

Action Research Mentoring Scheme (ARMS) 2025

From insight to action: Teachers leading change



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Foreword

Our work in English language learning and teaching is informed by both international and Indian research. We recognise that English can be a powerful skill for opportunity. However, in contexts where students are first-generation learners or where English is not part of daily life, multilingual pedagogies are not optional, they are essential.

The **MultiLiLa (Multilingualism and Multiliteracy)** project (2016–2020) led by a consortium of UK and Indian institutions demonstrated that using students' home languages in conjunction with English in the classroom via translanguaging strategies significantly improved reading comprehension and vocabulary in Grade 5 learners. Moreover, findings also showed that children instructed in their home language outperformed their peers in problem-solving and maths, highlighting that translanguaging supports deeper conceptual understanding.

Our research and experience strongly support the vision of India's National Education Policy (NEP 2020) for multilingual education and the pedagogical use of multiple languages in the classroom. Our current Multilingual Education (MultiEd) research project (2023–26) delivered by the British Council and a consortium of UK and Indian universities highlights pedagogical practices that integrate the rich linguistic diversity of learners in classrooms. By celebrating and

incorporating multiple languages, we build confidence and pride of students and teachers in the classroom and generate learning that can support teachers and educators alike in their professional development. We are proud to collaborate with state education departments, teacher educators, and institutions across India to promote inclusive practices while supporting the demand for quality English language teaching and learning.

The Action Research Mentoring Scheme (ARMS) reflects our long-standing commitment to supporting teachers as changemakers. We award grants to enable teacher educators and academics to mentor a small group of teachers through classroom-based research projects. In 2024-25, the grants were awarded to Gauhati University, Assam, Indian Institute of Information and Technology, Design and Manufacturing, Kancheepuram, and National Institute of Technology Warangal, each leading a project exploring translanguaging, multilingual materials development, and research-informed pedagogical practice in diverse educational contexts. With the guidance from 16 mentors, 54 teacher-researchers got the opportunity to engage in action research, generating classroom-based evidence to address real challenges they face, especially those related to the teaching of English in linguistically diverse settings.

This collection of 17 stories titled ‘From insight to action: Teachers leading change’ from the 2024–25 cohort highlights the power of multilingual approaches in English classrooms. The teacher-researchers featured in this publication have asked bold questions, embraced reflective practice, and found meaningful ways to honour their students’ languages and identities. Their work challenges the assumptions of a monolingual approach and instead demonstrates how home languages or a common link language in the school can support comprehension, participation, and confidence in learning English. The stories reflect classroom innovations in English, Mathematics, and Social Science, showing how these languages can be used as bridges, not barriers to learning. The role of teacher led research is critical. It can help teachers identify and document classroom innovation, drive positive change and professional growth. By focusing on one aspect of their practice they would like to improve, framing specific questions and following a process, teachers make changes that matter to their students, however small. Lastly, each story highlights the value of external challenge and collaboration - a well-documented and critical success factor in effective continuing professional development. Teacher researchers had access to a mentor to discuss ideas, and they have all realised that working with others, their

peers, school leaders, and their students has been the key to change.

As we look to the future, we will continue to advocate for language-in-education policies that are evidence-informed, context-sensitive, and learner-centred. I hope these stories inspire teachers, educators, policymakers, and researchers alike to use all the languages students bring to the classroom as a resource for better learning outcomes.



Alison Barrett MBE
Country Director British Council India

Introduction

When languages speak: researching the multilingual classroom in India

The context

Currently India is abuzz with the implementation of the National Education Policy (NEP 2020) which envisions an education system that builds on the assets and capabilities of our multilingual learners even as they enter school. Teachers are busy developing their understanding of creating bi/multilingual (BL/ML) pedagogies that can provide equal opportunities to all learners in both public and private schools across the country. This is alongside the requirement of syllabus completion and administering tests to ensure optimal learning outcomes for everyone.

In this context, a deeper understanding of what actually happens in the classroom when students make sense (or not) of their lessons is almost entirely in the hands of the teacher and is accessible only to the teacher. Although textbooks enable teachers to go through the lesson in a structured manner, it takes a different shape in each class, every day, in the hands of every teacher, given the diverse nature

of our learners - the languages and the social/cultural diversity they bring to the classroom. How does the student make meaning of the lesson? What is their struggle? What is their learning? What does the teacher do to make this learning happen? Answers to these questions need to be captured, documented, talked about, shared publicly for all of us to learn from.

This publication gives a peek into the agentive work teachers have done in their own classrooms in three regions - Tamil Nadu, Telangana and Assam - and emanates from the ARMS project (2024-25) that the British Council has initiated. This is not the first time that the British Council has given the teachers an opportunity to carry out classroom-based research so that they can exercise their 'right to research' (Appadurai 2006¹): beginning with ELTReP (2013) to now, we have seen several versions of practitioner research in Indian schools and universities (ELTReP 2013-16, AARMS 2017-20, ELTRMS 2019-20 and the present one). A significant development of the initiative has also been the way teacher researchers who were mentees have become mentors in the subsequent editions of the project and elsewhere in the country, clearly signalling a *coming of age* of practitioner research and teachers' CPD in India.

ARMS (2024-25)

There are many unique features of the project this year. In keeping with NEP (2020), teachers have tried to look deeper and critically at their practices in the classroom and have tried to include the full repertoire of students' home languages and cultural experiences as much as possible. Many subject teachers in Telangana (from the NIT Warangal team) have tried to figure out how Science and Math concepts can be made more accessible to their secondary level students, since Telangana now offers English medium education throughout school. The teachers in Tamil Nadu (from the IITD Kancheepuram team) have redesigned English lessons into BL materials and their research involved trying out different strategies: stronger students helping their friends, clarifying tenses through Tamil, translating abstract and complex English words, anecdotes and a host of others. An important finding was that those with strong Tamil literacy benefitted most, underscoring the role of L1 fluency in acquiring L2 skills.

Teachers of young learners in Assam (Gauhati University team) were sceptical of using children's home languages to teach English, given that, 1. they weren't all familiar with children's languages (sometimes as many as nine in one class!),

and 2. they were more confident of the 'direct method' providing as much exposure to English as possible especially when most children didn't have much English outside the classroom. This belief shifted as they started including children's languages in reading and other activities and observed children beginning to see themselves as capable learners.

A significant outcome of this project is also that terms such as translanguaging, code-switching, code-mixing are getting operationalised in actual teaching-learning contexts. Teachers' professional talk, both in formal and informal circles, has clearly seen a shift to a more process-oriented or strategy-based description of their work. Teachers have learnt to reflect on their work and have progressed to a more nuanced understanding and articulation of how children's home languages can be appropriately used in different contexts. Student-created resources such as multilingual word walls, trilingual dictionary will continue to be used and developed. The data gathering mechanisms that they have experimented with are another very effective tool in their hands to interrogate their classrooms enhancing their professional development further.

Where do we, teachers and teacher educators, go from here?

The two strands to this project pose further questions that we need to address quite seriously: one, *the bi/multilingual nature of our classrooms* in fact compels us to do justice to the rich linguistic and cultural canvas that we represent. Some of our old learning on teacher education (TE) programmes, such as the direct method for teaching English, will need to be looked at critically in our future teaching-learning activities. Similarly, till what age/grade should we ideally use home languages to teach English? Are their home languages also developing simultaneously? In fact, TE programmes would do well to introduce a full course on ML strategies for teaching English and other subjects.

Two, *reflective practice as a core focus area*. Teachers involved in this and other practitioner research programmes have consistently shown that they can understand and critically examine their own classroom work in ways outsiders cannot. They can document classroom experiences that can form a rich, practical theory - something which is the need of the hour.

They have enabled us to present ourselves as agents of social change, not just technocrats or skilled workers. However, to share this valuable classroom-based

research with the wider community, we need to enhance our research skills. Doing so ensures that everything we present is both authentic and credible.

We see ourselves and our teachers as partners on a shared professional journey, capable of generating locally relevant knowledge deeply rooted in practice. In this journey, students with their diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds are not merely participants, but essential collaborators.



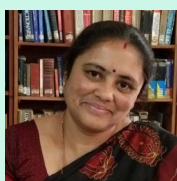
Rama Mathew

Freelance ELT Consultant,
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From silence to self-belief

Pushpa's classroom transformation through bilingual education



Mentee teacher

Pushpa D

Research focus:
Exploring bilingual materials to support students learning



Subjects they teach

English



State/district

**Coonoor,
The Nilgiris,
Tamil Nadu**



Mentor(s)

**Dr. Kandharaja
K.M.C and
Dinesh**



Grades

6-8

I am an English teacher at Panchayat Union Middle School, Sogathorai, in the Nilgiris district of Tamil Nadu. I hold a Bachelor of Arts, a Master of Arts in English, and a Bachelor of Education. For the past few years, I have been teaching students from grades 6 to 8. Working in a rural school comes with its own realities—limited teaching resources, large class sizes, and students whose exposure to English is mostly limited to rote memorisation and textbook exercises.

I noticed early on that many of my students lacked the confidence to speak or write in English. They hesitated to participate in class discussions and often avoided reading longer texts. This made me question my own teaching methods. Was teaching only in English really helping them, or was it making them more anxious about learning?

Around this time, I was invited to join the Action Research Mentoring Scheme (ARMS) by the British Council. Unlike earlier initiatives where teachers had to apply individually, the ARMS project was institutional—the mentors from three different institutes reached out to teachers like me across Tamil Nadu and other states. With the steady support of my mentors, Dr. Kandharaja K.M.C. and Mr. Dinesh, I began looking more closely at my teaching. Their regular feedback encouraged me to reflect on my students' needs.

What was my research focused on?

My research journey didn't begin with a neatly framed question. It started with small observations and daily classroom realities that stayed with me. I noticed my students lowering their heads whenever I asked them to read aloud. Simple writing tasks felt like a huge effort for them, and any time we had to work with longer texts, they would quickly lose interest or switch off completely. These moments made me pause and ask myself: What's really stopping them from engaging with English?

As days passed, I started connecting the dots. I realised their hesitation wasn't just

about vocabulary or grammar. It was about understanding. Many of them came from homes where English wasn't spoken at all. Their only contact with the language was inside my classroom—and even there, it felt distant to them.

I also saw patterns in their written work—spelling mistakes that kept repeating, incomplete sentences, and a clear reluctance to take risks with language. Even when I tried using newspapers or sharing small reading tasks over WhatsApp, I could sense their struggle.

Gradually, two questions became clear to me: was insisting on English-only instruction making learning difficult for my students? Would using Tamil, their mother tongue, help bridge this gap and boost their confidence? This realisation shaped the focus of my action research—to explore how bilingual materials could make English learning more accessible, meaningful, and less daunting.

It ultimately led me to my key research question: *Could English-only instruction limit my learners' comprehension and confidence, and might bilingual support better enhance their learning?*

What did I do in my class?

When I began this research, I knew I first needed to understand where my students stood in their language abilities. So, I decided to conduct a simple pre-test with ten students from my 6th-grade class. I broke it into three stages:

- **Word level:** I dictated ten words in both English and Tamil. Most students could attempt this with some support.
- **Sentence level:** Next, I gave five sentences in English and asked them to translate them into



Tamil. Only two students tried, and their attempts were incomplete.

- **Paragraph level:** Finally, I gave them a short paragraph in English and asked for a Tamil translation. Unfortunately, none of the students could attempt this.

These results were my first clear indication that while students could handle isolated words, they struggled with sentence- and paragraph-level comprehension.

To better understand their learning behaviours, I began using different classroom tools:

- **Teacher diary:** I started recording even small observations about students engagement, hesitation, or participation.
- **Classroom observations:** I made notes of how students responded during different tasks.
- **Video recordings:** Occasionally, I captured short clips of class activities to review later and track progress.

With guidance from my mentors who supported me with weekly sessions, I introduced bilingual teaching step by step.

Some key strategies I used included:

- using L1 (Tamil and other local languages) for clarifying concepts
- encouraging students to answer in both languages, even during assessments
- designing activities that covered all four language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing
- promoting peer support, where stronger students helped others with translations and explanations.
- sharing short reading tasks over WhatsApp, especially during school holidays, to maintain engagement.

Slowly, I noticed students started asking questions from reading passages, guiding each other during group work, and most importantly, letting go of their hesitation to use English, even if imperfectly.

What changed in my classroom?

What I witnessed in my classroom over the next few weeks was something I hadn't seen before. The same children who used to lower their heads when I asked a question in English were now raising their hands, eager to try. Our reading circles, which once felt one-sided, became full of energy and discussion. Students naturally began switching between Tamil and English—not because I asked them to, but because they wanted to make sense of new words and ideas.

One of the moments that stayed with me was seeing two of my quietest students volunteer to share their own short stories. They mixed Tamil and English beautifully, showing creativity and a new-found comfort with both languages. It wasn't just about writing. During group work, I noticed stronger readers sitting with their friends, helping them decode sentences. Some students even started bringing newspaper clippings from home, proudly reading them out in class.

When I compared their post-test results with their pre-test performance, the improvement was clear. Out of ten students, nine could now translate a full paragraph—something none of them could do in the beginning. Their sentence-level translation accuracy had improved by more than half.

But honestly, beyond the numbers, what mattered most to me was their confidence. They were no longer afraid of making mistakes. In fact, many students started asking me for more challenging activities. Parents told me their children had begun reading English newspapers at home, asking questions about new words. For me, that was the real success—seeing English become a language they wanted to use, not one they feared.

“

Before, I used to think that using Tamil in my English class was a barrier to learning... now I realise it is a bridge that supports and strengthens my students' understanding.



Learnings from my experience

Looking back, this action research journey has not only changed my teaching strategies but also, the way I understand my students. Before starting this process, I believed that teaching only in English was the best way to help them succeed. But slowly, I realised that bringing Tamil, their mother tongue, into my lessons wasn't reducing their exposure to English; it was helping them build a stronger foundation for learning it.

One of my biggest lessons was the importance of trusting the process. There were days when I doubted myself, especially when students didn't respond the way I expected. But by sticking with it and collecting evidence from my classroom, I could see even the smallest signs of improvement.

Some key strategies and tools that helped me during this journey were:

- maintaining a teacher diary to record small observations and student responses

- collecting student work samples to track progress over time
- using video recordings to reflect on participation and engagement levels.

Another important realisation was that learning does not stop at the school gates. When I encouraged parents to sit with their children for short bilingual reading sessions at home,

I noticed a clear difference. Students came back to class more confident and ready to participate. This journey has shown me that my students' language background is not a barrier but a bridge to better learning. Going forward, I am determined to share these approaches with other teachers in my school cluster so that more students can experience this change.

Opening doors to understanding Kezia's journey through multilingual reading strategies



Mentee teacher

**Kezia Rani
Vesapogu**

**Research focus:
Enhancing reading
comprehension in a
multilingual classroom**



Subjects they
teach

English



State/district

**Sathamrai,
Telangana**



Mentor(s)

**B. Salomi
Snehalatha**



Grades

6-10

I am an English teacher at Zilla Parishad High School, Sathamrai in Ranga Reddy District, Telangana. I teach students from grades 6 to 10 in an urban setting where my classroom reflects a rich mix of languages. Students speak Telugu, Hindi, Urdu, Bhojpuri, Lambadi, and Odia at home.

For a long time, I noticed that despite attending my English classes regularly, many students struggled with reading comprehension. They could understand the language to some extent, but when it came to expressing their understanding in written form—especially during formative and summative exams—they fell short.

