-informed, well-considered and yet fervent public conviction that the most deadly of all possible sins is the mutilation of a child's spirit...

Please bear with me if I start with some personal history. I am an American by birth. I first came to India in 1961. I stayed in Hyderabad for two years, teaching English as a lecturer in Vivek Vardhini College, and staying in the home of the principal, Dr. S.D. Satwalekar. Since the family was Maharashtrian, I became interested in Marathi.

From 1963-1966 I went to the University of Pennsylvania to do course work in linguistics, and also studied Marathi and some Telugu. In 1966 I went to Phaltan, a taluka town in Western

Maharashtra, to do field work for my Ph.D. dissertation on social variation in Marathi speech. By 1972, I knew I wanted to settle in Phaltan, and do something creative in the field of education. I applied for Indian citizenship, but received no reply.

Meanwhile, along with finishing my dissertation, I was working with Jai Nimbkar to produce materials to teach Marathi to non-Maharashtrian adults. Every other year, I would go to the U.S. to teach a short course in Marathi to American undergraduates preparing to spend two terms in Pune under the Associated Colleges of the Midwest India Studies Programme.

The year 1978 was a turning point. That April I rounded up a number of out-of-school Dalit children and started trying to teach them to read and write. In December, I was finally granted Indian citizenship. About the same time, the Phaltan municipality fixed up an old *dharmashala* and let us use it for our literacy class. Although I had originally thought of the work as a temporary, non-formal undertaking, it took shape as *Apli Shala* (Our School), a programme which involved enrolling children in municipal schools, and providing additional tuition in reading, writing and arithmetic. We also provided books, school supplies and, when necessary, health care for children and their parents. In 1984, we formally started *Pragat Shikshan Sanstha* (PSS): Progressive Education Society, and *Apli Shala* became a unit of PSS (see Figure 29).

Figure 29. Pictures from *Apli Shala*, Phaltan

By this time, people were urging me to start a full-time English medium school. For long, I refused, saying we had our hands full. Finally, however, I realised that it is not only the children from the Dalit community that need a good education; all children do—the Dalit to the elite. Finally, I decided to start a full-time Marathi medium school—*Kamala Nimbkar Balbhavan (KNB)*—with students from all sections of the community (see Figure 30).

Figure 30. Pictures from *Kamala Nimbkar Balbhavan*, Phaltan, Maharashtra

Though the medium of instruction was Marathi, we also taught Hindi and English. As I am a linguist with a special interest in literacy, I developed a method of teaching beginning reading and writing in Marathi, which we successfully used not only in KNB but also in Zilla Parishad schools in Phaltan taluka.

The PSS approach to early literacy developed by Dr Berntsen emphasises the systematic teaching of letter-sound correspondences in Marathi in a way that it remains meaningful for children. The phonics instruction in this methodology takes advantage of the transparent nature of the Devanagari script, in which the sounds and symbols map onto each other in a regular and transparent manner. Along with decoding, this methodology emphasises meaning-making by bringing children's experiences into the classroom in oral and written forms, creating contextual content, immersing the children in a print-rich environment and introducing them to a wide range of children's literature. The main components of the programme are:

1. A systematic teaching of sound-character correspondences (decoding)
2. Writing down experiences narrated by children and helping them read the account (organic reading/ language experience approach)
3. Reading of additional material—stories, poems, etc. (Berntsen, 2009)

In 2012, after working in KNB for 30 years, I came to Hyderabad to join the new branch of the Tata Institute of Social Sciences which was being established in Hyderabad. In coming to TISS, one of my hopes was to adapt for Telugu the method of teaching reading that we had developed in Maharashtra. In January of that year, we started the project with the financial support of the Sir Ratan Tata Trust (SRTT).

After some months of preparatory work—getting permissions, etc.—we started surveying the government schools we had been asked to visit. Our aim was to work in Telugu medium schools but, to our surprise, some had shifted to English medium in Class I, and the remainder were making the shift that June. In all these schools, the majority of the children had little exposure to English and, in most cases, the teachers apparently did not know any English. After some juggling, we ended up with five schools—three of the original lot, and two new ones. All except one are "English medium" in Class I.

The intervention 'Action Research to Improve Early Literacy in Grades 1 and 2 in Several Telangana Schools', headed by Dr Berntsen is one of the research projects of the Early Literacy Initiative. The intervention has two major objectives:

- To adapt for Telugu the methodology that Dr Berntsen and her colleagues had developed in Pragat Shikshan Sanstha (PSS), Phaltan, Maharashtra, for the teaching of beginning of reading and writing in Marathi
- To test the efficacy of this method by conducting a pilot project in a number of government schools in or near Hyderabad

How do we explain this situation, and how do we deal with it? On one level, the explanation is obvious: not only in Hyderabad, but in cities and towns all over India, poor parents are vying to send their children to English medium schools. We cannot deny that the desire of these parents has a rational basis. They are well aware that thousands of middle and upper middle class Indians are going abroad for higher education—especially the U.S.A., U.K., and Australia. The disadvantaged know that these already privileged people will consolidate their privileged position by completing their degrees and either securing highly-paid jobs abroad or coming back to India to take up well-paying jobs. Whether parents aspire to send their children abroad to study in a university or work in a multinational corporation, a BPO, a travel service, or a shopping mall, to drive a taxi or an auto rickshaw, they feel a knowledge of English is essential. And they are not wrong. But they also feel that unless a child studies in English medium, she/he cannot learn English.

