

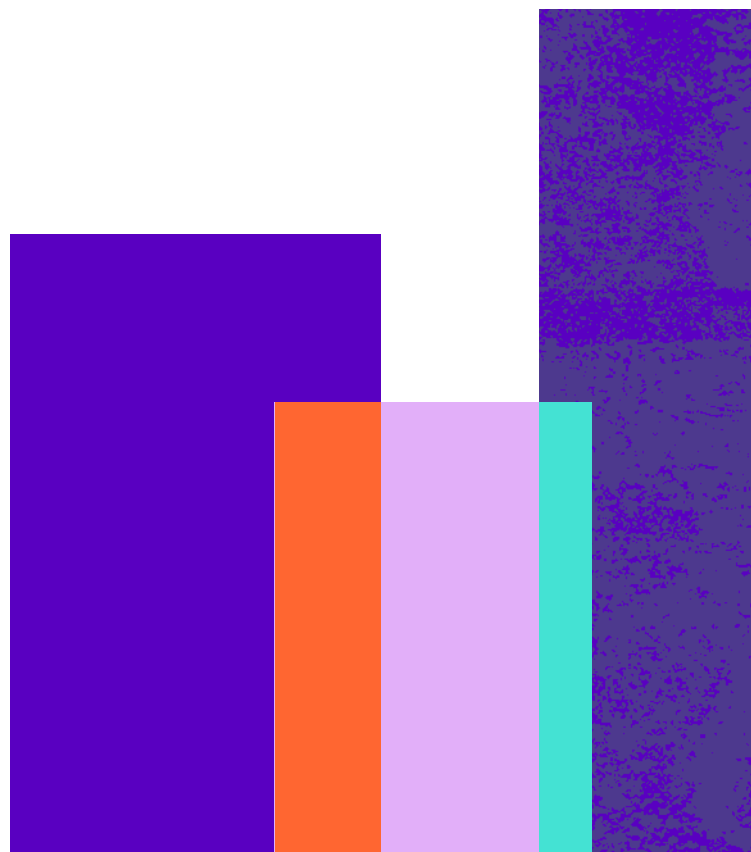
MultiEd Summary Report

Multilingual Education in India (MultiEd)

**Teaching, Learning
and Assessment**

Brief research report of a study on
Multilingualism in Education: Teaching,
Learning and Assessment in Delhi and
Assam (2023-2026)

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Foreword

Language is central to learning. It shapes how children understand ideas, ask questions, and build knowledge across subjects. In India, one of the most linguistically diverse countries in the world, multilingualism is not an exception; it is the norm.

The National Education Policy (NEP 2020) affirms the importance of mother-tongue education in the early years, while recognising the value of English as a language of opportunity and wider communication. At the British Council, we believe that learning English works best when it is positioned within a multilingual education framework. English should expand opportunity, not create new barriers to understanding. When learners are supported to draw on the languages they already know, they are better able to develop both subject knowledge and English proficiency.

The Multilingualism in Education (MultiEd) project offers timely and rigorous evidence in this area. Conducted in government primary schools in Delhi and Assam, this three-year study examined how structured multilingual pedagogy and simultaneous use of multiple languages can support reading comprehension and aid learning in English medium classrooms.

The research findings are encouraging. Structured use of home and regional languages alongside English improved students' comprehension of academically demanding texts, with no observed negative impact on English learning. Teachers also reported higher levels of engagement and confidence among learners, as classrooms became more interactive and inclusive. Importantly, the project helped shift existing language mixing in classrooms from spontaneous use to planned, purposeful multilingual pedagogy. This research reinforces an important message: when implemented thoughtfully, multilingual approaches can strengthen



Alison Barrett

English learning while improving overall comprehension and academic outcomes.

MultiEd also contributes practical tools to support this shift, including structured lesson planning templates and a self-access teacher development course designed to build confidence and classroom-ready skills.

In addition to its classroom intervention, MultiEd makes two important contributions to the evidence base. The study explored multilingual approaches to assessment, demonstrating how alignment between teaching and assessment can support deeper understanding of English medium texts. It also developed a Teacher Talk Corpus, offering rare empirical insight into how languages are used in real classrooms. Together, these strands strengthen our understanding of how multilingual education can be implemented thoughtfully and effectively in practice.

As India continues to advance the vision of NEP 2020, evidence such as this can help bridge the gap between policy and classroom practice.

We extend our sincere appreciation to the research partners, participating schools, teachers, students, and families who contributed to this important work. We hope the findings and resources shared in this report will inform dialogue, strengthen professional development of teachers, and support classrooms where every learner can understand, participate, and thrive.