Joining the ARMS project came at the right time. With my mentor B. Salomi Snehalatha's guidance, I was able to pause, reflect, and ask myself: Was language itself becoming a barrier? Could multilingual strategies support my learners in improving their comprehension and confidence?

What was my research focused on?

My research emerged from a simple classroom observation: my students listened carefully in class but failed to translate that understanding into written answers during exams.

I worked with students from grades 7 and 8. Class 7 had students from varied language backgrounds, including Bhojpuri, Lambadi, and Telugu, while Class 8 students primarily spoke Telugu and English as L1 and L2. I wanted to understand: why were these students struggling with reading comprehension in English, and could multilingual strategies help?

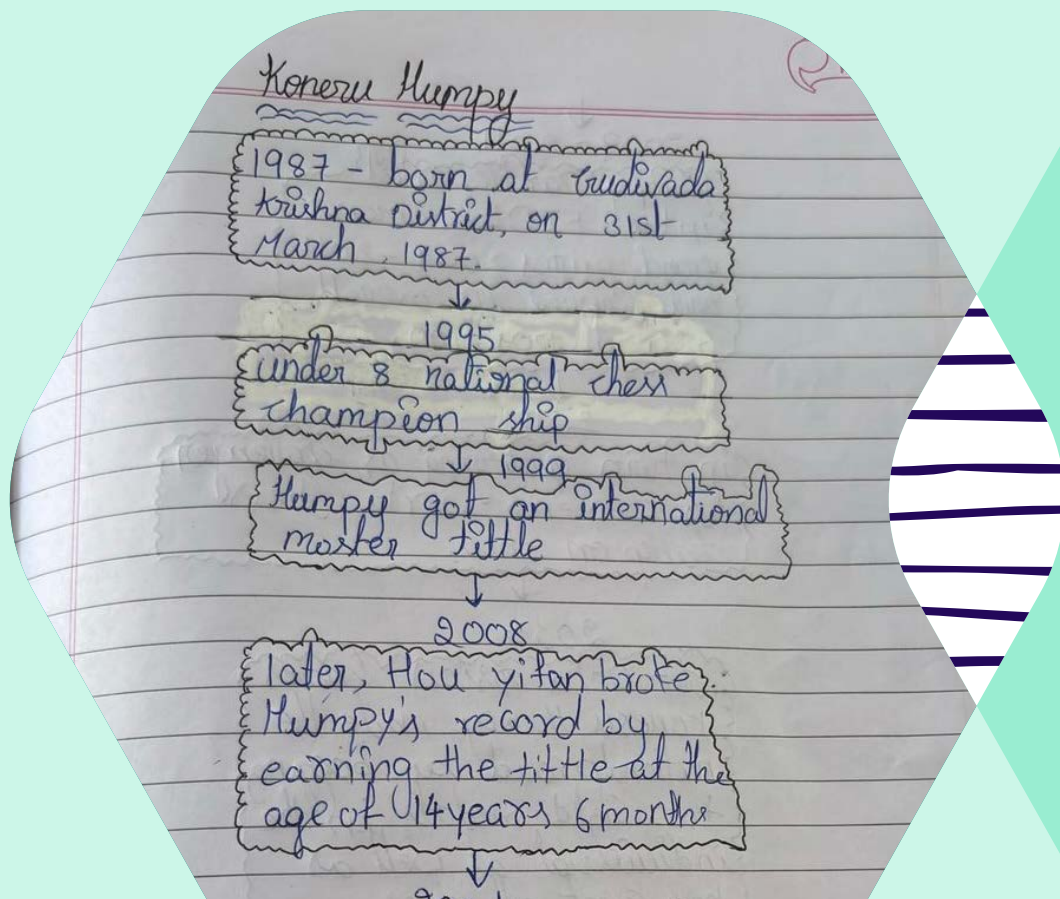
During discussions with my mentor and other teachers on the ARMS project, I learnt about translanguaging and its potential in classrooms like mine. One breakthrough moment for me was refining my action research title after multiple discussions with my mentor. Initially, I had a very broad focus. But after several conversations, I narrowed it down to *“Enhancing reading comprehension among students in a multilingual classroom.”*

Looking back, those mentor sessions played a big role in shaping both my research direction and my confidence as a teacher-researcher.

What did I do in my class?

To address the challenges my students faced, I implemented a combination of strategies rooted in multilingual practices:

- **Using first language (L1) for activating prior knowledge:** Before introducing a new topic, I encouraged students to share what they already knew in their home languages. This made them feel involved and confident about participating.
- **Clarifying vocabulary in L1:** Whenever students struggled with English words, I provided meanings in Telugu or Hindi or asked peer students to help in languages I wasn't fluent in.
- **Graphic organisers:** I introduced the KWL (Know–Want to Know–Learned) strategy using graphic organisers. When I realised that some students found the standard templates difficult, I created simplified, customised graphic organisers tailored for their levels.
- **Peer support:** Students who were stronger in certain languages helped their peers understand the lesson.



One important change in my practice was maintaining a teacher journal. After a face-to-face ARMS training in November, I began recording daily reflections, classroom observations, and student progress notes. This documentation helped me track small changes that I might have missed otherwise.

So, what happened?

As the research unfolded, the changes I observed in my students were both surprising and heartening. Some of my quietest learners who were reluctant to speak even a word in English, started engaging more confidently when I encouraged them to answer in their home languages. I remember one particular day when students from different linguistic backgrounds—Telugu, Bhojpuri, Lambadi—competed with great enthusiasm to explain answers in their mother tongues.

The use of translanguaging and L1 support became a breakthrough. Students who previously found classroom discussions intimidating were now eager to participate. They enjoyed giving meanings in their mother tongue and even started collaborating to help their peers understand difficult concepts.

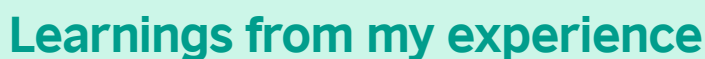
Another turning point was the introduction of customised graphic organisers. Initially, many students struggled with the standard formats I gave them in Cycle 1. However, after receiving feedback from my mentor and reflecting on my observations, I simplified the organisers. I used clear headings and guided prompts, which made it easier for all students to structure their ideas and thoughts. These modifications particularly helped slow learners, who began filling in the KWL charts and tree diagrams with increasing confidence.

A parent's question about the use of Telugu and Hindi in an English class presented a minor challenge. After I explained that this teaching strategy, which is evidence-based, aimed to improve reading comprehension, the parent's concern was resolved.

The most meaningful change for me was witnessing students who once felt lost in the classroom now raising their hands, contributing ideas, and showing visible motivation to read and comprehend English texts.



The students who were slow learners knew the answers, but they never spoke up because language was a barrier.” When I gave them freedom to answer in their mother tongue, they became very enthusiastic and started competing to participate.



Another important learning was that graphic organizers, when customized, can become

This journey has demonstrated to me that valuing our students' languages and identities can significantly impact their learning outcomes.

Words that connect

How Veena sparked vocabulary learning through peer talk



Mentee teacher

K. Veena Devi

Research focus:

Exploring how peer tutoring and multilingual strategies enhance vocabulary development among students in an English classroom.



Subjects they teach

English



State/district

**Medchal-
Malkajgiri District,
Telangana**



Mentor(s)

Vinayadhar Raju



Grades

6-10

I teach English at Zilla Parishad high School, Hasmathpet in Medchal-Malkajgiri District, Telangana. I teach children in grades 6 to 10 in an urban school. My classroom is a thriving multilingual area where Telugu, Urdu, Bengali, Marathi, and other languages coexist with English every day.

When my sixth-grade kids arrived from nearby primary schools, I observed a common challenge. The majority lacked basic English vocabulary. When I posed simple English questions, they would stand up and remain silent, unable to react. Their blank stares remained with me. This prompted me to consider deeply: was this only due to English proficiency, or was it due to insufficient vocabulary exposure and a lack of confidence?

When I joined the ARMS project, I found a way to methodically explore these questions through action research.

What was my research focused on?

The main question that drove my research was simple but powerful: *“How does peer tutoring among multilingual peers enhance vocabulary skills among students?”*

My students struggled with vocabulary not just in English class, but across subjects like Math, Science, and Social Studies. Through informal discussions with my colleagues and through a teacher questionnaire I designed, I realised this was a common challenge across classrooms.

To understand my students’ needs better, I conducted a diagnostic test and distributed questionnaires for both students and teachers to respond and reflect. The student questionnaires were bilingual—written in English and their home language, so students could respond comfortably. Many students shared that they had never been exposed to spoken English in primary school. Teachers also confirmed that students often stayed silent in English-medium lessons but responded confidently when addressed in their mother tongue.

This insight shaped my multilingual intervention. I wanted to create a supportive classroom

environment where students could build their vocabulary skills through peer interaction, translanguaging, and bilingual activities.

What did I do in my class?

I designed my classroom activities around peer tutoring, language games, and contextual learning, supported by technology where possible.

I grouped students based on their home languages—Telugu, Urdu, Bengali, and others. Within each group, I assigned a student leader who facilitated discussions and helped weaker peers understand new vocabulary. This peer support made students feel safe to ask questions and clarify doubts.

We played bilingual vocabulary games and puzzles. For example, I would design word puzzles where the clues were given in Telugu or Urdu and the students had to find the English equivalent. Vocabulary journals became a regular part of classroom practice—students recorded new words they learned each week.

To increase exposure, I used our school’s digital panel board to display vocabulary games and contextual exercises. I also made it a point to clarify



difficult English words by providing meanings in the students' home languages.

Throughout the process, translanguaging became a natural part of my teaching. Students first discussed answers in their mother tongue and then presented them in English. This multilingual flow made vocabulary learning less intimidating and more engaging.

The change I witnessed

As the weeks progressed, I began to notice small but meaningful changes in my students. Initially, when I asked questions in English, most of them would either remain silent or simply stand up without responding. There was hesitation and visible anxiety, especially when it came to speaking in English.

But once I introduced peer tutoring and multilingual strategies, the classroom atmosphere started shifting. Students began working collaboratively in their language-based groups—Telugu speakers sat together, Urdu speakers in another group, and so on. The group leaders took charge, facilitating discussions and encouraging their peers to participate.

The language games and puzzles, designed in both English and the students' home languages, made vocabulary learning fun and accessible. The vocabulary journals also played a key role—students took pride in recording new words and trying to use them in daily conversations.

I also saw students who were previously disengaged start showing interest. Even those who had been reluctant learners began participating during group discussions. Students started using English words during casual conversations and even with teachers from other subjects. One special moment was when my headmaster told me, *"The students who were once silent in class are now speaking in English with their teachers. There's a visible change."*

The results from the self-reported questionnaire at the beginning and end of the intervention revealed a noticeable enhancement in vocabulary usage. I was particularly impressed by the rise in student confidence, their enthusiasm for learning, and their readiness to take risks with language. My belief strengthened that peer tutoring and multilingual strategies not only enhance vocabulary but also foster learners who are confident and enthusiastic about engaging with English.

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Through this multilingual process, I came to know that teaching only in English is not effective. By using students' home languages as a support system, I could help them learn English more easily. This has changed my entire perspective on language teaching.



Learnings from my experience

This action research journey has transformed my teaching philosophy. Earlier, I believed that an English class should run only in English. Now, I realise that using multiple languages in the classroom builds bridges, not barriers.

Working with my mentor was another learning highlight. His constant encouragement, feedback during online meetings, and help with presentations and questionnaire design made me feel supported throughout the process.

This experience taught me the value of planning, reflecting, and adapting teaching

strategies based on student needs. I now feel confident using action research in my future classes, whether it's to improve writing, reading, or other language skills.

Moving forward, I plan to expand this peer tutoring and multilingual approach to my 7th and 8th grade classes, making vocabulary learning a long-term, ongoing process.

For me and my students, this is just the beginning.

Drawing lines, building meaning

Venkateshwarlu's bilingual approach to Geometry



Mentee teacher

A.
Venkateshwarlu

Research focus:

Exploring how a multilingual (bilingual) approach can help 9 grade students develop a deeper understanding of basic geometrical concepts and constructions



Subjects they teach

Mathematics



State/district

**Hanumakonda,
Telangana**



Mentor(s)

**K. Sampath
Kumar**



Grades

8-10

I am a Mathematics teacher at PMSHRI Zilla Parishad High School Madikonda located in the Hanumakonda district of Telangana. I teach students in grades 8 through 10 within an urban environment.

I noticed a persistent issue in my Grade 9 Mathematics classroom—students found it challenging to grasp fundamental geometrical concepts and constructions when I explained them solely in English. Despite my efforts, numerous students struggled to grasp the theoretical explanations or the construction steps during Geometry lessons.

The gap became increasingly apparent during assessments. Students demonstrated a restricted grasp of the material, exhibited inaccuracies in construction, and displayed a hesitance to seek clarification.

Upon joining the ARMS project with my mentor, I started to contemplate whether language was becoming a roadblock in my Mathematics teaching. Can a multilingual approach enhance students' engagement with Geometry?

What was my research focused on?

My research started with a simple yet pressing concern: Why were my Grade 9 students struggling to understand basic geometrical concepts and constructions when taught in English?

I realised that my students were not just struggling with mathematical content, but also with the language of instruction. Terms like “perpendicular bisector,” “locus,” or “tangent” felt alien to them when explained only in English. Even those who were otherwise good at calculations found Geometry particularly difficult.

With encouragement from my mentor, I reframed my teaching approach. I started using a bilingual method—switching between English and Telugu—to help students make sense of these abstract concepts.

My goals became clear:

- to help students understand Geometry concepts clearly by using their home language (Telugu) as a support system
- to boost their logical and critical thinking skills through bilingual explanations and hands-on activities

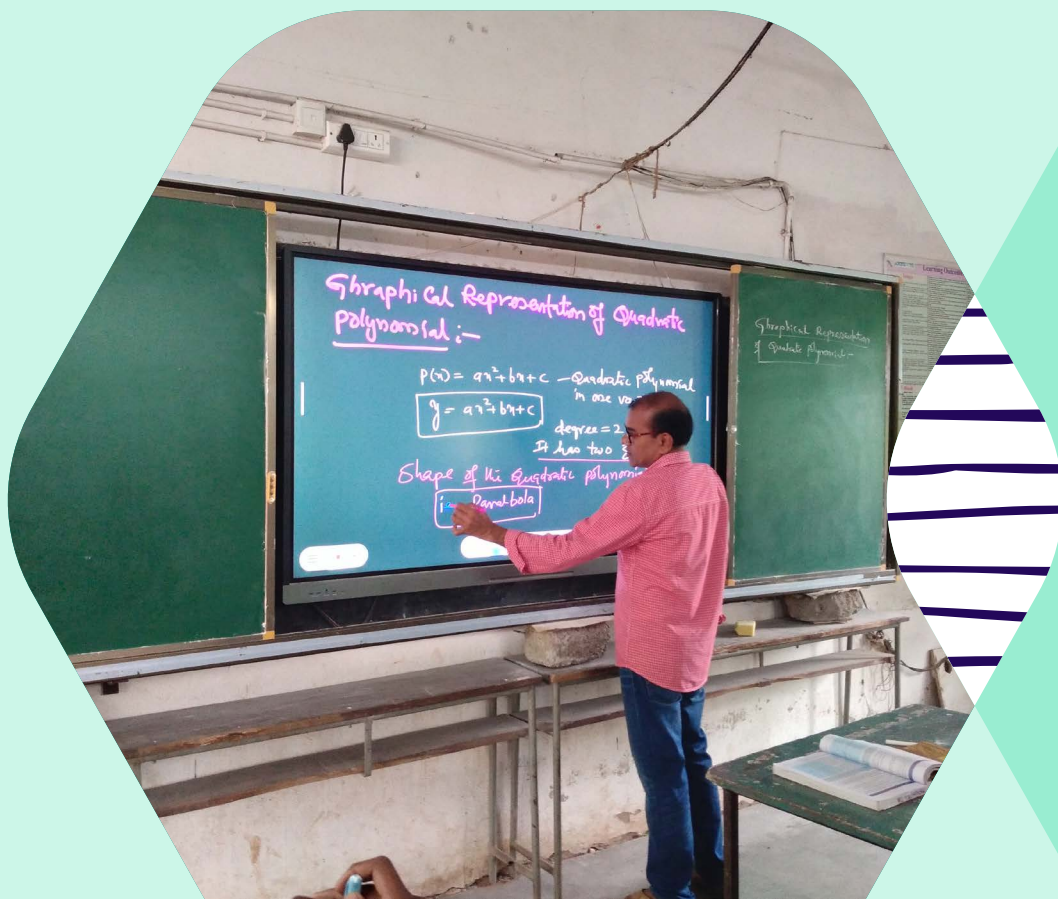
- to build their confidence so they could participate in class discussions and attempt constructions independently

Ultimately, I reached the central question that my research focused on: *“How could a multilingual approach be useful in helping 9th-grade students develop a deeper understanding of basic geometrical concepts and their constructions?”*

My research involved 38 students from Grade 9, whom I paired into 19 student groups. This pairing allowed for collaborative learning and peer discussions, especially when switching between English and Telugu for clarification. I designed my classroom research around pre and post-tests, student-teacher questionnaires, and regular classroom observations to track changes.