Those from lower income families are, as far as possible, opting for private, low-fee English medium schools. This trend threatens the very existence of the government-run schools, and the government, in some states, is making English the medium of instruction in its schools. This may be politically necessary, but is it possible for our governments to run its schools in English medium, and turn out students who have a grasp of the language? Even if it is possible, is it desirable?

One cannot help asking oneself these questions the moment one steps inside a first grade classroom in a government school, and hears fifty children yelling "A for apple, B for bat." The incredible thing, as my friend Jane Sahi has observed, is that even with this method, some children manage to learn some English. It is a tribute to the resilience of the human spirit, and our amazing cognitive endowment. But such apparent initial success does not carry children very far in becoming literate in English.

The 2016 ASER report for English shows that nationwide only about one-third of the Class 3 children tested could read simple words, though they had been studying them since Class 1. (However, it must be emphasised that learning outcomes for the regional languages are also far from satisfactory. Over the recent years, the ASER reports have repeatedly shown that all over the country more than half the Class 3 children in government schools could not read the Class 1 regional language text.)

Altogether, it is clear that most government schools in India are not in a position to become English medium schools overnight. Continuing the present policy of changing the label of a school without changing the reality will eventually have disastrous

consequences—both for individual students and for the system. State governments all over the country are wrestling with the question: "Experts say that children should learn first in their mother tongue, but if poor parents understandably demand English medium, what are we supposed to do?"

Is there any alternative to instant English medium schools? Is there a way forward? I very hesitantly, tentatively suggest that there may be. But before we look at this, let us look more closely at the question of medium of instruction, and the devaluation of the mother tongue/first language.

The Devaluation of the Mother Tongue

In the title of this talk, I have used the phrase "English for All". To most people, I suppose, the phrase implies English as the medium of instruction. The idea generates a seductive excitement among parents, children and teachers (even those who do not know English, and will have to "teach through English"). Parents and teachers dream of their children learning English, and competing with well-to-do children attending English medium schools. Even children from marginalised backgrounds, given the choice of singing "*Illu, illu, illu*" (House, House, House) or "Johnny, Johnny, Yes, Papa? Eating Sugar? No, Papa" will opt for the latter. Why? Does singing that silly song somehow make them feel as if they have joined a new and beautiful world? Similarly, when asked for the Telugu words for "mother" and "father", children often reply with "mummy" and "daddy". (For the remaining relatives they shift to Telugu!)

The sad thing is that education through the mother tongue has become devalued. Saying one studied in a government regional language medium school is a matter of shame, a confession that one belongs to the disadvantaged. This was not always the case, and in most countries it is not the case even today.

What is the argument for education through the mother tongue/ first language? The mother tongue is an inestimable gift that life gives each of us. It is through experience encoded in the mother tongue that a child builds a picture of the world in his/ her head. The memory of the home and family, the land and weather, the food, songs, stories, festivals, daily rituals—secular and religious—games, weddings, funerals, and early social interactions, occupations, technologies, arts and crafts provides the foundation for all the child's perception, thinking, and learning. The extension of understanding from the known to the unknown enables learning to proceed in an easy flow. If a child is inordinately excited by "Johnny, Johnny", is it because she/

he has never been encouraged to look at her/his experience as valuable and worth sharing?

To reiterate: learning through one's mother tongue makes learning easier and more transparent. The knowledge of the world the child has acquired is instantly on hand to facilitate developing advanced levels of speaking, listening, reading and writing.

From the standpoint of society, a common medium of instruction provides a basis for social communication—although it does not guarantee that such communication will happen. Moreover, one of the functions of a shared common language is that it enables a society to stay in touch with its cultural history. I am not talking only about literature, but about things like traditional cropping patterns (like intercropping grain with pulses) that regenerated the soil, or techniques of storing and transporting rainwater.

A shared common language also gives a society an opportunity to look critically at its social history. The burgeoning of Dalit literature in Maharashtra several decades ago made it possible for large numbers of caste Hindus to get some idea of the Dalit experience. There is still much denial, too much blaming the victim, but it is undeniable that Dalit literature has had an impact.

Some Praise for English

No matter how much we sing the praises of the mother tongue/first language, we cannot deny that for the time being, at least, English is the language of power at both the global and the local level. It is also the premier language of knowledge creation. Aside from the innumerable practical advantages offered by English, it offers a refreshingly diverse view of human experience. I have heard people from various countries talk about feeling claustrophobic when confined only to the discourse in their mother tongue. Although it is an accident of history that English has made such inroads into this country, it would be folly not to take advantage of it. The problem is making English available to all, without sacrificing the advantages of the mother tongue.

A Middle Position: Cummins' Bilingual Model

What I would like to argue is that there is a middle position that is desirable—and maybe even possible—although it would require tremendous political will, and commitment at all levels.