Alison Barrett MBE

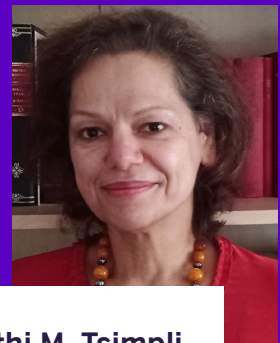
Country Director India, British Council

Foreword

In India, multilingualism is the norm. There are over 270 mother tongues (Census of India, 2011) spoken in the country with the average adult Indian speaker being able to communicate in three to five languages. Of all these languages, 22 are ‘scheduled languages’ according to the Indian Constitution and these and others, including tribal languages, may be used as school languages across the country. In this context, how does English feature alongside this impressive linguistic diversity?

Worldwide, English is a lingua franca, a language considered to be the gateway to social, economic and academic improvement. In India, English is offered as a school subject but frequently also as the school language in combination with regional or home languages. However, most of the time the pedagogical practices followed in schools separate languages in the curriculum and the classroom. Would it be possible to empower schools to reflect the richness of multilingual diversity among students, communities and the country as a whole?

Our previous research in India contributed novel insights which support international findings regarding the benefits of multilingualism for students’ cognitive, linguistic and, most importantly, socioemotional development and wellbeing. The MultiEd project offers a novel and practical Multilingual Education framework for language and content learning with a specific focus on improving reading comprehension and learning outcomes in English with the structured integration of Hindi, Tamil and Assamese. The present report outlines the basic principles and practices of the multilingual pedagogical translanguaging intervention implemented in Delhi and Assam including the teacher training elements alongside the findings of the study pertaining to the teachers and students recruited. The report offers



Ianthi M. Tsimpli

a unique opportunity for language experts, policy makers, academics and practitioners to obtain insights based on research evidence from one of the first extensive and comprehensive implementations of multilingual education in primary schools in India focusing on teachers and students alike. In this respect, it comes as a novel and important contribution to the country's investment in mother tongues, regional languages and English within a multilingual education framework.

Our intervention programmes in Delhi and Assam schools have led to enhanced student and teacher engagement and wellbeing in the classroom by making multilingualism a visible, feasible, transformative and sustainable approach to teaching and learning. They also point towards a promising future of the MultiEd programme across and beyond India.

Ianthi M. Tsimpli

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Introduction

The Multilingualism in Education (MultiEd) project was a three-year research study (2023–2026) funded by British Council and awarded to the University of Cambridge (Cambridge Partnership for Education at Cambridge University Press & Assessment with Professor Ianthi M. Tsimpli at the Department of Theoretical and Applied Linguistics in the Faculty of Modern and Medieval Languages & Linguistics, as the Lead Researcher).

According to the National Education Policy of India¹, mother-tongue education is prioritised in the early years, while English is envisaged as a subject taught in a high-quality manner to promote equity and access. The policy also acknowledges systemic constraints affecting implementation, including limitations in teaching–learning materials in regional languages, uneven provision for linguistic minorities, and the challenges teachers face in adopting bilingual or multilingual pedagogies. In recent years, several state governments have expanded English medium instruction (EMI) in government schools².

While this shift reflects strong societal demand for English, it has often been implemented in contexts where teachers and schools continue to operate with varying levels of pedagogical, material, and professional support. This has created a gap between policy intent and classroom realities, particularly in linguistically diverse and resource-constrained settings.

Following a decade of research in India's primary schools, the MultiEd team was in a position to focus on two strengths previously reported for primary school students in the MultiLiLa³ research findings: the first strength is the fact that multilingualism is the norm in India, the implication being that the population of India, and primarily Indian children, have exceptionally strong oral language skills and a nurtured propensity to learn and speak multiple languages as part of growing up in one of the most linguistically diverse parts of the world.

The second strength has to do with the attested improved learning outcomes students show when a) pedagogical

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 2. India Today. (2025, July 10). <https://www.indiatoday.in/education-today/news/story/english-medium-section-mandatory-in-each-class-of-delhi-government-schools-doe-2753611-2025-07-10>
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The Tribune. (2024, June 28). <https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/himachal/english-to-be-medium-of-teaching-in-all-govt-schools-634733/>
 3. [Multilingualism and multiliteracy \(MultiLiLa\) research project | British Council](#)

practices promote student engagement through teacher-student and student-student interactions in classroom activities and b) when English texts are made accessible, comprehensible and learnable through the structured use of languages already familiar to the learner to support the unfamiliar language, English.

Based on the above strengths, MultiEd implemented the Multilingual Pedagogical Translanguaging Intervention programme (MultiPed), targeting English textbook reading and higher literacy skills to address the most obvious weakness identified in primary school children in India, namely poor reading comprehension skills. Although students were found to be able to read aloud in English, Hindi and Telugu, they found it difficult to understand the content of the text they had just read, particularly when this was in English.