What did I do in my class?

To begin with, I conducted a baseline test to assess how well students understood key geometrical concepts. The results confirmed my observations—the understanding was very low.



I then introduced several bilingual strategies with the support of my mentor:

- **Direct instruction with bilingual explanations:** I explained new concepts first in English and then in Telugu, making sure I didn't dilute the core meaning of the terms.
- **Activity-based learning:** Students worked in pairs (19 pairs in total from 38 students) on construction tasks and problem-solving activities.
- **Peer discussions in Telugu:** I encouraged students to discuss the concepts among themselves in their home language before sharing answers in English.
- **Tangram puzzles and visual tools:** I used activities like Tangram-based shape identification, which allowed students to relate geometrical shapes to real-life objects.
- **Use of ICT tools:** I showed digital demonstrations of constructions and narrated explanations in both languages to help visual learners.

Throughout this period, I collected feedback from both students and my fellow teachers using questionnaires. This helped me track not just learning outcomes but also student attitudes towards the new teaching approach.

constructions and explain the steps. They were even attempting to ask me questions in English—a huge shift from where they started.

Other subject teachers noticed the change too. Some shared that students who rarely participated in class earlier were now answering confidently, especially during Science and Math periods.

For me, the biggest takeaway was seeing how language support could unlock students' confidence and deepen their understanding of Geometry.

How did I my students respond?

The changes I witnessed were both surprising and heartwarming. The same students who once hesitated to answer even the simplest Geometry questions in English started participating more confidently.

One day during a construction activity, I noticed something special; students who earlier sat quietly were now leading discussions within their groups. They were explaining properties of geometrical figures first in Telugu and then trying to frame their thoughts in English. I remember one student saying, *"Sir, earlier I was scared to speak in English, but now after discussing in Telugu first, I am able to explain in English—even if I make mistakes."*

By the time we conducted the post-test, the improvement was clear. Almost 80 to 90 percent of students could successfully perform geometric

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Whenever you face challenges in explaining technical concepts, don't hesitate to use the students' home language. With the right balance, bilingual teaching can lead to deeper understanding and better classroom engagement.



Learnings from my experience

This action research journey has changed my perspective on teaching Mathematics. Earlier, I believed Maths was purely about numbers and figures, with no place for language-based adjustments. Now, I know that language plays a crucial role, especially when we want students to develop conceptual clarity.

My mentor's guidance was instrumental at every stage—whether it was reframing my research question, choosing the right strategies, or encouraging me when I felt stuck. His regular feedback helped me refine my lesson plans and classroom activities.

Moving forward, I am committed to continuing this approach in my higher grades and sharing these practices with my fellow teachers. With the Telangana government now encouraging the use of bilingual textbooks, I believe that this is the right time for more teachers to experiment with multilingual strategies.

For me, this research has not just improved my students' learning—it has transformed the way I approach teaching Mathematics.

From hesitation to expression

Bixapathi's journey with bilingual reading support



Mentee teacher

**Bixapathi
Ramancha**

Research focus:

**Enhancing reading
comprehension through a
bilingual approach among
8th and 9th-grade students
from underprivileged
backgrounds**



Subjects they teach

English



State/district

**Hanumakonda,
Telangana**



Mentor(s)

**Kavitha
Neerumalla**



Grades

6-10

I teach English to students from grades 6 to 10 at Zilla Parishad Boys High School, Mulkanoor, Hanumakonda district, Telangana. I work in a rural school where most of the students come from economically and socially disadvantaged backgrounds. Many of them are first-generation learners, belonging to tribal Banjara communities, Sikh families, and migrant families from other states like Uttar Pradesh.

I noticed that most of my students, especially in classes 8 and 9, were struggling with reading comprehension in English. Even reading simple sentences felt like a huge task for them. Their fear of English was evident during classroom activities. They remained silent, hesitant to read aloud, and confused about the meaning of texts.

This experience made me reflect deeply. Was an English-only approach helping them? Or was it making learning even more difficult? With these questions in mind, I decided to participate in the ARMS project when approached by my mentor.

What was my research focused on?

My research started with small classroom observations. I noticed that my students' struggle was not just about vocabulary or grammar, it was about understanding meaning. Their home environment offered very little exposure to English. The textbook language felt distant, and teacher talking only in English made them more anxious.

I conducted a baseline test to assess their comprehension levels. I gave them short passages and asked simple questions. Many students couldn't even identify key words. Others couldn't read aloud fluently. It became clear that their reading comprehension needed immediate attention.

This led me to explore whether integrating Telugu and other home languages into my English lessons could help bridge this gap. Could using a bilingual approach give them the confidence and understanding they needed to engage meaningfully with English texts? This became the central focus of my research.

With the encouragement of my mentor, Kavitha ma'am, I framed my research question, "How can a bilingual approach enhance reading comprehension among class 8th and 9th students from underprivileged backgrounds?"

What did I do in my class?

With the guidance of my mentor, I introduced a variety of bilingual strategies to improve my students' reading comprehension.

Some of the key steps I took were:

- **Pre-assessment:** I started with a simple diagnostic activity. Students read short English passages and answered comprehension questions. This helped me understand their starting level.
- **Storytelling with code-mixing:** I narrated short stories, switching between English and Telugu. Occasionally, I even used Banjara and Sikh languages, especially when explaining key words or ideas.
- **Use of phonics:** I introduced two-letter, three-letter, and four-letter English words, using phonetic drills to help with pronunciation.
- **Code-switching for explanation:** While reading English texts, I paused frequently to explain the meaning in Telugu or other languages spoken by my students.
- **Reading aloud activities:** I modelled reading first, then encouraged individual and group reading by students.



- **Translanguaging:** After reading, students discussed the text in their home language to build understanding and then moved back to English for writing or answering questions.
- **Student-generated questions:** I encouraged students to frame their own questions about the texts in both languages, to check comprehension.
- **Writing tasks:** I gave them small writing exercises like describing their daily routines in English, with the option to use Telugu words where they felt stuck.

For data collection, I used student worksheets, observation notes, and feedback from other teachers. I also spoke informally with students to understand their learning experience.

Beyond the tests and worksheets, the real success lay in the classroom atmosphere. The energy shifted. Reading time, which once felt like a task, became something students looked forward to. Group discussions became lively. Even my quieter students began helping their peers.

This research journey didn't just bring changes in my students. It brought changes in me as a teacher. I learned the power of mentorship, the importance of classroom-based evidence, and above all, the value of respecting my students' linguistic identities.

Before ARMS, I often felt that solving the challenge of reading comprehension was a lonely struggle. But now, I know that with guidance, reflection, and the willingness to try new approaches, even difficult classroom problems can be addressed successfully.

Action and its impact

As I moved forward with my action research, one thing became very clear—this journey was not something I could have managed alone. The steady guidance of my mentor played a central role in shaping both my teaching practices and the outcomes of this project.

As I began implementing these multilingual approaches, I started noticing small but important shifts in my classroom. Students who earlier sat quietly at the back, avoiding eye contact, began participating in group reading sessions. Some of my most hesitant learners started raising their hands to answer questions—mixing Telugu and English at first—but showing clear signs of understanding.

One of the biggest turning points was during a storytelling session. I narrated a story using both English and Telugu and asked students to retell it in their own words. To my surprise, not only did they retell the story confidently, but they also added their own details, using both languages creatively.

The post-intervention assessments showed encouraging results. Students who once struggled to read even a few lines could now attempt full paragraphs and answer comprehension questions. Their fear of English started to fade. They became more willing to try—even if their answers weren't perfect.

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Before ARMS, I often felt that improving reading comprehension was too big a challenge for me alone. Now, I know that with the right support, strategies, and student trust, even the toughest barriers can be broken. This project has shown me that multilingualism is not a shortcut; it is a strategic support system that builds both understanding and confidence among students.



Learnings from my experience

This action research journey has transformed not just my students but also me as a teacher. Before this project, I believed that English learning had to happen only in English. But now I see that **multilingualism is a powerful tool, not a limitation**.

Some important lessons I learned are:

- **Multilingual teaching builds confidence:** Using home languages helps students understand complex ideas without fear.
- **Mentoring matters:** Timely support and constructive feedback from mentors can transform teaching practices.

- **Small changes bring big results:** Even simple strategies like storytelling, phonics practice, and code-switching can make a huge difference.
- **Peer collaboration strengthens learning:** Students learn better when they help and support each other in their familiar languages.

Moving forward, I am determined to apply these strategies in other areas of language teaching, like listening and speaking. I also hope to encourage my colleagues to adopt multilingual approaches.

Letting their voices in

How Priya used home languages to reignite engagement



Mentee teacher

Priya Mishra

Research focus:
Exploring how translanguage strategies can enhance student motivation and engagement in English classes by integrating students' home language with the school language



Subjects they teach

English, Social and Environmental Science



State/district

Barpeta, Assam



Mentor(s)

Dr. Khamseng Baruah



Grades

3th, 4th, 7th, and 9th

I teach English and Social Science to students in grades III, IV, VII and IX at Adarsha Vidyalaya Gomafulbari, in Barpeta district of Assam. Our school is firmly rooted in a rural setting, where many of my eighty Grade 3 learners come from economically challenged backgrounds and have little exposure to English beyond rote textbook exercises. When I joined last April, I noticed that while these children were lively in other subjects, they became quiet and withdrawn the moment we entered the English classroom.

What was my research focused on?

When I joined Adarsha Vidyalaya Gomafulbari in Barpeta, I was assigned to teach English and Social Science to students across Grades III, IV, VII, and IX. It didn't take long for me to notice a pattern—my students were cheerful, expressive, and confident in other subjects, but when it came to English, they grew silent and disengaged. Activities that required speaking or reading in English were often met with blank stares, nervous laughter, or complete withdrawal. I began to wonder: was the way we were teaching English making it harder for students to enjoy or connect with the subject?

Most of my learners come from Bengali-speaking households. For many of them, English exists only in textbooks and exams, not in their day-to-day lives. I suspected that the insistence on English-only communication in the classroom might be acting as a barrier, limiting their ability to engage, express, and participate fully. That's when I framed my research question: *Why are my students not motivated and engaged in English class?*

With the support of my mentor, I decided to explore translanguaging as a classroom strategy. The idea

was to bring in the students' home language, Bengali, alongside English in a purposeful way, using it to scaffold meaning, build confidence, and encourage expression. Through bilingual storytelling, peer activities, and vocabulary-building tasks that allowed the use of both languages, I hoped to create a more inclusive and engaging learning environment where all students felt heard and empowered.

What did I do in my class?

To understand their reluctance, I began with:

- **Classroom observations** across both sections of class III (total 80 students).
- **Informal interviews** with students, colleagues and even parents during drop-off times to gauge their exposure to English at home.
- **A teacher diary** to note day-to-day engagement patterns.

Over four weeks in January, I introduced a new bilingual activity each week:

- **Week 1 – Language portrait:** Students drew a human figure and labelled body parts. When I asked in English, only a handful could respond; when I invited Bengali labels, nearly every child participated confidently.



- **Week 2 – Storytelling competition:** Initially, just ten children volunteered short stories in English. After discussing this with Dr. Baruah, I allowed them to tell their stories in Bengali or a mix of Bengali and English. Participation leapt to around 35–38 students per section, and I saw genuine creativity as they wove personal experiences into their tales.
- **Week 3 – Concept mapping:** Using Environmental Science topics (e.g., “school,” “environment”), learners created mind-maps, labelling nodes in both languages. Stronger readers naturally supported their peers, translating unfamiliar terms on the spot.
- **Week 4 – Debate:** I divided students into two teams—those who preferred to play inside the classroom versus outside and held a structured debate. When limited to English, arguments were halting; once I permitted Bengali, students articulated their points with clarity and confidence.
- In a small post-test of ten pupils, nine successfully translated an entire English paragraph into Bengali—a milestone none had reached in the pre-test.

Beyond test scores, what delighted me most was their newfound confidence; they began asking for more challenges, volunteering answers without prompting, and even practising English at home, as parents reported.

I also assigned daily vocabulary homework—five English words with Bengali meanings—which some families supported at home, bolstering the classroom work.

The results in action

The transformation was remarkable:

- Active participation soared from about 10 to over 70 students in my observations.
- Two of my quietest learners volunteered to share bilingual stories, seamlessly switching between Bengali and English.
- Peer mentoring flourished: stronger readers helped decode passages, and many children began bringing in newspaper clippings to read aloud.

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I watched their eyes light up the moment they could express themselves in Bengali and English, it felt like I unlocked a door they never knew existed.



Learnings from my experience

This action research has reshaped how I view language in the classroom. Key takeaways include:

- **Translanguaging as a bridge, not a barrier.** Allowing home language opens doors to deeper understanding.
- **Flexibility is essential:** Rigid “English-only” rules can stifle creativity and risk-taking.
- **Peer support amplifies learning:** Collaborative tasks build confidence and reinforce skills.

- **Family engagement matters:** Simple at-home reading sessions can reinforce classroom gains.

Moving forward, I plan to extend these multilingual practices across other grades and subjects, collaborate with colleagues to create a school-wide translanguaging community, and explore digital tools, such as bilingual story applications to further enrich our learners’ experiences.

When pictures spoke

Nipa's classroom embraces confident reading



Mentee teacher

Nipa Das

Research focus:

Investigating how translanguaging, picture-prediction charts, and pair-reading can boost reading confidence and comprehension in a multilingual rural classroom



Subjects they teach

English



State/district

**Tamulpur,
Assam**



Mentor(s)

**Nivedita Malini
Barua**



Grades

3

At Adarsha Vidyalaya Nagrijuli, a small government school tucked away in rural Tamulpur, I teach English to a class of 32 lively third graders. Most of these children come from homesteads where Bodo, Nepali or Bengali is the heartbeat of daily life. When I first stepped into my classroom this year, I quickly noticed a paradox - while my pupils burst with energy at playtime, they froze at the prospect of reading aloud in English. Hesitation, decoding errors and a haunting lack of confidence cast a shadow over even the simplest reading task.