The position that I would argue for is a bilingual model of education. It is based on the theoretical insights of Jim Cummins, a Canadian linguist. Cummins developed his model in the context of Canada, which has much less linguistic diversity than India. Moreover, as I understand it, his model is typically used in situations where non-English speaking individuals migrate to an English-speaking country. Thus, lack of exposure to English is not a problem. In the case of India, on the other hand, a large population speaking one or more Indian languages is aspiring to gain a high level of proficiency in English. These differences notwithstanding, I believe that Cummins offers insights that can point us to a way forward.

First of all, Cummins distinguishes between two kinds of linguistic proficiency: BICS and CALP (Cummins, 1979). BICS (Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills) refers to skills required for everyday social interaction. CALP, on the other hand, is Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency. This distinction sheds light on a phenomenon that has puzzled many of us teaching in Indian universities, where we sometimes find students who speak and write English fluently, but are unable to understand or write an academic paper.

Cummins has another insight that is very relevant for our purposes. This is what he calls CUP— Common Underlying Proficiency. He argues that as a child learns a first language, he/she acquires certain basic metalinguistic skills utilised to make subsequent language learning easier. The concepts referred to above (i.e., BICS, CALP, and CUP) underpin Cummins' model of bilingual education, where two languages are given equal prestige.

A Bilingual Model

In essence, the model I am suggesting is very close to the three-language formula originally proposed by the Education Commission in 1968, and again recommended by NCF in 2005. The difference is that the aim will be to develop schools in which the mother tongue/first language and English are given equal weight by Class 8. This means that in the first three years, the emphasis will be on children's becoming literate in the mother tongue/first language. The major part of each day will be devoted to instruction in the mother tongue. During this three-year period spoken English will be taught, through songs, poems, art activities, art activities and stories. If possible, beginning reading and writing in English will be introduced in Class 3. In later years, the time given to English will increase, and certain subjects (most probably, mathematics and science) will be taught primarily in English. (This is similar to the practice termed "semi-English" in Maharashtra.) Ideally, some subjects (such as literature or social studies) could be theme based, and taught in a genuine bilingual fashion.

Implementing the Model: Problems and Potential

Of course, it is easy to write a paragraph describing an ideal scenario. But implementing it is a task of an entirely different magnitude. It will take tremendous political will, committed leadership, a visionary pedagogy, a huge financial investment and massive development of human resources.

Political will: The slogan of English medium elicits an immediate response. A bilingual medium school does not sound quite as exciting. It will require building awareness in the communities whose children attend government schools. These days the school year starts with *Badi Bata* (Path to School) campaigns to urge parents to enroll their children in government schools. The teachers literally go out in the streets and shout slogans. Drumming up support for the idea of a bilingual medium school will require a quieter, more sustained approach. Not only teachers, political leaders also have to find creative ways to conduct a dialogue with parents on the need for a school that does justice to both the mother tongue and English.

In doing this, we must be careful not to take the line that the poor must take the responsibility to save the mother tongue. This is sometimes said, and the poor rightly answer: "why

should we take on the burden of saving the mother tongue when the rich send their children to elite English medium schools?" The point to be made is that children gain more when given a solid bilingual education.

Children's lack of exposure to English: Cummins' model assumes that children learning English will be a small minority in a community where the majority of the population speak English as their first language. In government schools in Indian cities, this is not the case. Children frequently are from migrant families that come to the cities to work as labourers. The families do not know English; sometimes the language they speak is a tribal language, or the language of a neighbouring state. Strikingly, though, those who do not know the local language when they come to the city learn to speak it fluently in three or four years. They pick it up naturally as they are immersed in it, and they require it for their survival. This is not the case with English, although I would not be surprised to learn that they know quite a number of English words. An interesting possibility is that these bi- or multi-lingual children might learn English faster than their monolingual peers.

Teachers' lack of knowledge of English: Initially my staff and I had the impression that very few teachers in the schools we had chosen knew any English. Gradually, we are finding that they know more than we thought—maybe even more than they thought. Some are enthusiastic about learning English, and are creatively finding ways to engage children in language learning activities. For instance, a teacher (who is bilingual in Telugu and Hindi) wanted to help the children learn the names of various colours. She deliberately wore a dress with many colours, and the class had great fun identifying them.

Of course, there is a great distance between doing this and teaching concepts in science, mathematics or social science in English. Cummins' model assumes that each teacher will be bilingual. However, it may be more realistic to have one teacher for the regional language and another for English.

In any case, major training efforts will need to be launched. However, we need to avoid a lock-step programme. It is important to encourage various groups to create and share training methods and materials. Undoubtedly, internet-based material in the form of videos can be used to upgrade teachers' knowledge of language and content. On the early primary level, forming WhatsApp groups interacting through smart phones can facilitate teachers to share songs, stories, and poems.

Need for school libraries: If we are serious about improving our schools there needs to be a massive investment in school libraries. Unless we give children access to books and teaching learning material in the two or three school languages, all talk of educational reform will be meaningless.