My own journey to this point was shaped by early experiences as a learner in a multilingual community. I vividly recall the embarrassment of stumbling over English words when I was their age and the relief I felt when a teacher let me think aloud in my mother tongue. Now, when I embarked on this ARMS journey under the mentorship of my mentor, I carried those memories with me.

I resolved to design a classroom where no child would feel ‘trapped’ between two languages but rather liberated by the rich tapestry of their linguistic heritage.

What was my research focused on?

My action research began with two pressing questions:

1. Does translanguaging help in class?
2. Do picture charts and pair-reading naturally support translanguaging?

These questions emerged as I noticed the persistent silence, decoding struggles, and lack of engagement in my English classroom. I suspected that strict English-only instruction was acting as a barrier. Instead of reducing confusion, it increased anxiety. I wanted to see if allowing students to use their home languages - Bodo, Bengali, or Nepali could create a bridge to comprehension and confidence.

What did I do in my class?

When I first began noticing how hesitant my students were to read in English, I didn’t rush to fix it. Instead, I paused and watched. For a full week, I just observed how they reacted to English reading tasks, who avoided eye contact, who looked to their friends for help, and which words brought them to a halt. I kept a small diary, writing down my thoughts each evening, slowly starting to see patterns. Most importantly, I saw fear, fear of getting it wrong, fear of being corrected, and fear of English itself.

With the support of my mentor, I began planning what could be changed. She encouraged me to start with what my students already knew—their home languages. So, we designed activities that would gently invite those languages into the English classroom.

With my mentor’s guidance, I mapped out a five-week intervention. We agreed on three intertwined strategies:

- **Picture-prediction charts.** Visual cues (for example, local fruits or traditional dishes) would invite students to name items first in Bodo, Nepali or Bengali, then in English.



- **Pair-reading.** Mixed-language pairs would read short texts aloud, pausing to clarify tricky words in their own mother tongue before reconvening in English.
- **Multilingual word walls.** A living display featuring key vocabulary alongside translations in all represented home languages, so children could self-scaffold on demand.

I documented every lesson in my ‘teacher’s diary’, noting who volunteered, how often peers helped each other, and the frequency of decoding errors. Regular check-ins with families verified that these strategies were resonating beyond my classroom walls, encouraging informal reading routines at home.

The ripple effect

The transformation in my classroom was both visible and emotional. The same students who once avoided eye contact now eagerly raised their hands. One of my quietest students, who had never spoken in English class, proudly read a sentence in English after explaining it to his friend in Bodo. That moment captured everything I had hoped for.

Group reading became livelier and more inclusive. Students leaned on each other for clarification and even laughed while switching between languages. It wasn’t just about decoding anymore—it was about understanding, connecting, and enjoying the process of learning.

Parents told me their children were now trying to read English signs at home, sometimes even explaining them to siblings. Students who once whispered their answers now spoke with pride. The fear of English was fading and with it, the fear of failure.

This shift wasn’t only about language. It was about confidence, joy, and a renewed sense of agency. Children who had once been invisible in the English classroom began to take ownership of their learning. And I, as their teacher, saw that allowing translanguaging didn’t reduce their English learning, it only *enabled* it.

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Today, I see myself not just as a teacher, but as a lifelong learner and change-maker. I now tell myself, if you begin with what children know, they will take you farther than you imagined.



Learnings from my experience

This journey has changed me not just as a teacher, but as a person. In the beginning, I believed I had to follow the rulebook: “English medium means only English in the classroom.” But what I saw in my students proved otherwise. The moment I allowed them to bring their own language into the learning process, their confidence bloomed. The same children who once shied away from reading now raised their hands and offered to help each other.

One of my most vivid memories is of a shy little boy who had never spoken during English class. During a pair-reading session, he quietly explained the meaning of a word in Bodo to his friend and then read the sentence fluently in English. He looked up at me, half-smiling, and said, “Ma’am, I understand now.” That moment will stay with me forever.

I’ve learned that when children feel seen, when their language, their identity, and their home are welcomed into the classroom they begin to see themselves as capable learners. The use of translanguaging didn’t just help them read better; it helped them believe in themselves.

Going forward, I want to expand this work beyond my own classroom. I plan to introduce these strategies in other grades and share my experience with fellow teachers. We could create simple bilingual materials together—story cards, picture charts, or folk tales in multiple languages.

I also dream of involving parents. Imagine a ‘reading passport’ where a child teaches a parent five new English words every week, explaining them first in their home language. This could turn homes into learning spaces too.

Of course, there were challenges, managing time, balancing lesson planning with material preparation, and making sure no student felt left out. But these struggles taught me patience, creativity, and the power of slow, steady progress. I now see myself as a continuous learner, someone who can lead change—not by forcing it, but by listening, adapting, and trusting my students’ voices.

This experience has made me believe that change doesn’t need a big budget or fancy tools. Sometimes, all it needs is a picture, a pair of readers, and the courage to say - your language belongs here.

Seeing, saying, speaking

Sujatha's experiment with images and home languages



Mentee teacher

G. Sujatha**Research focus:**

Developing speaking skills through picture description using multilingual approaches and digital tools



Subjects they teach

English

State/district

**Serilingampally,
Ranga Reddy
District, Telangana**



Mentor(s)

**Salomi
Snehalatha**



Grades

6-10

I teach English at ZILLA PARISHAD HIGH SCHOOL Serilingampally, an urban government school in Ranga Reddy District, Telangana. I work with students from classes 6 to 10, many of whom come from homes where languages like Telugu, Hindi, Kannada, or Tamil are spoken. Though most of my students read English texts fluently, I've always wondered why they hesitate when it comes to speaking. The moment I asked them to describe a picture in English; many would stay quiet or avoid eye contact.

This gap between reading and speaking kept bothering me. Around that time, I got an opportunity to be part of the ARMS project. I was excited because it gave me a chance to explore this concern more seriously. Under the guidance of my mentor, Ms. Salomi Snehalatha, I began to think about how I could build my students' speaking skills through picture description activities using multilingual strategies and digital media.

There was a point when I almost gave up—just before my final presentation at NIT Warangal due to personal reasons. But my mentor stood by me, encouraged me, and told me, “You’ve come this far, don’t stop now.” That one conversation gave me the strength to go ahead. I’m thankful to her for helping me complete this journey.

What was my research focused on?

The question that guided my research was: *Why is it that my students do not speak during picture description tasks, even though they are good at reading?* I had noticed this repeatedly in my classroom. Many of my 9th-grade students could read passages fluently, but when it came to speaking, even something simple like describing a picture, they would freeze.

I started wondering whether insisting on English-only communication was hampering their confidence. Since many of them spoke different languages at home—Telugu, Hindi, Kannada, I wanted to see if bringing those languages into the classroom would help. I believed that if I gave them a chance to express their ideas first in their mother

tongue, they might feel more comfortable switching to English.

So, I decided to frame my action research around picture description, digital tools, and a multilingual approach to help students find their voice.

What did I do in my class?

To begin, I wanted to understand exactly where my students stood in terms of their speaking abilities. So, I conducted a baseline test with about 60 students from my 9th-grade class, though I analysed the data in detail for 30 of them. The results were telling—only two students could speak confidently, while around 19 were able to read fluently. This gap made it clear to me that while reading was not a major hurdle, speaking remained a significant challenge for many of them.

I planned a series of classroom activities over four to six weeks. My aim was to make students feel more comfortable expressing their thoughts, and for that, I knew I had to change my approach. I introduced multilingual support and simple digital tools into the classroom—something new for both me and my students.



One of the first things I did was introduce picture-based prompts for description tasks. I searched for YouTube videos and short visual lessons that modelled how to describe a picture step by step. These videos helped students understand how to structure their responses—what to say first, how to use descriptive vocabulary, and how to link ideas. Many of them took notes while watching and later referred to these during speaking tasks.

I also introduced a translation app that allowed students to type sentences in their mother tongue—Telugu, Hindi, Kannada—and see the English translation. This became a bridge for students who wanted to say something in English but didn't know how to form the sentence. They began to use this tool during class activities, and it built their vocabulary and confidence gradually.

Alongside this, I encouraged students to begin their picture descriptions in their home languages. I made it clear that it was okay to speak first in Telugu or Hindi and then try to express the same idea in English. This made a big difference. Students who earlier kept quiet began to speak in short sentences, first in their familiar language, and then with my help or their peers', they translated them into English.

To track their progress, I used a combination of informal conversations, classroom observations, and a teacher diary. I also recorded short video clips to compare speaking levels before and after the intervention. These tools helped me reflect on what was working and where I needed to adjust.

The change in the classroom atmosphere was gradual but noticeable. Students who had once stayed silent began to show interest. Some of them even started preparing at home. They'd come to class asking, "When will we have the next speaking test, ma'am?" Others began using new words during class discussions or volunteering to describe pictures in front of their classmates.

The use of their home languages made the classroom feel safer and more inclusive. With digital media and multilingual tools, students were no longer afraid of making mistakes—they were excited to try. And for me, that was a big win.

So, what happened?

The results were heartening. By the endline test, 14 students had reached the 'A' grade in speaking. More than that, their confidence had grown noticeably. Some of my quieter students, who had never raised their hands before, were now volunteering to speak. One student came up to me and said, "Ma'am, from next week, I will only speak to you in English." That moment felt like a reward for the entire journey.

I also saw how much impact the multilingual approach had. Students began mixing English with their home languages in natural ways, just to get their point across. And instead of correcting them immediately, I encouraged this. They were thinking, processing, and trying—which was more important than perfection.

Another positive outcome was the change in their digital engagement. Though I faced some initial resistance from parents about students using phones, once I explained the purpose of the applications, they cooperated fully. Some even told me how proud they felt when they heard their children speaking English at home.

As for me, this journey helped me grow as well. I had always wanted to improve my students' speaking skills but didn't know how to go about it. This research gave me that path. I also gained new technology skills—something I had struggled with earlier. I started using the interactive panels in school more effectively and felt more confident about designing lessons digitally.

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At first, I thought English had to be taught in English. Now, I know that when we welcome students' home languages, we invite English in too.

Learnings from my experience

This experience has changed how I view language learning. Earlier, I believed English should be taught only in English. But now I understand that our students' home languages are not barriers—they are bridges that can support learning.

Some of the key learnings from this journey include:

- Students feel more confident when they are allowed to think and respond in their own language first.
- Digital tools, when used meaningfully, can make language learning more engaging and accessible.
- Mentorship matters. The continuous guidance, resources, and moral support from Ms. Salomi played a big role in keeping me motivated.
- Parent engagement is important. Taking time to speak to parents helped me overcome the challenge of device availability.
- Being a reflective teacher helps. Keeping a teacher diary, video recording student participation, and comparing baseline with endline gave me clear insights into their progress.

Moving forward, I plan to continue this work with other classes. I also want to explore more digital tools and study other teachers' research to deepen my understanding. I now have the confidence to speak about my work in meetings and share these methods with colleagues in other schools.

Breaking through with words

Amala's story of finding confidence in multilingual speech



Mentee teacher

**Veerati Amala
Reddy**

Research focus:

How does multilingualism influence the development of English-speaking communication competence among 7th-grade students?



Subjects they teach

English



State/district

**Government TWAHS
Girls, Medipally,
Jayashankar
Bhupalpally District,
Telangana**



Mentor(s)

**Mamatha
Sadu**



Grades

6-10

I am an English teacher at Government Tribal Welfare Ashram High School for Girls in Medipally, located in the Jayashankar Bhupalpally district of Telangana. I teach English across grades 6 to 10. Ours is a rural, all-girls school, and many of my students come from tribal communities where Telugu is spoken, along with other home languages like Lambadi, Koya, and Erukala. These students live on the school campus in hostels, far from the daily language environment of English.

The recent shift from Telugu-medium to English-medium instruction, combined with limited exposure to English outside the classroom, has caused many of my students to lack confidence in speaking English. I too come from a Telugu-medium background, and I empathised with their hesitation, especially when it came to speaking in English.

It made me wonder: Could teaching only in English be creating obstacles instead of helping students connect and learn more effectively? I wanted to find out if using their home languages alongside English could build their confidence and help them express themselves more fluently. And so began my action research journey through the ARMS programme.

What was my research focused on?

My research began with a genuine concern: Why were my students struggling so much with speaking English. Most of my students come from tribal or rural backgrounds and live in the school hostel. English is rarely spoken at home. Until recently, our school followed the Telugu medium. But with the state's decision to shift entirely to English-medium instruction, I could see the anxiety building among students—and honestly, even within myself.

I noticed that my 7th-grade students would often fall silent when I asked them to respond in English. They were full of stories, opinions, and energy in their own languages—Telugu, Lambadi, Erukala—but that confidence disappeared when English became the only language of instruction. I started wondering if this English-only approach was building barriers

instead of bridges. That's when I decided to frame my action research around a key question: *How does multilingualism influence the development of English-speaking communication competence among 7th-grade students?*

I wanted to explore whether allowing students to use their home languages in classroom discussions could help them express their ideas more confidently, reduce their fear of speaking incorrectly, and gradually improve their fluency. My goal was not just to teach English, but to make English more accessible, meaningful, and less intimidating. This research was an attempt to create a classroom where all languages were seen as assets—not limitations.

What did I do in my class?

To begin, I observed my students' speaking habits during daily routines in the hostel and classroom. I then introduced structured yet flexible activities that encouraged them to use Telugu and other home languages in tandem with English.

Some of the key strategies I used were:

- **Code-switching and code-mixing:** During storytelling, role-play, or JAM (Just A Minute) sessions, students freely mixed English with



Telugu or their tribal languages. This helped reduce hesitation and built fluency gradually.

- **Use of multilingual activities:** Students freely alternated their mother tongue and English to convey meaning. For instance, they would first share an experience in their home language—like what they did during a festival or what they ate that morning—and then retell the same in English.
- **Use of L1 for clarity:** If a student was confused about a word or instruction, I would explain it in Telugu or even use Lambada or Erukala vocabulary if I knew it. This made the classroom more inclusive and less intimidating.
- **Peer group collaboration:** Since they lived together in hostels, students would practice English through informal peer conversations, often reflecting what we did in class.

For data collection, I used Google Forms (printed for those without access to phones), conducted interviews with students and teachers, and noted observations in a reflective journal.

What unfolded

When I began this journey, I wasn't sure how my students would react to the idea of using their home languages in an English classroom. In the first few days, there was confusion. Some of the girls looked at me and asked, "Madam, isn't this an English period?" They had grown up thinking that English must be kept separate from the rest of their life and language. But I kept encouraging them, "Start in Telugu if you want to, then try telling me the same thing in English." Gradually, something started shifting.

In the early weeks, it was the confident girls, those who usually topped the class, who first took up the challenge. They began role-playing simple scenes in Telugu and then retelling them in English. For instance, after a festival break, I asked, "What did you do at home?" A few students began sharing their experiences in Telugu, how they helped their mothers in the kitchen, how their village celebrated the festival. I then helped them find the English words for these ideas. Slowly, they started taking

ownership of this process asking each other, "How do we say that in English?" That was my first sign that translanguaging was working.