A Final Word

I have proposed a bilingual model of education for our government schools; the model attempts to give equal weight to the mother tongue/first language and English from Class 8 to 10. The aim is that students will have a mastery of both languages on the levels of speaking proficiency and cognitive academic proficiency. This is one model. There may be others. The important thing is that we commit ourselves to develop our government schools so that they can equip students with a robust mastery of speaking and academic skills in both the home language and English. If we are content with merely changing the labels on the schools, parents and children will finally realise that their trust has been betrayed, and their children are not able to hold their own either in their home language or in English. If this happens, the schools will eventually die, and in the process, the spirit of countless children will be broken. We would do well to keep in mind the warning of Erik Erikson given as an epigraph at the beginning of this paper: "...the deadliest of all possible sins is the mutilation of a child's spirit."

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Cummins, J. (1979). Cognitive/academic language proficiency, linguistic interdependence, the optimum age question and some other matters. *Working Papers on Bilingualism, No. 19*, 121-129.

ANNOTATED READING RESOURCES

Understanding Linguistic Diversity in Indian Classroom

Jhingran, D. (2009). Hundreds of home languages in the country and many in most classrooms – Coping with diversity in primary education in India. In T., Skutnabb-Kangas, R., Phillipson, A. K., Mohanty & M., Panda (Eds.), *Social justice through multilingual education*, (pp. 250–267). Bristol: Multilingual Matters.

This chapter helps the reader understand the scope of linguistic complexities in Indian classrooms, and the challenges this creates for learning and teaching. Jhingran begins by stating that children who learn through a language they cannot fully understand in primary grade classrooms face enormous difficulties—both cognitively and socio-emotionally. Later in the chapter, he estimates that approximately 25% of the students in primary grade classrooms in India face such difficulties. Yet policies that have been formulated for language education have been notoriously ineffective in addressing them. Jhingran ends by describing a variety of ways out of this situation, although he acknowledges that very few have been tested in Indian contexts.

Menon, S., Viswanatha, V., & Sahi, J. (2014). Teaching in two tongues: Rethinking the role of language(s) in teacher education in India. *Contemporary Education Dialogue, 11(1)*, 41–65. https://doi.org/10.1177/0973184913509752

This article is a sharing of emergent ideas about the potential role of languages in teacher education (TE) programmes in multilingual contexts in India. The authors contextualise the discussion by describing the situation vis-à-vis languages and language teaching in India. Next, they develop and describe a rationale for adopting a bilingual/multilingual position in TE programmes in India. Finally, they describe a few possibilities for the practice of language teaching.

Skutnabb-Kangas, T., & McCarty, T. L. (2008). Key concepts in bilingual education: Ideological, historical, epistemological, and empirical foundations. In *Encyclopaedia of language and education (Vol 5)* (2nd ed.) (pp. 3-17). New York: Springer. Retrieved from http://www.tove-skutnabb-kangas.org/pdf/Key_concepts_in_bilingual_ education_Tove_Skutnabb_Kangas_and_Teresa_L_McCarty.pdf

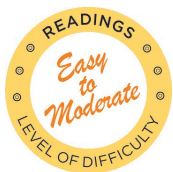
This document helps readers with concepts that may be new, as the authors define and unpack key concepts in bilingual/ multilingual education. The focus is on terms and concepts encountered most frequently in the research and pedagogical literature. The team at ELI has created an abridged version with permission from the authors.

Abridged: http://eli.tiss.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Multilingualism_KeyConcepts-Abridged-table.pdf

Unabridged: http://www.tove-skutnabb-kangas.org/pdf/Key_concepts_in_bilingual_education_Tove_Skutnabb_Kangas_and_Teresa_L_McCarty.pdf

Multilingual Education: Planning and Policy

Centre for Early Childhood Education and Development. (2015). *Multilingualism in early childhood education classrooms: Rationales, challenges and possibilities—a policy brief*. New Delhi: Ambedkar University.

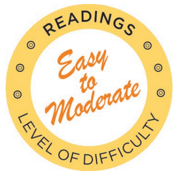


This policy brief focuses on the issue of multilingualism in early childhood classrooms. It is in agreement with NCF 2005 in terms of viewing multilingual classrooms as a possibility and a resource rather than a challenge. It builds on research and suggests how teachers can promote linguistic diversity and ensure that learning takes place in a non-threatening, welcoming environment.

The paper engages with these questions: What is the role of language policy with respect to multilingualism in India? Why do we need to address multilingualism in early learning? How can we promote multilingualism through ECE? The document ends by making recommendations for multilingual education in early childhood classrooms.

Link: http://eli.tiss.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Multilingualism-in-Early-Childhood-Settings_CECED.pdf

Granville, S., Janks, H., Mphahlele, M., Reed, Y., Watson, P., Joseph, M. & Ramani, E. (1998). English with or without g(u)ilt: A position paper on language in education policy for South Africa. *Language and Education, 12 (4)*, 254-272.