As the weeks passed, the quieter girls—the ones who once sat at the back, eyes lowered, began coming forward. One of the most touching moments for me was when a shy student, who had never spoken in front of the class before, confidently stood up during a JAM (Just A Minute) session and shared a story about a pani puri vendor near her home. She began in Telugu, switched to English halfway, and ended with a big smile on her face. The whole class applauded, not because it was perfect, but because she tried.

Group activities became more animated. In one session, students role-played a conversation between a doctor and a patient, first in Telugu, and then tried to perform it in English. They weren't worried about grammar; they were focused on getting the meaning across. That shift, from correctness to communication, was the biggest success of all.

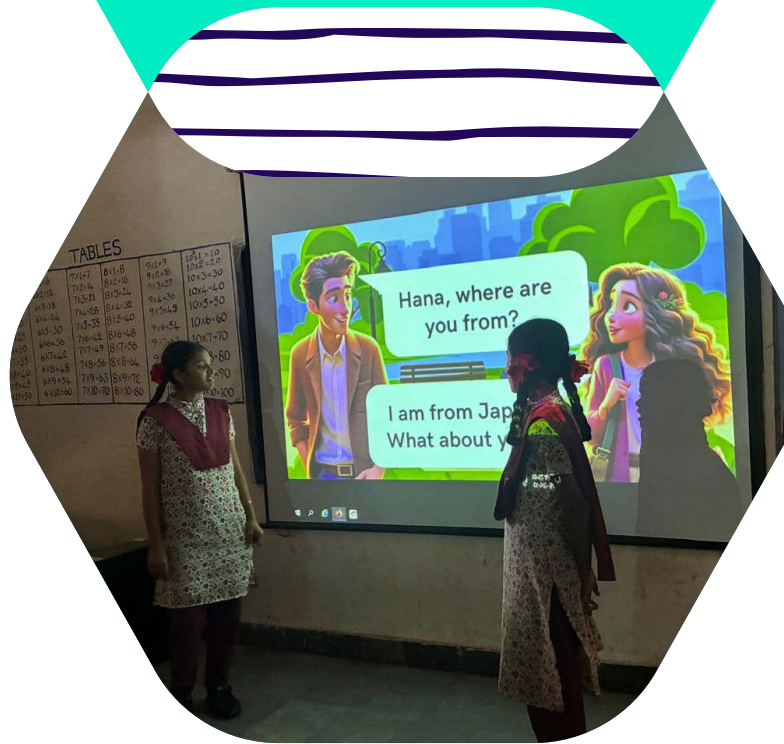
Out of the 40 students in my 7th-grade class, nearly 30 began actively participating in these multilingual tasks. Students who once hesitated now raised their hands eagerly. They began asking me to come to their other classes, saying, "Madam, please come—we want to speak in English today!"

Even beyond the classroom, I saw changes. Some students would meet me during hostel hours, wanting to practice English through their daily conversations—what they ate, what their family did at home, or what they planned for the weekend. Their curiosity had come alive. English was no longer a subject to fear—it had become a part of their voice.

But the biggest change was in how they saw themselves. They began seeing English not as a threat to their identity, but as something they could own, alongside Telugu, Lambadi, or Erukala. And as a teacher, I too felt transformed. I had always thought my job was to teach English. Through this research, I learnt that my true role is to help students use language in all its forms to express who they are.

“

At first, I thought using Telugu in my English class would slow down learning. Now I know—it's the reason learning even began.



Learnings from my experience

This action research journey has deeply reshaped how I think about teaching English in a rural, multilingual setting. Initially, I believed that insisting on English-only classrooms would push students to improve faster. But I soon realised that it was doing the opposite—many students were withdrawing, afraid of making mistakes or being judged. Through this research, I discovered the power of a multilingual classroom, where languages like Telugu, Lambada, and Erukala were not obstacles, but bridges to learning.

Some of my most important learnings include:

- **Multilingualism builds confidence:** When students were encouraged to use Telugu or other home languages before shifting to English, they felt safer, more expressive, and willing to participate.
- **Simple strategies work best:** Code-switching, peer interactions, role-plays, and storytelling made a bigger impact than traditional grammar drills. Activities felt more natural and student-led.
- **Reflection matters:** Keeping a teacher

journal, collecting student responses, and noting changes over time helped me track subtle progress that might not show up in formal assessments.

- **Mentoring support was key:** My mentor, always guided me with patience. Her constant reassurance, feedback, and belief in me helped me stay focused—even when I was uncertain.
- **Confidence grows slowly but surely:** Not all students responded at once. Some took weeks or months to open—but once they did, their enthusiasm became unstoppable.
- **Language is identity:** When students saw their mother tongue being valued, they felt proud, respected, and more motivated to learn English.

Going forward, I am committed to building inclusive English classrooms where students' home languages are used as stepping stones, not seen as limitations. I now teach not just with a textbook, but with trust in the rich linguistic world my students bring with them every day.

Bridging two languages, building understanding

Indumathi's rural reading revolution



Mentee teacher

Indumathi K.**Research focus:**

Exploring how multilingual materials and practices support reading comprehension and student confidence in English



Subjects they teach

English

State/district

**Panchayat Union
Middle School,
Nedungal,
Thiruvannamalai,
Tamil Nadu**



Mentor(s)

**Dr.
Kandharaja &
Dr. Dinesh**



Grades

6th

I teach English to grade 6 students at Panchayat Union Middle School, Nedungal, a rural government school in Thiruvannamalai district, Tamil Nadu. Like many teachers in rural settings, I work with children who come from under-resourced households and whose exposure to English is extremely limited. Most of them are first-generation learners and use Tamil at home for all communication.

When I began teaching English, I quickly realised that while my students could read English words, they struggled to understand them. They could copy from the board or read short phrases, but there was little actual comprehension or confidence. I often found myself translating instructions and texts into Tamil just to keep the lesson moving. Still, something didn't feel right. Was I helping them or just creating a dependency?

That's when I joined the Action Research Mentoring Scheme (ARMS) under the guidance of Dr. Kandharaja and Dr. Dinesh. With their support, I decided to investigate whether bilingual materials could help my students read more independently and deeply understand English content, without always relying on me for translation.

What was my research focused on?

My research question was simple but powerful: *Could a bilingual approach support deeper reading comprehension and build confidence among my grade 6 students?* I wanted to move beyond traditional rote learning and understand how children engage with English when they're allowed to use their home language—Tamil—without guilt or fear.

The goal was to explore how practices like translanguaging, code-switching, and bilingual scaffolding could help students move fluidly between Tamil and English while reading. I observed how children used Tamil to process English texts and complete tasks more meaningfully when they were not forced to work in English alone.

One important realisation was that the problem wasn't about intelligence or willingness—it was about accessibility. English felt like a foreign language, distant and unrelated to their lives. Through this action research, I hoped to bridge that distance.

What did I do in my class?

I began with a small group of 20 sixth-grade students. First, I created a baseline by observing how they engaged with English texts. I noticed that while most of them could read individual English words, very few could grasp their meanings in context. Paragraphs were intimidating, and even short exercises caused anxiety.

So, I prepared bilingual versions of the reading materials—one side in English and the other in Tamil. Along with this, I used strategies such as:

- **Translanguaging tasks:** asking students to retell English paragraphs in Tamil and vice versa
- **Code-switching during discussions** to encourage natural communication
- **Phonics-based vocabulary practice** for decoding unfamiliar words



- **Peer collaboration** where students helped each other translate and explain texts
- **Home-reading assignments** where parents were invited to observe and support bilingual reading

For data collection, I used student work samples, classroom observations, and audio-video recordings. I also invited feedback from parents and senior teachers who observed my class.

As weeks passed, the shift was visible. Students began attempting comprehension exercises on their own—sometimes even before I introduced them. They used Tamil smartly to decode meaning and then attempted to express it in English.

“Earlier, I felt guilty using Tamil in my English classroom. Now, I see it as a stepping stone—a bridge that leads my students toward confident learning.”

– **Indumathi K.**

Seeing the difference

What unfolded in my classroom over the following weeks was nothing short of inspiring. The same students who once mumbled through English passages or waited for me to explain everything in Tamil began showing curiosity and initiative. With bilingual materials in hand, they were no longer passive recipients of information—they became active learners.

I remember clearly how one of my quieter students, who barely spoke during English lessons, raised her hand one day to read an entire paragraph aloud. She stumbled at a few places, yes—but she tried, and more importantly, she understood what she was reading. She even translated it into Tamil for the class, all on her own. That was the first moment I realised something had truly changed.

Group work also took on a new shape. Students began naturally collaborating—discussing meanings, decoding tricky vocabulary together, switching between Tamil and English as they made sense of new texts. I saw a kind of joy and freedom in their learning process. English no longer felt like an intimidating, foreign subject. Instead, it became something they could engage with on their own terms.

Over time, I noticed that students no longer waited for me to translate; they referred to the bilingual versions of the text, used context clues, and even

guessed meanings based on prior knowledge. Many started completing tasks faster, and a few began asking for additional reading passages to try at home.

Perhaps one of the most heartening signs of progress came from parents. Several of them mentioned that their children had started reading English aloud at home and asking the meanings of unfamiliar words. Some even told me that their children insisted on watching English cartoons or attempting to translate small ads and posters they saw around them.

The improvement in comprehension was not just anecdotal—it was evident in assessments too. Where initially only a couple of students could translate or understand paragraph-level English, now nearly all 20 students could handle these tasks with confidence. Their performance in both oral and written comprehension exercises improved, but what thrilled me the most was the change in their attitude—they were no longer afraid of English.

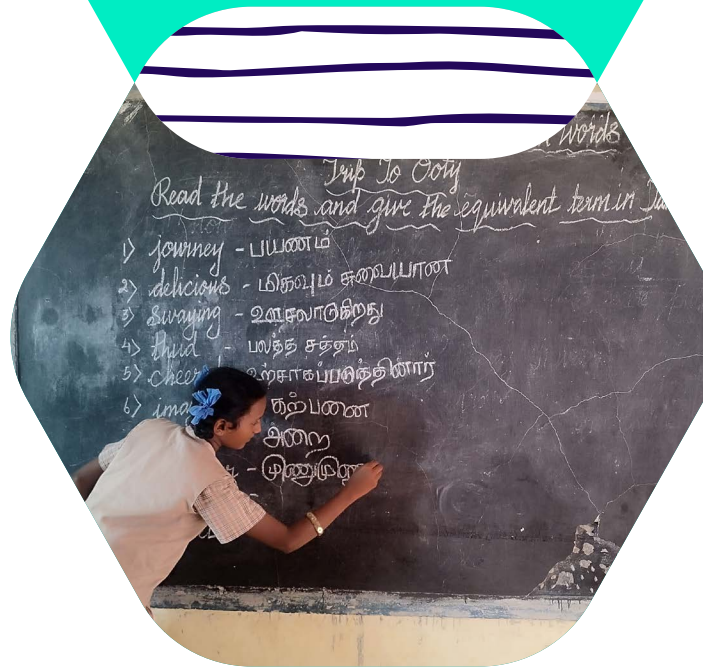
This shift was not just about a new method—it was about a new mindset. The moment I stopped viewing Tamil as a distraction and started treating it as a resource, everything changed. My students stopped hiding behind silence and began using all their language tools to learn.

“I used to think that if I let Tamil into my English class, it would dilute the learning. Now I know that it’s what made learning possible in the first place.”

Indumathi K.

“

Multilingualism is not a barrier to learning—it's a pathway to deeper understanding.



Learnings from my experience

This action research journey has transformed both my teaching practices and my perspective on language in education. Before starting this process, I believed that insisting on English-only instruction was the best way to help my students succeed. But slowly, I realised that embracing their home language—Tamil—was not a compromise; it was a powerful tool to unlock their potential.

By allowing students to use both languages in the classroom, I witnessed a significant shift. Comprehension improved, participation increased, and more importantly, my students started to believe in themselves. Language was no longer something they feared—it became something they could use, explore, and enjoy.

Some of the most meaningful learnings for me included:

- **Multilingual strategies build confidence and comprehension.** Translanguaging and bilingual scaffolding gave students clarity without making them feel inadequate.
- **Reflective tools matter.** Maintaining a teacher journal, using video clips, and collecting student feedback helped me stay grounded and observe growth even in small moments.
- **Mentoring matters.** Weekly sessions with Dr. Kandharaja and Dr. Dinesh gave

me the courage to question old patterns and refine new strategies.

- **Parental involvement adds value.** When I encouraged parents to participate in bilingual reading at home, I noticed students coming back more prepared and eager to learn.

This journey didn't just end with my classroom. It planted a seed for what's next. I now plan to:

- **Develop bilingual teaching materials** for the entire academic year, making English content more accessible to learners.
- **Support teachers in my school cluster** by sharing these materials and strategies during cluster meetings.
- **Advocate for multilingual classrooms** where all languages are seen as assets, not obstacles.
- **Continue using and refining bilingual practices** to ensure that students across grades can learn English with confidence and joy.

What I now carry with me is a deep respect for my students' linguistic identities. I've come to understand that meaningful learning happens when children feel seen, heard, and supported—in every language they speak.

Choosing the right words

Why Mariappan adopted focused translation



Mentee teacher
Mariappan R.

Research focus:
Exploring the effectiveness of partially translated materials in English classrooms



Subjects they teach
English



State/district
Tenkasi District, Tamil Nadu, Government Higher Secondary School, Urmelalagiyam (rural)



Mentor(s)
Dr. Kandharaja & Dr. Dinesh



Grades
6-10

I am an English teacher at Government Higher Secondary School, Urmelalagiyam, located in the rural Tenkasi district of Tamil Nadu. I teach students from Grades 6 to 10, most of whom come from under-resourced backgrounds where exposure to English is minimal and often limited to textbooks. In my classroom, I have often faced the challenge of bridging the language gap between the English curriculum and the Tamil-speaking realities of my students.

Over the years, I noticed that many students showed reluctance toward English learning—especially when taught only in English. Even bright students would stay silent or hesitant, not because they lacked intelligence, but because they felt distanced from the language. I often relied on Tamil to explain lessons, but I began wondering if there could be a more intentional way to support their learning through bilingual tools.

When I joined the Action Research Mentoring Scheme (ARMS) with the British Council, under the mentorship of Dr. Kandharaja and Dr. Dinesh, I found the space and support to explore this very question. The research I undertook wasn't just about comparing teaching materials—it was about rethinking how language learning can be made more inclusive, relatable, and empowering for students in rural government schools like mine.

What was my research focused on?

My action research emerged during a mentor-led discussion, when I encountered fully translated English learning materials—including basic, commonly used words like friend—rendered in Tamil. This made me pause. Why were we translating words students already knew? Wouldn't this hinder their growth in English? That moment helped me formulate my central research question:

Is partially (focused) translated material more effective in the English language teaching-learning process?"

This wasn't an abstract question—it came from my classroom reality. I wanted to explore whether giving

students materials that were entirely in Tamil encouraged dependence, or whether providing only key translations would push them to engage more actively with English. I was particularly interested in how this choice would affect vocabulary retention, reading comprehension, and learner confidence.