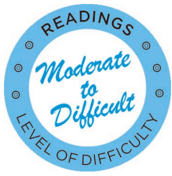


The aspiration for English as the medium of instruction is not an Indian one alone. Set in the context of South Africa, this paper takes on the national Language Plan Task Group (LANTAG, 1995) that proposed a plan for preserving South Africa's nine African languages through a multilingual education policy. The authors of this paper take on a somewhat controversial position by arguing that any policy aiming to challenge the domination of English must essentially recognise the need to provide equal and quality access to the language of power (i.e., English) to every child, especially those from historically disadvantaged and marginalised groups. It is only through quality access to the dominant language as well as her own language that a student can survive and critically challenge the politics of power that operates through languages. Articulate in its recommendations, this paper would be useful for anyone interested in the domain of language in education policies.

Groff, C. (2017). Language and language-in-education planning in multilingual India: A minoritized language perspective. *Language Policy, 16 (2)*, 135–164.

This comprehensive article explores India's linguistic diversity from a language policy perspective, emphasising policies relevant to linguistic minorities. It would be of interest to policy makers and students wishing to get a bird's eye perspective on language planning for linguistic minorities in India. However, we draw readers' attention particularly to the two appendices at the end of the article, one that provides a bird's eye view of the history of colonial language-in-education planning in India, and another that provides a snap-shot of post-independence planning of language-in-education, including the famed three-language formula. Under the Creative Commons License agreement, these appendices are presented here for quick reference: http://eli.tiss.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Cynthia-Groff_Appendix-1-2.pdf

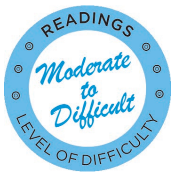
Mohanty, A., Panda, M., & Pal R. (2010). Language policy in education and classroom practices in India: Is the teacher a cog in the policy wheel? In Menken, K., & García, O. (Eds.). *Negotiating language policies in schools: Educators as policymakers*. New York: Routledge.



Readers interested in language policy implementation will find this piece useful. The chapter describes in detail the ground realities of primary education in India, where a severe lack of resources and inadequacy of training often leads to chaotic implementation of language policies, marginalising and pushing out minority cultures and languages. However, the chapter also brings stories of great resilience and resourcefulness from the ground, where teachers have synthesised their methods to interact creatively with the multilingual realities of the children.

The question posed in the title of the chapter, of whether a teacher is only another cog in the policy wheel, seems to have no easy answer. The authors bring us stories from both sides; hazardous consequences of ill-implemented policies as well as locally-led, relevant, meaningful responses to these gaps.

Mohanty, A., Panda, M., Phillipson, R., & Skutnabb-Kangas, T. (2009). *Multilingual education for social justice: Globalising the local*. New Delhi: Orient BlackSwan.



This is a must-read for those interested in a serious study of issues in the domain of multilingual education (MLE). It attempts to show that it is essential that the gap between theory and practice in MLE be bridged in complex sociolinguistic contexts. Scholars, theorists and practitioners come together to provide both theoretical and pedagogical analyses and insights into MLE for minority, marginalised and indigenous communities. English language education is carefully considered in some chapters— especially its homogenising and hegemonising influence, leading to an erosion of linguistic diversity in communities. Experiences from diverse continents and contexts—e.g., Asia, Europe, Africa, North and South America—are drawn upon to examine issues in the education of linguistic and cultural minority students, with an intent to caution against uninformed policy making.

Nag, S. (2017). Theoretical assumptions regarding the mind-culture-language relationship underlying models of multilingual education in India and their impact on resulting practices. In H., Coleman (Ed). *Multilingualism and development: Selected proceedings of the 11th language and development conference* (133-150). London: British Council.

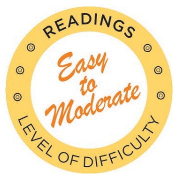
What are the underlying assumptions of Multilingual Education (MLE) programmes in India? Only a few Indian states—Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, Chattisgarh and Assam—have MLE policies or programmes. But a closer look at the MLE programmes in those states reveal an important issue—they use the mother tongue mainly as a "bridging tool" to help students transition to the mainstream languages.

Shivani Nag contrasts these MLE programmes with an alternative—MLE plus—based on the work of Professors Ajit Mohanty, Minati Panda and their team. MLE plus does not see mother tongue as a bridging tool, but aims to foster mother tongue development for its own sake—as a cultural and linguistic resource for students and their communities. Practitioners might be especially interested in pages 140-147, where rich descriptions of classroom practices in the MLE and MLE plus classrooms are contrasted.

Link: http://www.langdevconferences.org/publications/2015-NewDelhi/Chapter8-TheoreticalassumptionsMLEmodelsinIndia-ShivaniNag.pdf

Multilingual Education in Classrooms

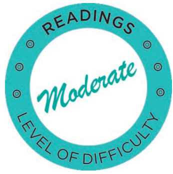
Cook, V. (2001). Using the first language in the classroom. *Canadian Modern Language Review, 57(3)*, 402-423.



There is a time-honoured view in second language teaching that use of the first language (L1) should be avoided in the second language (L2) learning classroom. Vivian Cook reviews historical reasons for educators being discouraged from using L1 in L2 classrooms. In the second half of the chapter, he argues convincingly that the L1 can be brought in as a meaningful resource into L2 learning, and suggests various appropriate uses in the classroom, such as to convey meaning, explain grammar, for managing and organising the classroom, during collaborative learning among students, and so on. This is a slightly long and dense, but important piece for educators working with multiple languages in the classroom.