To test this, I developed two versions of the same lesson:

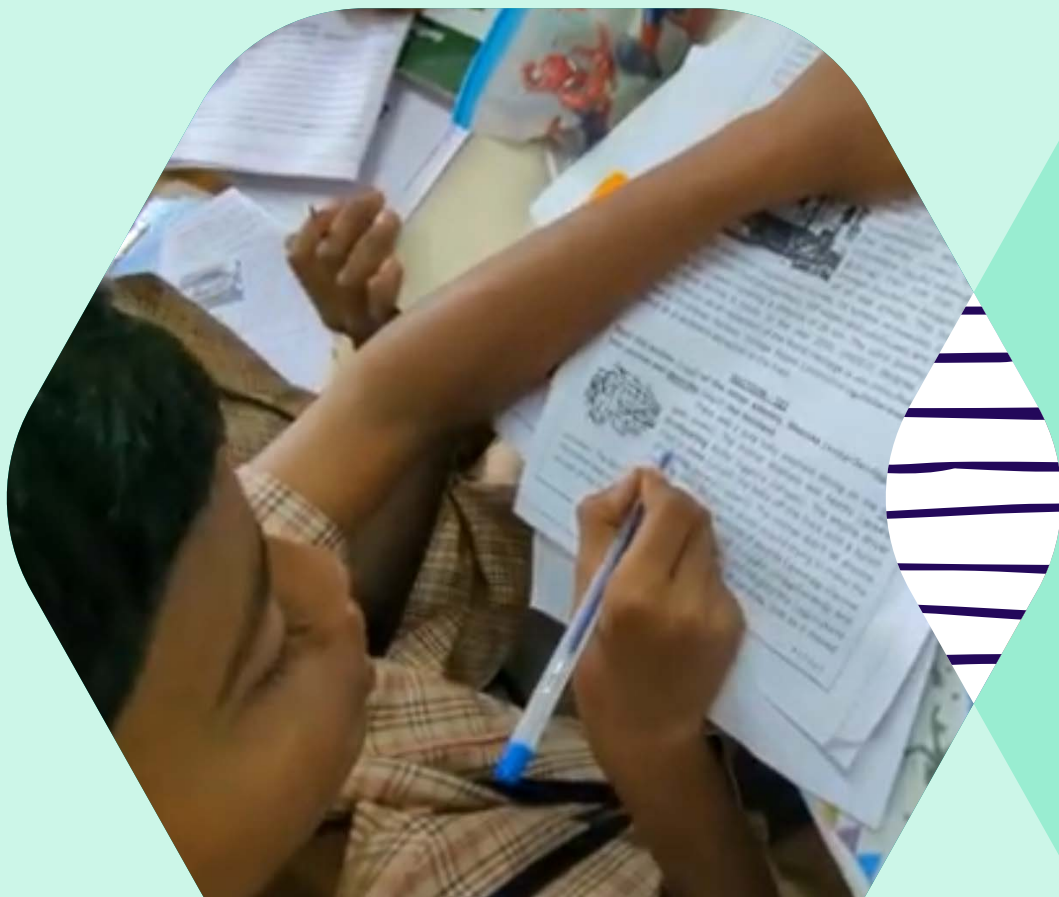
- A **fully translated version**, where the complete content was rendered in Tamil.
- A **partially translated version**, where only difficult or unfamiliar words were translated.

This core comparison anchored my research and gave me a clear lens through which to observe how my students interacted with multilingual materials.

What did I do in my class?

I implemented the research with a class of 38 students in Grade 6. I began by distributing the fully translated materials and observing how students used them. Many learners focused entirely on the Tamil text, bypassing the English sections altogether.

Next, I gave them the partially translated version, which included only key vocabulary items translated



into Tamil. This approach sparked more focused attention. Students began looking at the English sentences to infer meanings using the translated terms as clues. They were more confident and willing to attempt tasks on their own.

Throughout the process, I used:

- **Classroom observation** to track engagement and confusion
- **Student written responses** to assess understanding
- **Teacher reflection notes** to record daily insights
- **Informal feedback discussions** with students

The strategy I followed involved translanguaging—fluidly moving between Tamil and English to explain, discuss, and reflect. For students already confident in Tamil, this approach enabled English learning. For those less proficient in Tamil, however, both versions posed challenges—highlighting the essential link between first-language competence and second-language acquisition.

What changed in my classroom

The results were striking. The moment I introduced bilingual materials—particularly the focused ones—the classroom atmosphere changed. Students who had previously remained silent began flipping through the pages, underlining words, and asking questions. I saw a visible shift in their engagement, motivation, and confidence.

One student, who rarely spoke in class, eagerly answered a question by referring to the partially translated material. Another group began helping peers decode English using the Tamil cues provided. There was a sense of ownership and joy in learning that I hadn't seen before.

Some important insights from this phase include:

- Students treated **fully translated materials** as Tamil reading practice and didn't engage with the English text.

- **Partially translated materials** encouraged active guessing, deeper attention, and language retention.
- Those with strong Tamil literacy benefitted most—underscoring the role of L1 fluency in acquiring L2 skills.

I also noted some limitations. A small group of students with weak Tamil literacy remained hesitant in both versions, suggesting that even bilingual resources are effective only when the first language foundation is strong. Still, for the majority, the experience was empowering. Their reactions made one thing clear: when students see their own language in the classroom, their sense of belonging and willingness to try increases dramatically.

“

What this research taught me is simple: if students don't connect with the language, they won't learn it. Tamil helped build that connection—without replacing English, it supported it.



Learnings from my experience

This journey has reshaped my understanding of what it means to teach English in a rural, multilingual context. Before, I believed that English should be taught only through English. Now, I understand that the mother tongue is not a crutch—it is a catalyst. When used purposefully, it builds vocabulary, boosts engagement, and makes language learning inclusive.

Here are some key takeaways:

- **Focused translation** works better than full translation. It helps students engage with English while providing enough support to decode unfamiliar content.
- **L1 fluency is foundational.** Students must be confident in their home language to benefit from bilingual strategies.
- **Engagement and participation improve** when classroom materials reflect students' linguistic identity.
- **Multilingual classrooms are not weaker—they are richer.**

Looking ahead, I plan to:

- Experiment with **student-created bilingual materials**, which could foster creativity and ownership.
- Use **digital tools like Google Translate** to help students independently decode texts.
- Build a **vocabulary-focused toolkit** using partially translated scaffolds.
- Share these practices with fellow teachers to help build a resource-sharing culture across rural clusters.

If this research were to continue, I'd like to study how bilingual approaches affect long-term language development. I'd also explore how to support students with weaker L1 skills so that multilingual strategies are truly equitable. For policymakers and curriculum designers, I hope my findings highlight the need to move beyond all-or-nothing language policies. What we need are layered, flexible approaches that treat both languages as partners in learning.

Reading Without Fear

Pavithra's bilingual journey to unlock English in a rural classroom



Mentee teacher

Maram Pavithra
Research focus:

The impact of bilingual biology textbooks on 9th-grade students' confidence in engaging with scientific activities



Subjects they teach

**General
Science and
Bioscience**



State/district

**Penpahad village,
Suryapet District,
Telangana**



Mentor(s)

**Mamatha
Sadu**



Grades

6-10

I am a Science teacher at Zilla Parishad High School Penpahad, a government-run school located in a rural part of Telangana. I teach General Science and Bioscience from grades 6 to 10. My students come from diverse backgrounds—Lambada, Muslim, Doodiekula, and other tribal communities. Many of them are first-generation learners, and often, the language used in our science textbooks feels unfamiliar to them.

I noticed that when it came to practical activities in science, students hesitated to take the lead. Most waited for me to demonstrate the experiment and then tried to follow along. It bothered me that they weren't reading the instructions on their own or feeling confident enough to take initiative. That's when a thought struck me—was language becoming a barrier in science learning? Could bilingual instructions help bridge the gap?

When I joined the ARMS programme, I decided to explore this further. With the support of my mentor, I began investigating whether bilingual biology textbooks—those with instructions in both English and Telugu—could build confidence among my 9th-grade students, especially when performing scientific experiments independently.

What was my research focused on?

My action research was shaped by what I witnessed every day in my classroom: a hesitation to read, a reluctance to try, and a reliance on teacher demonstrations. I wondered if simplifying the language barrier could help students take ownership of their learning.

So, I framed my research question around this central idea: ***How do bilingual biology textbooks influence 9th class students' confidence in performing scientific activities?***

To investigate this, I designed a series of practical science lessons where students had to read and follow experiment instructions. Sometimes these instructions were only in English. Other times, I used bilingual instructions—English along with Telugu. I observed their performance, engagement, and level of hesitation in both scenarios.

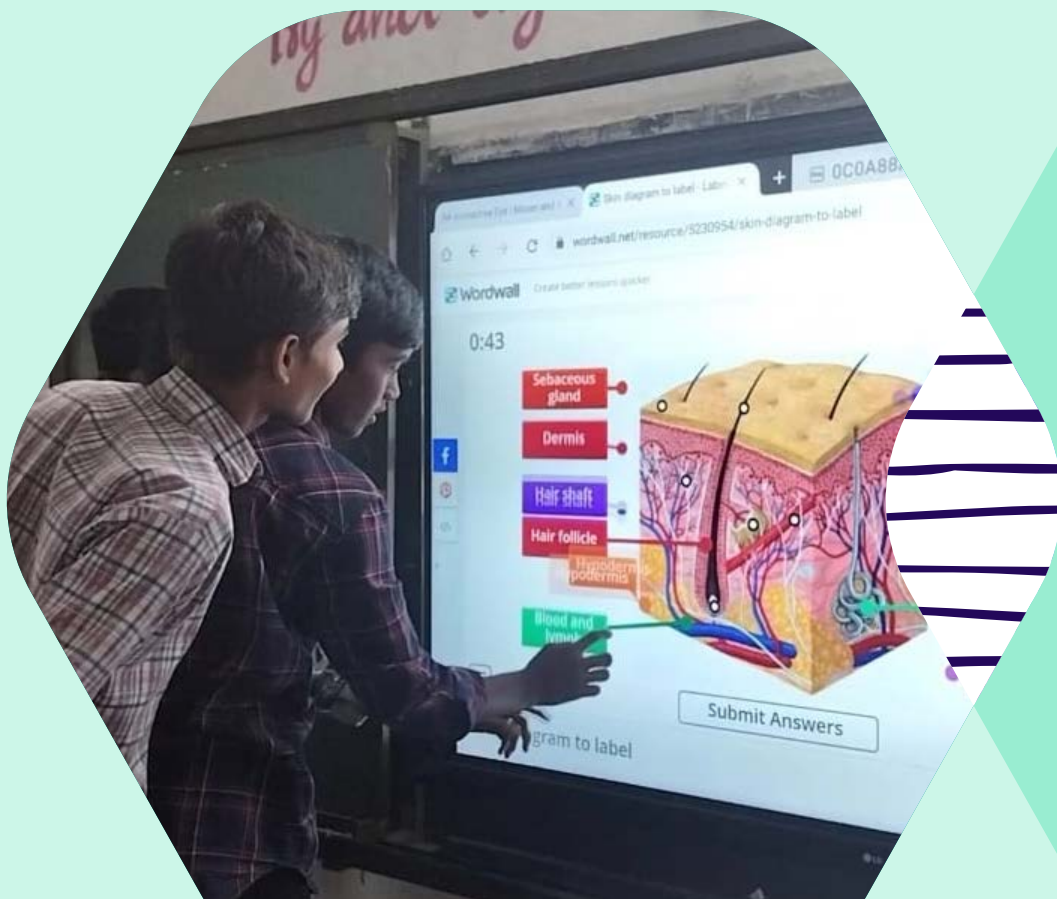
Over a span of 3–4 months, I continued this practice across multiple science activities. Alongside, I conducted a pre-test to assess their baseline understanding and followed up with a post-test after the intervention. I also collected feedback through questionnaires—both from students and from fellow biology teachers across Telangana. Their perspectives helped me understand what was working and what wasn't.

What did I do in my class?

In my classroom, I shifted the responsibility of reading and conducting experiments to the students themselves. I used two types of instruction methods—one in English only, and the other in both English and Telugu. The difference in their confidence levels was evident.

Here's what I implemented:

- **Bilingual instructions** for selected science experiments.
- **Peer learning**, especially for students from Lambada backgrounds who needed extra language support.
- **Code-switching** during class discussions to ensure clarity.



- **Visual aids** and diagrams to make instructions easier to follow.
- **Daily “One Minute Talk”** sessions where students practiced speaking in English on topics of their choice.
- **Extended time and space**—sometimes using last-period slots or free periods from absentee teachers to continue unfinished activities or presentations.

This wasn’t always easy. Some students still struggled with both English and Telugu, so I started using simple language mixed with their dialect. What surprised me was how willing they were to try when the language wasn’t a barrier. One student even stayed back after class just to make sure he got the experiment report “exactly right.”

Evidence of change

The results were deeply encouraging. With bilingual instructions, around **80% of students completed the experiments confidently and independently**. They were less hesitant, made fewer errors, and even began asking for more activities.

On the other hand, when instructions were in English only, students took longer, often reread lines, and frequently asked for my help. Some even gave up mid-task. A small group—around 15%—**preferred English-only materials** because they felt it was easier to remember scientific terms that way. And **5% of students were already comfortable with English-only instructions**.

But the real impact wasn’t in the numbers. It was in the small, powerful shifts I observed: students discussing what they observed in Telugu, confidently reading out steps, or collaborating with a friend to decode an instruction. The “One Minute Talk” sessions had their own charm—by the end of a month, **nearly 40% of students had shown visible improvement in English speaking**.

One particular moment stayed with me. A quiet student, who once avoided participating in class, stood up one day and said, *“Madam, I did the experiment myself... and I can explain it too.”* That sentence, simple as it was, captured everything I hoped this research would achieve.

“

When students understand the language, they begin to understand the science. And when they feel understood, they are no longer afraid to try.



Learnings from my experience

This action research journey has reshaped how I understand language, science, and student learning. I had always believed that teaching science in English alone would prepare students for the future. But I now realise that if students cannot understand the language, they cannot truly engage with the subject.

Some of my most important learnings include:

- **Language scaffolding matters.** Bilingual materials helped most students engage more deeply and independently with scientific tasks.
- **Multilingual teaching is not dilution—it is inclusion.**
- **Peer support and code-switching** build bridges where formal instruction may fall short.
- **Visual aids and simplified instructions** helped struggling students make sense of complex ideas.

- **Regular, low-pressure speaking opportunities**, like “One Minute Talks,” significantly improved students’ English fluency.

My mentor, Mamatha Sadu, played a key role throughout. Her discipline, timely guidance, and clear instructions helped me break down what felt like an overwhelming project into manageable steps. She also encouraged me to focus my research, leading me to this specific question rather than tackling too many ideas at once.

I plan to extend this approach to more grades and train other teachers in my cluster to use multilingual resources and peer strategies. I also want to work on improving students’ written expression—especially when reporting their experimental findings.

Finding their voice

Nalini's journey to develop English communication in a multilingual classroom



Mentee teacher

Kolisetty Nalini

Research focus:
Developing oral communication skills among multilingual students



Subjects they teach

English



State/district

TGMRS Jammikunta Girls 1, Telangana



Mentor(s)

Sampath Kumar Kokkula



Grades

7-10

I teach English at TGMRS Jammikunta Girls High School in rural Telangana. My classroom is a multilingual one, with students speaking Telugu and Urdu at home, and learning English in school. Many of them are first-generation learners, and I've always tried to make my lessons engaging and accessible. But over time, I noticed that my students, especially those from Urdu-speaking households, were hesitant to participate in spoken English tasks.

As someone from a Telugu-medium background myself, I understood their fear all too well. In a classroom where the language of learning doesn't match the language of home, participation takes a backseat. That's when I began questioning whether my teaching was reaching everyone equally. The ARMS programme came at just the right time. It gave me a platform to pause, reflect, and redesign my approach with more intention and empathy.