Link: http://www.est-translationstudies.org/research/2012_DGT/documents/2001_cook.pdf

Cummins, J., & Early, M. (2011). *Identity texts: The collaborative creation of power in multilingual schools*. Stoke on Trent: Trentham Books.



The book helps the reader understand the use of identity texts as a pedagogical tool. Identity texts can be defined as the products of students' creative work or performances carried out within the pedagogical space put together by the classroom teacher. Students invest their identities in the creation of these texts— which can be written, spoken, signed, visual, musical, dramatic, or combinations in multimodal form. The text then holds a mirror up to students in which their identities are reflected back in a positive light. When students share identity texts with multiple audiences (peers, teachers, parents, grandparents, sister classes, the media). They are likely to receive positive feedback and affirmation of the self in the interaction with these audiences.

The authors assert that identity texts are a powerful pedagogical tool to promote equity for students from marginalised social backgrounds, and when adopted as a strategy, they can boost the success of a multilingual classroom.

Schwarzer, D., Haywood, A., & Lorenzen, C. (2003). Fostering multiliteracy in a linguistically diverse classroom. *Language Arts, 80 (6)*, 453-460.

This article, set in the context of United States, addresses questions relevant to Indian educators working in multilingual settings. It asks how a monolingual teacher can support linguistic diversity in a classroom of children who speak many different native languages. The authors start with the assumption that strategies effective for developing literacy for a monolingual child are also effective for helping children develop literacy in their mother tongue even if the teachers do not speak all the languages of the students. While multiliterate teachers who know all the languages in the classroom are ideal, even monolingual teachers could create a classroom environment and culture that actively makes multilingual resources available to all the children. The article also suggests some specific strategies.

Link: https://www.csun.edu/~bashforth/305_PDF/305_ME3/LanguageVarieties/LanguageVarities_LangArts/FosteringMultiliteracyMonolingualTeacher_LA_Jul2003.pdf

Viswanatha, V. (2016). Re-visioning translation for multilingual education in India. In D. Merkle, G. Lane-Mercier & J. Koustas (Eds), *Plurilinguisme et pluriculturalisme. Des modèles officiels dans le monde* (pp. 107-124). Presses de l'Université de Montréal.

This paper begins by describing the complexity of Indian multilingualism, the natural richness of its use in day to day life vis-a-vis its constricted usage within the spheres of education. With this, it makes a case for thoughtfully designing language policies such that they aren't reductive of the multilingual nature of the society, and at the same time address community aspirations for English. The paper pushes for using the process of translation as an effective teaching pedagogy in multilingual classrooms. It details interesting anecdotes from the author's classroom where translation was used to understand the changing nature of idioms across cultures and languages.

Resources for Practitioners

Centre for Learning Resources. (n.d.) CLR bilingual materials for language learning and recreational reading. Retrieved from http://eli.tiss.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/CLR-Bilingual-Reading-Materials.pdf

How can we facilitate second language learning? Bilingual books can serve as useful resources for second language learning. CLR has created a range of books, details for which can be found by following the link given.

Centre for Learning Resources (n.d). CLR 'bridge' materials for transition from home language (tribal) to school language. Retrieved from http://eli.tiss.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/CLR-Materials-for-Transition-Home-Language-School-Language.pdf

What are ways in which one could ease the transition of tribal or disadvantaged children from their home language to the regional medium of instruction? Presented here are useful "bridge" materials developed by Centre For Learning Resources (CLR).

Ilaiah, K.S (2015). Dalits and English. *Deccan Herald.* Retrieved from https://www.deccanherald.com/content/137777/dalits-english.html

Kancha Ilaiah, noted Dalit activist makes a case for English education for those oppressed and marginalised by generations of caste based discriminations.

Kurrien, Z. (2016). Effective bilingual teaching and learning of spoken English through radio. In D. Nawani (Ed.) *Teaching-learning resources for school education*. New Delhi: SAGE Publications. Retrieved from http://eli.tiss.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Zakiya-Kurrien-Bilingual-Teaching-and-Learning-of-Spoken-English.pdf

What are the ways in which we could make sure that students from disadvantaged rural and urban communities get familiar with a new language such as English, which they hardly get to hear in their immediate surroundings? What kind of resources do we need to accomplish this task? Read on to find out how using the bilingual radio as a teaching learning resource could be a great idea to explore!

National Multilingual Education Resource Centre (NMRC). https://www.nmrc-jnu.org/nmrc_about_us.html

National Multilingual Education Resource Centre is funded by UNICEF and it came into existence as a result of a continued collaboration between MLE interest groups as well as individual MLE professionals. It has been led by Dr. Ajit Mohanty and Dr. Minati Panda. It is a resource-cum-research facility aiming to provide the required institutional level support and initiative for promotion of Multilingual Education (MLE) particularly for tribal children in different states in India.

Pathak, M. (2013). India becoming graveyard of languages: Ganesh Devy. *Live Mint*. Retrieved from https://www.livemint.com/Opinion/vIbx7ZUHxvTQMbwboNYHPI/India-is-becoming-a-graveyard-of-languages.html

Ganesh Devy, noted activist and writer, in an interview with Maulik Pathak helps bring the readers' attention to the complexities involved in India's linguistic realities, and why we need to start thinking of saving dying languages.

Rajasekaran, S. & Kumar, R. (n.d.). Challenges and strategies for multilingual education in India. Retrieved from http://www.fortell.org/content/challenges-and-strategies-multilingual-education-india

In this paper, key challenges and possible strategies are identified for supporting multilingualism education in India and for promoting its understanding and value.

Sinha, S. (2018). Creating spaces for child's language within the classroom. Hyderabad: Early Literacy Initiative, Tata Institute of Social Sciences. Retrieved from http://eli.tiss.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/ELI-Handout-2-Multilingualism-.pdf

Shuchi Sinha writes about why it is important to conceive of and create multilingual classrooms. Creating spaces for a child's language holds consequences both for the child's comprehension as well as for the rightful inclusion of her identity, culture and experiences. The brief ends with some useful tips on creating a multilingual environment within classrooms.

CONTRIBUTORS

NIVEDITA V. BEDADUR

Nivedita V. Bedadur is working as visiting faculty in the University Resource Centre of Azim Premji University, Bangalore. She is currently supporting textbook writing in Sikkim while facilitating courses for teachers and teacher educators in the area of early literacy, language teaching and child development and learning. She has written English textbooks for Class VII, CBSE and ICSE, published by Indiannica (formerly Encyclopedia Brittanica). She can be contacted at nivedita@azimpremjifoundation.org.

MAXINE BERNTSEN

Maxine Berntsen first came to India in 1966, and spent two years teaching at Vivek Vardhini College in Hyderabad, staying at the home of Dr. S. D. Satwalekar, principal of the college. While in Hyderabad, she also started studying Telugu and Marathi. In 1963, she returned to the U.S. to do course work for a Ph.D. in linguistics, and in 1966 she returned to India to do field work for her dissertation on sociolinguistic variation in the speech of Phaltan, a taluka town in western Maharashtra. Along with competing her thesis, she also collaborated with Jai Nimbkar in developing a set of 10 books to teach Marathi to adult non-Maharashtrians. From 1970 to 1999, she went to the U.S. every other year to teach Marathi to students from the Associated Colleges of the Midwest who were preparing to spend a year in Pune. In 1978, she renounced her American citizenship and became an Indian citizen. That same year, she started working with out-of-school children, and in 1984 founded the Pragat Shikshan Sanstha (PSS). The PSS had three components: Apli Shala, a support programme for Dalit children; Kamala Nimbkar Balbhavan, a full-time Marathi medium school; and an Outreach Programme, which later became the Centre for Language, Literacy and Communication.

When the TISS MA in Elementary Education was being set up, Maxine and Jane Sahi developed the course in First Language Pedagogy, which they taught from its inception until last year. In 2012, she was invited to join the new TISS campus at Hyderabad as Professor Emerita. At present, she is teaching one course in TISS, and heading an ELI project to adapt for Telugu the reading approach she had originally developed for Marathi.

She has received many awards for her work, the most recent being Marathi Abhyasak Puraskar, an award from the Maharashtra government for her work in Marathi. A sketch of her life and work was also included in the volume *Daughters of Maharashtra.* For her 80th birthday, in 2015, Sujata Noronha and Jane Sahi brought out *Threading Texts within Contexts*—a selection of her poetry and her writings on language and education.

HARSHITA V. DAS

Harshita V. Das works as a Project Coordinator with the Early Literacy Initiative. She has an M.A. in Education from Azim Premji University, Bangalore. She has worked as a teacher at an alternative school in Bangalore, and has worked with preprimary and primary teachers in a low income private school, where she supported them with the teaching and learning of English language. She has also volunteered at an NGO that works with children of a migrant labour community, where she co-taught Kannada and English, and has actively participated in the setting up and functioning of a library in the government school that hosts the NGO.

Her key areas of interest are critical literacy, language and culture, with an emphasis on the idea of balanced bilingualism. She is very fond of children's literature and the idea of engaging young children with it. When she os not going crazy collecting children's literature you can find her happily getting her hands dirty with clay and paint. She feels a deep connect with birds in the wilderness and stars in the vast sky.

DEVAKI LAKSHMINARAYAN

Devaki Lakshminarayan is currently a faculty at Azim Premji University. She holds a Ph.D. in Psycholinguistics from the University of Mysore (1987) and has completed her post-graduation in Psychology from Bangalore University. She also holds a Masters in Clinical Linguistics from the University of Groningen, Netherlands. Prior to this, she was with the Central Institute of Indian Languages, Mysore. Her areas of interests are language learning, bilingualism and bilingual education, and relation between language and cognition.

SHAILAJA MENON

Shailaja Menon is Professor and Programme-in-charge of the Early Literacy Initiative at Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Hyderabad. Concurrently, she also works as visiting faculty in the area of Language and Literacy at the School of Education, Azim Premji University, Bangalore.