What did I do in my class?

To begin, I divided the students into mixed-language groups—pairing Telugu and Urdu speakers together. This encouraged peer support and mutual learning. I introduced structured speaking activities like **role plays, mock interviews, and informal conversations** based on real-life situations. We even created spontaneous speaking tasks, like reacting to a classroom scenario or describing weekend plans.

A major part of our work was developing a **trilingual dictionary**—English words alongside their Telugu and Urdu meanings. This was not just a vocabulary-building task but a way to validate and celebrate the languages students brought from home.

Knowing my limitations in Urdu, I sought help from Urdu language teachers, who played a key role in supporting these activities. They helped translate and simplify instructions, ensuring that no student was left behind.

One of the most effective changes was replacing passive activities with **interactive oral sessions**. We reserved time each week for a “Speaking Circle,” where students had to present, perform, or speak for a minute on a familiar topic. At first, they

hesitated. But gradually, they looked forward to these moments. A quiet girl once came up after class and whispered, “*Madam, I want to try next time too.*”

That sentence meant everything. I struggled with both English and Telugu, so I started using simple language mixed with their dialect. What surprised me was how willing they were to try when the language wasn’t a barrier. One student even stayed back after class just to make sure he got the experiment report “exactly right.”

What I noticed

The changes I witnessed in my classroom were not just encouraging—they were transformational. Over the course of the research, I observed a steady and meaningful shift in how my students approached English, particularly speaking tasks. **Roughly 75–80% of my students showed a marked improvement in their oral communication skills.** But more than just the numbers, it was the nature of their engagement that spoke volumes.

Students who once avoided eye contact when asked to speak now began initiating conversations. They asked questions, made suggestions during group



work, and even corrected one another gently during role plays. What had started as structured speaking activities evolved into spontaneous classroom interactions—in English.

For my Urdu-speaking students, the impact was especially visible. Earlier, many of them struggled with instructions and stayed on the margins of classroom discussions. But when I allowed them to think, plan, and even rehearse their ideas in their mother tongue before responding in English, their confidence bloomed. I remember one student who had never spoken in front of the class suddenly volunteering to do a conversation role play. She hesitated at first but completed the task with her partner—and then smiled with pride as the class clapped for her.

Even students from Telugu-speaking homes began to benefit in unexpected ways. Working in mixed-language groups, they began learning Urdu phrases and understanding cultural references from their peers. **The classroom started becoming a space of not just language learning, but cultural exchange.** This helped foster deeper peer bonding and respect across linguistic lines.

One of the most successful tools turned out to be the **trilingual dictionary project**. Initially designed as a vocabulary aid, it became much more. Students often flipped through it during free time, comparing how the same word appeared in English, Telugu, and Urdu. Some even added their own examples and drawings. It became a collaborative resource that the class took pride in—and a symbol of their shared learning journey.

Outside the classroom, parents began noticing changes too. A few even approached me during school events and said, *“My daughter is speaking in English at home—just a few lines, but she’s trying!”* That, to me, was a moment of quiet triumph. It meant that students were no longer keeping English confined to the classroom—it was slowly becoming part of their lived experience.

Most importantly, **the fear of speaking English began to fade**. Mistakes were no longer something to be ashamed of. Instead, they became stepping stones. My students laughed together, corrected each other gently, and encouraged their peers. The pressure of perfection was replaced by the joy of participation.

By the end of the term, the classroom felt different. There was more movement, more energy, and a new sense of confidence in the air. Students weren’t just learning to speak English—they were learning to express themselves without fear. That, for me, was the real success of this journey.

“

This journey taught me that when we shift our mindset from delivering content to discovering what truly helps our students learn, we unlock potential in the classroom—and in ourselves.

Learnings from my experience

This action research experience has opened a new chapter in my teaching journey—one that is rooted in reflection, adaptation, and a deeper connection with my students' needs. Before I began this journey, I saw myself mainly as a classroom teacher, someone responsible for delivering lessons and preparing students for exams. But now, I see myself as a facilitator, a researcher, and most importantly, a learner.

One of the biggest insights I gained was the importance of valuing students' linguistic identities. In the beginning, I assumed that pushing students to speak only in English would build their fluency. But what I discovered was the opposite—once I allowed them to express themselves using their mother tongues first, their comfort and confidence grew naturally, and that laid a stronger foundation for English communication.

I also learned that multilingual classrooms are not a problem to manage—they are a rich resource to tap into. By involving Telugu and Urdu in my classroom activities, I saw students supporting one another, sharing vocabulary, and feeling seen. The trilingual dictionary was a great example of this—it wasn't just about words, but about giving students a sense of ownership in the learning process.

Another key takeaway was how peer learning can transform shy students into active participants. Many students who rarely raised their hands in the past started volunteering during group activities when they knew they had the support of their peers who understood their home language. The groupings helped create a safe environment where no one was judged for making mistakes.

Working with my mentor taught me the importance of consistency and regularity. Dr. Sampath Kumar constantly reminded me to stick with the process even when I was unsure. His suggestion to involve Urdu teachers helped bridge the communication gap I initially faced. I also learned the value of integrating research into regular teaching—it doesn't have to be a separate activity; it can be woven into everyday lessons through careful planning and observation.

Here are a few strategies that had the most impact:

- **Multilingual scaffolding:** Using mother tongues alongside English allowed students to understand concepts better and participate more actively.
- **Visual cues and group support:** These helped reduce anxiety, especially during oral tasks.
- **Routine oral activities** like "One Minute Talks" gave students a daily opportunity to practice speaking without fear of judgment.
- **Collaborative projects**, such as building the multilingual dictionary, kept students invested and curious.
- **Involving other subject teachers**, particularly Urdu colleagues, made the approach more holistic and sustainable.

Perhaps the most unexpected learning was my own transformation. This process has given me the courage to take the next step—I've enrolled in a **PhD in English Language Teaching**, something I never imagined myself doing just a year ago. I now believe that action research should be a regular part of every teacher's practice—not only to improve outcomes for students, but to help us grow as educators.

Science in their words

How Somalaxmi used students' home language and resources to teach Science



Mentee teacher

Budda Somalaxmi

Research focus:

The role of teaching resources in supporting science learning for 7th-grade students in multilingual classrooms.



Subjects they teach

**Biological
Science**



State/district

**Jamalapuram,
Khammam District,
Telangana**



Mentor(s)

**Mamatha
Sadu**



Grades

6-10

I currently teach Biological Science at Zilla Parishad High School in Jamalapuram, a rural school near the border of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. Until last year, I taught at a primary school, but after being promoted, I was transferred to this high school. Around that same time, my new school experienced a significant change: the state government implemented a new policy that shifted the medium of instruction from Telugu to English for all grades, from 6th to 10th.

This abrupt change was challenging for both students and teachers. My students, most of whom come from Telugu-speaking homes, struggled to follow lessons in English. I, too, was navigating this new terrain—new students, a new school, and a shift in language. That's when I joined the ARMS project with the support of my mentor. Her constant encouragement helped me frame my research focus: Could the use of low-cost teaching resources and multilingual support improve science learning in this new English-medium environment?

What was my research focused on?

My action research was driven by a pressing classroom reality. Teaching science to 7th-grade students in English, when their previous education was conducted in Telugu, felt like trying to cross a river without a bridge. The students struggled to understand key vocabulary and scientific terms, often remaining silent during lessons. This led me to question whether there was a way to make science more accessible. I wondered, would integrating hands-on resources and allowing the use of their home language support learning better?

These reflections helped me frame my core research question: What is the role of resources in science teaching of 7th-class students in a multilingual scenario?

To investigate this, I focused on using two types of interventions:

- **Activity-Based Learning (ABL):** using low-cost and no-cost materials collected from students' homes and surroundings.
- **Technology integration:** through the Interactive Flat Panel Boards (IFPBs) available in our school.

Additionally, I made conscious use of multilingual practices—explaining concepts first in Telugu, then repeating them in English. This helped students bridge the gap between their prior knowledge and the new language of instruction.

My aim wasn't just to teach science content. I wanted my students to feel confident, participate actively, and gradually transition to using scientific terms in English—without abandoning their linguistic strengths.

What did I do in my class?

With just 12 students in my 7th-grade class, I had the opportunity to try personalised interventions. I started by identifying simple science topics like parts of plants, basic cell structures, and functions of organs. For each topic, students brought everyday materials—leaves, twigs, small containers, which we used to build models and explain key ideas. They were thrilled to see their homes and environments become part of the learning space.

Simultaneously, I began using the IFPBs to show short science videos in English, followed by discussions in both Telugu and English. I would first explain the core ideas in Telugu, allowing students to



build understanding, and then repeat the explanation in English to reinforce key vocabulary. Over time, I encouraged them to describe what they had seen, first in Telugu, then in English.

I also created bilingual worksheets and used translanguaging techniques like code-switching and code-mixing. For example, I would say, “Idi plant cell diagram lo vacuole unadi (this plant cell diagram has a vacuole)” and guide them toward the English terminology. Slowly, they began to imitate this blend of languages.

- To collect data, I used:
- Pre- and post-activity reflections
- Classroom observations
- Google Forms to capture feedback from students and colleagues
- Parent feedback during meetings

The results in action

In the initial weeks, students were hesitant and unsure. Many of them had never heard scientific vocabulary in English before, and the sudden medium shift had left them disoriented. They often reverted to Telugu when asked questions, and I could sense their discomfort during English-only explanations. But I remained consistent—with each lesson, I introduced bilingual support and resource-based learning slowly and patiently.

Within three to four months, the transformation was visible. Students who once passively listened were now raising their hands, asking questions, and attempting to describe scientific processes in their own words. I vividly remember a group activity where they built simple plant models using leaves, straws, and clay. As they placed each part, they named them, “stem,” “leaf,” “root”—first in Telugu, then gradually in English. This shift wasn’t just linguistic; it was deeply behavioural. They were becoming active participants in their learning.

One breakthrough moment was when a quiet student—who had barely spoken in class before—explained the process of photosynthesis in mixed language: “Light energy vasthadi plant ki... it makes food.” That short sentence felt like a big milestone. It

showed me that understanding was happening, even if the grammar wasn’t perfect.

The use of Interactive Flat Panel Boards (IFPBs) brought another layer of engagement. Visual explanations in English helped demystify abstract concepts. Students started connecting what they saw on screen to the terms I introduced during activities. Over time, even their homework and class notebooks reflected this change—they attempted English more confidently, incorporating scientific terms accurately.

The ripple effects were felt beyond the classroom. Parents noticed the difference. In parent-teacher meetings, some said, “*My child now explains science concepts at home—in English!*” My fellow teachers were also intrigued. Inspired by the students’ enthusiasm, they began exploring similar multilingual and resource-based methods in their lessons. It felt like a shared shift in mindset—where language was no longer a barrier, but a bridge.

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Resources, whether they are low-cost or digital, and the use of mother tongue, together create a joyful and inclusive classroom. That’s the kind of science teaching I want to continue.



Learnings from my experience

This action research project taught me more than I expected—about my students, my teaching, and myself.

Here are my key takeaways:

- **Mother tongue matters:** It’s not a hurdle; it’s a stepping stone. Allowing students to use Telugu in the early stages helped them gradually transition to English with confidence.
- **Resources change the game:** From household items to digital panels, when students see, touch, and engage with real objects, their learning becomes deeper.
- **Mentoring made the difference:** My mentor, Mamatha Ma’am, guided me in everything—from framing questions to refining vocabulary in my documentation. Her calls and feedback pushed me to try

harder and reflect better.

- **Documentation is powerful:** Though I was used to teaching, recording each phase of this process helped me see growth, both in my students and in myself.

This journey has transformed the way I approach science teaching. I now believe that language and subject content go hand in hand. When taught with care, support, and the right tools, even complex topics can become accessible.

Next year, I plan to extend this approach to other classes, including Grade 6 and 10. I also want to explore new problems students face in higher grades and continue my action research journey. Who knows, one day, I may become a mentor myself!

Planting words, growing confidence

Sumathi's bilingual approach to vocabulary in a rural school



Mentee teacher

Sumathi N.

Research focus:

Exploring the impact of bilingual instruction on vocabulary enrichment among rural learners



Subjects they teach

English



State/district

**Government
High School,
Segampalayam,
Tiruppur District,
Tamil Nadu**



Mentor(s)

**Mr. Kandharaja
and Mr. Dinesh**



Grades

6-10

I am an English teacher at Government High School, Segampalayam in Tiruppur District, Tamil Nadu. I teach classes from Grade 6 to 10. Most of my students come from families of daily wage earners working in textile factories, and their exposure to English is limited to what they encounter at school. Teaching in this rural context often made me reflect deeply on how my students were receiving language instruction, especially when I saw their blank expressions as I spoke in English.

For years, I followed the belief that English must be taught only in English. But I kept asking myself—are my students truly understanding what I teach? Is it possible that using Tamil could support their learning instead of hindering it? These questions, along with the increasing presence of North Indian migrant children with little Tamil or English exposure, prompted me to take up action research under the

mentorship of Mr. Kandharaja and Mr. Dinesh. This journey helped me uncover how our students' home languages, when used strategically, can unlock their confidence and deepen their understanding of English

What was my research focused on?

The core focus of my action research was simple but powerful: *"Is bilingualism helpful in acquiring vocabulary enrichment among rural students?"*

My interest in this area was born out of the struggles I observed in my classroom every day. Students were hesitant to participate in English lessons. They often didn't respond at all when I asked questions in English, not because they didn't want to, but because they couldn't. Their limited exposure to English, combined with a lack of support at home, made learning frustrating rather than rewarding.

I noticed that students grasped concepts better when I used Tamil as a scaffold. So I set out to explore this insight further. I divided my students into two groups—one received instruction only in English, and the other received bilingual support. I

developed pre-and post-intervention questionnaires for both groups and used a range of tools like diary writing, peer observation, and feedback collection from teachers outside the English faculty. My goal was to see whether a strategic use of Tamil could help students acquire and retain English vocabulary more effectively. Could bilingual instruction move their perception of English from something they feared to something they engaged with confidently?

What did I do in my class?

I worked with 13 students from my Grade 6 class who volunteered to participate in the research. I began by conducting a pre-test to assess their current vocabulary knowledge. Then, I introduced bilingual materials and explanations into my lessons for one group while keeping instruction strictly in English for the other.

Some of the key strategies I used included:

- **Translation:** I translated unfamiliar English vocabulary into Tamil, especially abstract or complex terms.
- **Clarification:** I clarified grammatical tenses using Tamil equivalents (e.g., "Netru" for "yesterday" to teach past tense).



- **Anecdotes:** I shared personal stories about my journey from Tamil-medium to English-medium learning.
- **Full translations:** I used partial and even full translations depending on the students' needs and comfort levels.
- **Conducted post-tests:** I conducted post-test after a lesson unit on a trip to Ooty to measure changes in understanding.

To supplement these interventions, I also collected peer observations from two non-English teachers, who noted the students' surprising fluency and correct pronunciation during unrelated math classes. One of them shared, "Your students are using English words we didn't even teach them!" That spontaneous feedback affirmed that something was changing.

Students began showing interest, even asking for handouts when they missed class. One student returned after a week's absence and said, "Ma'am, I missed the lessons. Can you please give me the material?" That moment reminded me that when learning feels accessible, students are eager to participate.

When ideas met reality

The transformation observed in my classroom over 50 days was both incremental and significant. At first, my students exhibited hesitance and resistance. Some individuals declined to engage in English-only lessons, and many opted not to respond in English when prompted. However, upon introducing Tamil for clarification and explanation, the situation began to shift.

Students who previously remained silent commenced enquiring. The students demonstrated a genuine interest in the lessons, especially when I elucidated unfamiliar vocabulary through relatable Tamil examples. Their eyes lit up upon recognising a previously unfamiliar concept. During a lesson focused on a trip to Ooty, I posed the question, "What actions would you take if an elephant cub obstructed your path?" A child confidently stated, "I will burst crackers!"—eliciting laughter, surprise, and joy. Despite being unforeseen, it demonstrated creativity, confidence, and comprehension. Significantly, it was spontaneous and originated from a child who previously exhibited minimal verbal participation in class.

Peer learning also thrived. I observed more proficient students translating and elucidating terms to their peers, effectively bridging learning gaps in unexpected ways. Colleagues outside the English department observed a notable shift; students began using English during math classes, demonstrating impressive pronunciation and vocabulary usage.

In addition to academic enhancement, I observed a transformation in emotional well-being and personal identity. Students no longer perceived English as a daunting subject. They perceived their learning as their responsibility. Their pride was evident when they correctly employed English, even if it was limited to a few words, and they demonstrated a willingness to attempt usage. The most significant achievement, in my view, was the transformation of fear into curiosity, silence into expression, and hesitation into enthusiasm.



So far, I believed English must be taught only in English. But now I see it clearly—our students need Tamil to reach English. Their mother tongue is not the problem; it is the solution.



Learnings from my experience

This action research journey proved to be an invaluable learning opportunity for both my students and me. This journey reshaped how I view language learning. For years, I maintained the conviction that instructing English in English was the sole “correct” approach. This research allowed me to move beyond that notion and uncover a more inclusive, student-centered approach.

The most significant lesson I learned was that bilingualism is not a secondary option, but a valuable resource that enhances understanding and supports meaningful learning. Using Tamil to clarify key terms led to improved student responses, enhanced vocabulary retention, and increased participation. It enhanced not only their understanding in English but also in subject areas that depended on language skills.

Here are several key insights I acquired from this journey:

- **L1 enhances vocabulary development:** Translating complex terms into Tamil allowed students to understand challenging concepts and remember them more efficiently.
- **Confidence increases with comprehension:** As students recognized their understanding of the material, they became more willing to engage in speaking, writing, and participation.
- **The presence of mind and creativity were enhanced:** Students started using English words in novel contexts, occasionally extending beyond the lessons provided.
- **Peer learning is impactful:** Students were naturally motivated to assist each other when they felt confident in both languages.
- **Utilising teacher reflection tools has proven effective:** Maintaining a diary and recording class responses enabled me to monitor student growth and refine my strategies.
- **Mentorship is essential:** The weekly online sessions with my mentors enabled me to plan effectively, reflect sincerely, and approach classroom challenges with a positive outlook.

One of the most unexpected insights I gained was about my growth as an educator. I developed greater patience, heightened my observance, and became more receptive to listening. I no longer experienced frustration when students didn't respond right away. Instead, I remained patient, adjusted, and observed their blossoming.

As I continue this work, I aim to expand the bilingual approach to Grades 7 and 8. This isn't a full stop—it's a comma in a long sentence of learning. I believe this approach can inform not just teachers, but policymakers too. If we want to create truly inclusive classrooms, we must acknowledge the role of the mother tongue, not as a crutch, but as a springboard.

The silence that spoke

Sarojini's quest to understand why students didn't respond



Mentee teacher

Sarojini Mardi

Research focus:

Understanding why students do not respond in class and the role of multilingual strategies in encouraging interaction



Subjects they teach

English



State/district

**Chirang District,
Assam**



Mentor(s)

**Khamseng
Baruah**



Grades

3

I teach English at Adarsha Vidyalaya, Borobazar, in rural Chirang district of Assam. I teach across classes, but it was with my Class 3 students that I chose to explore something that had been bothering me for a while—their silence. Despite my efforts, many of my students remained quiet, hesitant, and disengaged in class, especially when I spoke in English. This worried me. Was it the language? The classroom environment? Or something else?

I wanted to know what was preventing them from responding—and not just academically, but emotionally and socially as well. Working in a class where students speak nine different mother tongues—Bodo, Assamese, Bengali, Nepali, Sadri, Hindi, Garo, Kurukh, and Santal—I knew that language played a major role in shaping how students engaged with learning.

When the opportunity to join the ARMS project came along, I saw a way forward. With the support of my mentor, I began a research journey that not only changed how I taught but transformed how my students learned.

What was my research focused on?

My research began with a pressing question: *Why do my students not respond in my class, especially when I teach in English?* I was not just looking for a linguistic answer—I wanted to understand the emotional and social reasons behind their silence.

I explored multiple angles:

- What does it mean for a student to “respond”?
- Why is classroom interaction important?
- Do students react differently to different teachers or subjects?
- Does using their home language make them more comfortable and likely to engage?

I observed a consistent pattern: many students became disengaged when I spoke only in English.

Some nodded along without understanding, while others looked away. This made me think that an English-only approach was making them feel disconnected. With my mentor’s support, I decided to explore the benefits of multilingualism, specifically using translanguaging, as a way to foster connection and build confidence

I designed my action research to examine how the use of students’ mother tongues in classroom conversation could help students open up, respond thoughtfully and engage with the subject matter on a deeper level.

What did I do in my class?

To get to the root of the problem, I chose a range of strategies over a six-week period involving both sections of Class 3, which included a total of 80 students.

I began with the following strategies:

- **Interviews:** I conducted interviews with selected students who seldom spoke during class.



- **Questionnaires:** I distributed questionnaires to other teachers who taught the same students to determine if the students' lack of response was limited to English classes.
- **Parent meetings:** I held meetings to inquire about the languages spoken at home and how their children engaged with learning at home
- **Peer conversations:** I asked pairs of students to describe things in both English and their home language. For example, they would share how to say "cat" or "orange" in languages such as Bodo, Nepali, or Sadri.

The main intervention I implemented was **translanguaging**—a simple yet powerful shift. Instead of teaching only in English, I started blending it with Bodo, Hindi, and other languages familiar to the students. I used this strategy to clarify vocabulary, check comprehension, and encourage classroom discussion.

For instance, when I introduced the word "apple" in English, I asked the students, "What do you call this at home?" Their faces lit up with excitement. They realised that they were no longer being asked to abandon their language to learn mine; they were being invited to build on what they already knew.

With support from my mentor, I tracked changes through my teacher diary, classroom observations, and discussions with students. The changes were small at first—but unmistakable

Multilingual interactions gave students a way to feel seen and safe. They laughed more, worked in pairs, shared their thoughts, and even more surprisingly, began to help each other. One boy translated instructions for his friend in Nepali. A Bengali-speaking child tried to explain a story in Hindi. These weren't just academic gains—they were social breakthroughs.

Some students preferred sticking to English, especially those who had greater exposure to it at home. But even they appreciated when others could join in, thanks to the flexible language environment.

Parents, too, noticed the shift. They told me their children had started speaking more freely at home, even using new English words and asking questions about what they'd learned.

The ripple effect

The results were far beyond what I had expected. Students who once sat silently at the back began whispering answers. That whisper turned into raised hands. Then, into complete sentences. And slowly, into conversations—sometimes in English, sometimes in their home languages, and often in both.

One breakthrough moment still stays with me. A girl who had never spoken a word in class looked at a drawing of a cat and said shyly in her language, "Goru." I smiled and said, "Yes, and in English, we call it a cat." She repeated, "Cat." That day, with the help of translanguaging, she didn't just learn a word, she crossed a boundary of fear.

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I used to think I had to teach only in English. But this research showed me that teaching in a child's home language first opens the door to English—not shuts it.



Learnings from my experience

This research changed the way I see teaching, language, and learning itself.

At first, I believed that insisting on using only English would help students become fluent. However, now, I see that using their mother tongue doesn't weaken their English—it strengthens their understanding, confidence, and connection to the subject.

Some of my key takeaways from this journey include:

- **Multilingual strategies** build trust and reduce fear in early learners.
- **Translanguaging** allows students to use all their linguistic resources to make meaning.
- **Building confidence** is the first step toward developing language skills.
- **Engaging with families** about language use at home can provide valuable

insights.

There were challenges. I came from a college-teaching background and had never taught such young learners before. Class 3 textbooks arrived late, and with nine languages spoken in a single room, the complexity was real. But with the support of my mentor, principal, and colleagues, I navigated through it.

One thing is clear to me now: multilingual classrooms are not chaotic. They are rich, layered, and full of opportunity, if we know how to listen.

In the future, I plan to deepen this work. I want to study the impact of multilingualism more systematically. I aim to expand the range of languages I can use and share my learning with other teachers. Above all, I want to keep creating classrooms where every child, in every language, feels like they belong.

Reading without fear

Satyanarayana's efforts to support oral English through home languages



Mentee teacher

**V. Satyanarayana
Rao**

**Research focus:
Improving oral reading
efficiency in
multilingual contexts**



Subjects they teach

English



State/district

**Zilla Parishad High
School, Nadargul,
Balapur Mandal,
Ranga Reddy District,
Telangana**



Mentor(s)

**Akarapu
Padma**



Grades

6-10

I am an English teacher at Zilla Parishad high School, Nadargul, located in a multilingual community in Telangana. I teach students from Classes 6 to 10, many of whom speak Telugu at home, while some come from Lambadi or Kannada speaking backgrounds. English, for most of them, exists only inside the classroom. I noticed early on that while my students could often write words, they resisted when asked to read aloud in English. Their pronunciation was hesitant, and their confidence wavered.

This raised a powerful question in my mind: *Why are my students struggling with oral reading in English, and what could I do differently in a multilingual setting to support them?*

When I joined the ARMS project, I saw it as a unique opportunity to pause, reflect, and investigate this issue in a structured manner, with the steady guidance of my mentor. With her encouragement, I decided to examine how using multilingual strategies, especially translanguaging and peer-assisted reading could help students decode, understand, and read English texts with greater confidence.

What was my research focused on?

My research was driven by a simple yet urgent question: How can I improve my students' oral reading efficiency in English through multilingual strategies?

I wanted to understand what was preventing them from reading fluently. Was it unfamiliarity with English sounds? Was it a lack of confidence? Were my classroom methods—relying mainly on English instruction—creating more fear than fluency? I broke this down into smaller questions:

- How do current practices fall short in supporting students' oral reading?

- How might home languages support decoding and pronunciation in English?
- What are some multilingual techniques that I can try in my classroom to change this?

Through this research, I wasn't looking for a perfect solution. I wanted to explore my students' linguistic resources—what they already knew in their home languages and use those to build bridges to English. That belief shaped everything I did in the next few months.

What did I do in my class?

I began by dividing my work into two stages: the exploration phase and the action phase. In the first phase, I collected data using questionnaires for both students and other subject teachers. To ensure everyone could provide their insights, I prepared the questionnaires in both English and Telugu. This helped me gain a clear understanding of students' perspectives on reading and identify gaps in current teaching strategies.

For the intervention stage, I focused on a group of 40 students in Class 8. Initially, only 18 of these students were able to read basic English texts aloud.



To improve their reading skills, I implemented several multilingual strategies:

- **Translanguaging:** I encouraged students to process and discuss English content in Telugu or their home language before attempting to read aloud.
- **Code-switching:** I gave them space to use their mother tongue to decode meaning and then rephrase in English.
- **Peer-assisted multilingual reading:** Stronger readers were paired with hesitant ones, often explaining meanings in a shared language.
- **Use of culturally relevant stories:** I selected narratives that students could relate to providing parallel phrases in Telugu and English. This allowed for easier comprehension of the material.

Supported by feedback from my mentor, I kept a daily diary of my teaching and observed shifts in student participation. We also integrated digital tools to promote fluency through repetition and visual learning.

Here's how it went

When I began this journey, only 18 out of my 40 eighth-grade students could read aloud in English with any degree of fluency. The others would either skip words, hesitate after every sentence, or simply refuse to read at all. Their discomfort with English was evident—not only in their reading pace but also in their body language and tone. Most students had limited exposure to English outside of school, making the language feel distant and intimidating.

But within a few months of applying multilingual strategies, everything began to change. By December, following a single term of classroom-based research, 38 out of the 40 students were reading aloud comfortably. The two who did not reach this level had irregular attendance and often missed the crucial intervention days. Even so, they demonstrated some improvement during the times they were present.

One significant moment was when I introduced **multilingual storytelling** to my class. At first, my students faced challenges, but as they began to retell familiar stories in Telugu, followed by English versions, their voices became steadier, their confidence grew. They started using decoding strategies they knew in their home language—

breaking words into syllables and sounding out letters based on Telugu phonemes—and applied these skills to English texts.

The classroom transformed into a more collaborative space. **Peer-assisted reading** allowed more proficient students to mentor those who needed help, often explaining meaning and pronunciation in their shared languages. I noticed that even quieter students began participating more actively in group tasks. One student, who had never read a sentence aloud earlier, voluntarily stood up and read a full page during one of our shared reading sessions.

What truly amazed me was the **level of enthusiasm** that emerged. My students didn't just read better—they wanted to read more. They began requesting stories in both English and Telugu and even brought books from home to compare English sentences with their Telugu versions. My principal and mentor noticed these positive changes too. Even parents told me that their children had started reading signs, labels, and even newspapers at home.

This change wasn't just about academic improvement. It was about self-worth. Students began to see themselves as capable readers, not just in Telugu but also in English.

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This journey has only begun—and I am committed to continuing it, for the benefit of every learner who deserves to thrive in every language they speak.

As one student said to me after reading a bilingual story aloud for the first time, “Sir, English is not scary now. It's like Telugu's cousin.” That, to me, is the heart of this journey.



Learnings from my experience

This journey has reshaped me—not just as a teacher, but as a learner. Earlier, I viewed English as a skill to be taught in isolation. But now, I see how deeply intertwined it is with the students' home languages, identities, and confidence. The shift in my perspective was significant: from treating mother tongues as secondary to recognising them as foundational tools for English literacy.

One of the most powerful strategies I discovered was translanguaging—allowing students to think, speak, and decode in their home languages before transitioning to English. This helped learners process complex texts more confidently and improved their oral fluency. Alongside this, code-switching proved to be a highly effective tool. Students began using Telugu as a springboard to build English vocabulary and structure, without the fear of making mistakes.

Equally impactful was the use of peer-assisted multilingual reading. Students supported one another, creating a collaborative environment that not only built language skills but also a sense of shared responsibility. My role shifted from instructor to facilitator, and that change made a visible difference in student motivation.

Some of my key takeaways from this research include:

- **Collaborative reading builds confidence:** Peer support systems allow students to learn from each other meaningfully.
 - **Culturally relevant materials matter:** Texts that reflect students' realities increase engagement and comprehension.
 - **Mentorship drives innovation:** Regular feedback helped me refine strategies and reflect more deeply on my classroom practice.
- Looking ahead, I plan to:
- **Extend multilingual strategies** to all the grades I teach, and adapting these strategies based on age and language background.
 - **Create bilingual reading resources** and story-based materials for teachers in my cluster.
 - **Convene sharing circles** for fellow educators to discuss multilingual pedagogy and classroom innovations.
 - **Advocate for bilingual assessments** that measure not just pronunciation, but comprehension and confidence.
 - **Document and present findings** at educational forums to inspire more teachers to embrace multilingual approaches.
- **Multilingualism is a strength, not a barrier:** Home languages can support—not hinder—English learning.