Shailaja has completed BA (Psychology) from Delhi University, M.Sc. (Child Development) from MS University, Baroda, and Ph.D. in Literacy, Language and Culture from the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor. Prior to joining Azim Premji University, she has taught at the University of Colorado, Boulder, and at Jones International University. She led a longitudinal project, Literacy Research in Indian Languages (LiRIL; 2011-2017), investigating the teaching and learning of early language and literacy in Maharashtra and Karnataka. She is a co-editor of the volume: Childhoods in India: Traditions, Trends and Transformations (2017).

At Azim Premji University, Shailaja offers courses related to early literacy, children's literature, child development and learning, curriculum and pedagogy in the early years, and research methods. Shailaja is also a key anchor of the bi-lingual annual children's literature festival, KathaVana, hosted by Azim Premji University (2012-present).

She has served on the jury for the Hindu Literature for Life awards for Children's Literature (2016; 2017), and Sir Ratan Tata Trust's Big Little Book Award (2016). Shailaja's publications have appeared in international and Indian journals, and she serves on several advisory committees that are currently shaping policy and practice related to early literacy in India.

PARTHASARATHI MISRA

Parthasarathi Misra is a Faculty at Azim Premji University. He teaches Curricular Material Development in Language and English Language Proficiency courses at the university and is involved in designing courses for the professional development of teacher educators. Besides an MA in English from the University of Nottingham, United Kingdom, he has a Ph.D. in Linguistics from the University of Calcutta and a Postgraduate Diploma in Teaching English from the English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad. He has been working in the field of language, language teaching and teacher education for more than three decades. His areas of interest are stylistics, English language teaching, material production and textbook writing. Dr Misra writes regularly on language and language teaching on his blog http://indiaelt.wordpress.com. His book An *Introduction to Stylistics: Theory and Practice* was published by Orient Black Swan, New Delhi.

GIRIDHAR RAO

Giridhar Rao is with Azim Premji University where he teaches courses on multilingual education, language policy, Esperanto and linguistic democracy, and science fiction. Earlier, in Hyderabad, he taught similar courses at International Institute of Information Technology. Before that he was editor and public awareness officer at the crops research institute ICRISAT.

His doctoral work on science fiction led him to learn the language Esperanto. He is a member of the Academy of Esperanto, and active in the local and worldwide movements. Giridhar's blog in English on language and education, Bolii, is at http://bolii.blogspot.com. His Esperanto blog on the same themes is at http://www.ipernity.com/blog/giridhar.

SAKTIBRATA SEN

Saktibrata Sen is the Literacy Director at *Room to Read*. *Room to Read* works works across multiple countries, with a keen focus on literacy and gender equality in education.

SHUCHI SINHA

Shuchi Sinha is an alumna of Azim Premji University, Bangalore and has been working as a Communications Consultant with the ELI Blog and Dissemination team. Before this, she has worked as a teacher at Adharshila Learning Centre, a school for tribal children in rural Madhya Pradesh, and as an Academic Coordinator at the Organization for Early Literacy Promotion (Ajmer, Rajasthan), an organization dedicated to implementing meaningful early literacy ideas and practices in highly challenging contexts.

Amongst many things that interest her, she finds her heart almost always returning to examine the idea and possibilities of Critical Literacy. She believes that language holds tremendous emancipatory potential and possibilities, and that each child, irrespective of her context, must be given an environment to develop a sense of love and fearlessness of words.

MULLIGATAWNY DREAMS

anaconda. candy. cash. catamaran.
cheroot. coolie. corundum. curry.
ginger. mango. mulligatawny.
patchouli. poppadom. rice.
tatty. teak. vetiver.

i dream of an english
full of the words of my language.

an english in small letters
an english that shall tire a white man's tongue
an english where small children practice with smooth round
pebbles in their mouth to the spell the right zha
an english where a pregnant woman is simply stomach-child-lady
an english where the magic of black eyes and brown bodies
replaces the glamour of eyes in dishwater blue shades
and the airbrush romance of pink white cherry blossom skins
an english where love means only the strange frenzy
between a man and his beloved, not between him and his car
an english without the privacy of its many rooms
an english with suffixes for respect
an english with more than thirty six words to call the sea
an english that doesn't belittle brown or black men and women
an english of tasting with five fingers
an english of talking love with eyes alone

and i dream of an english

where men
of that spiky, crunchy tongue
buy flower-garlands of jasmine
to take home to their coy wives
for the silent demand of a night of wordless whispered love . . .

– Meena Kandasamy

Helping students become literate in a multilingual country like India is a daunting task! Students often have to navigate home languages that are different from the medium of instruction at school; and then learn additional languages like English while at school. Teachers have to help young readers and writers with learning all these new languages and scripts. There is also very little help at hand, since this is an under-explored area of scholarship or research in Indian contexts. The Early Literacy Initiative thought it was critical to initiate a discussion around issues related to multilingualism in India, and hence took it up as the first of five thematic topics we explored. This book brings together a compilation of original perspectival blog pieces written by scholars and practitioners in the field; as well as related talks and resources. We hope that they are of interest to the reader!