The aim of the MultiEd project was to identify through a multilingual pedagogical translanguaging intervention programme (MultiPed) the best practices in which English can be used alongside the regional and home languages of teachers and students to deliver optimal multilingual education to English Medium Instruction (EMI) primary school classrooms in government schools in Delhi and Assam, having first been implemented in primary school classrooms in EMI government schools in Hyderabad.

This report provides evidence and practical guidance for integrating multilingual approaches into English medium classrooms. It is intended to support policymakers, educators and systems in strengthening learning outcomes while advancing equity.

Figure 1: Classroom teaching

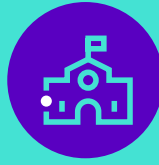




Institutions involved

Researchers from 6 universities across the UK and India (University of Cambridge, Gauhati University, Jawaharlal Nehru University, English and Foreign Languages University, Goethe University of Frankfurt, University of Oxford)

Involvement of



8

schools from Guwahati, Assam and Delhi, National Capital Territory of Delhi



694

primary school pupils



37

teachers

Outputs

MultiPed translanguaging intervention programme

A multilingual pedagogical translanguaging intervention programme (MultiPed), in which teachers are encouraged to build on their students' strength in oral skills by allowing them to act as 'agents' in their own learning process and use English alongside their home languages in planned and monitored oral interactions in class.

Teacher Talk Corpus

A Teacher Talk Corpus (TTC) documents the natural translanguaging teachers may engage in during lesson delivery. This is the first of its kind in India presenting translanguaging practices in low-resourced classrooms with multilingual learners.

MultiPed teacher training course: self-access online training for teachers

An online teacher training course enabling teachers to familiarise themselves and develop sufficient skills to deliver multilingual education in pedagogically and linguistically informed ways.

Learner datasets on Reading Comprehension in English and the Regional Language

Datasets from primary school pupils who received MultiPed intervention, showing that there is no perceptible negative effect on learning from adopting MultiPed in the teaching of content classes (Environmental Science).

Multilingual lesson plan templates

Templates of lesson plans developed with trained teachers to create multilingual lessons using MultiPed.

The MultiPed translanguaging intervention programme


The MultiPed intervention programme lasted for six to seven months and was delivered in EMI schools in Assam and Delhi. Twelve teachers in Assam schools and twenty-five in Delhi schools were trained and recruited for the project. The majority of the teachers (28/37) had Master's degree qualifications, and 81% of the teachers were multilingual while the remaining seven teachers were bilingual. Eighteen of the Delhi-based teachers claimed to use English only as the language of instruction and the remaining seven used Hindi alongside English. In Assam, only 4 out of 12 teachers claimed to use English only in lesson delivery.

MultiPed introduced pedagogical translanguaging practices, summarised on the right, for primary school teachers in EMI schools in Delhi and Assam.

- i. **Guidance on how to read English texts aloud to students in a meaningful way: the importance of chunking meaningful units**
- ii. **Lesson plans as essential for structured pedagogical translanguaging**
- iii. **Orality and code-switching as a strength of multilingual learners.**
- iv. **Organisation of peer group multilingual activities in class**

Figure 2: Example of questions in the reading comprehension task

Plastic plates and tumblers are being used during picnics and functions. Though in minute quantity, some plastic enters our body, which is very harmful for us. The plastic takes lakhs of years to decompose and thus adds to soil pollution. It even block the micro organisms which make soil fertile. Plastic glasses and plates when burnt release harmful gases into the atmosphere and thus cause air pollution.



Leaves of Butea(moduga) and banyan tree are used as plates. Since ancient times, we have been using leaf plates for eating. They decompose in less time. Thus, they protect our environment. Plastic plates are harmful to health and also lead to soil pollution.

3. प्लास्टिक पर्यावरण के लिए हानिकारक क्यों है?

A. क्योंकि जानवरों को इससे एलर्जी होती है।
B. क्योंकि इसकी गंध बहुत खराब होती है।
C. क्योंकि यह हजारों सालों में सड़ता है।
D. क्योंकि यह आमतौर पर बहुत गंदा होता है।

4. "अपघटन" (decompose) का क्या मतलब है?

A. टूटना।
B. विघटित होना।
C. प्रदूषित करना।
D. जलना।

Findings

3.1. Teachers' classroom practices and attitudes towards using MultiPed

There were some differences between Delhi and Assam in teacher practices and attitudes towards multilingual pedagogy during MultiPed. While in Assam, Assamese was regularly used for explanation and code-switching was practised, in Delhi the instruction was mostly in English with strategic use of Hindi and Tamil or students' home

languages for clarification purposes. Nevertheless, in both sites, teacher attitudes toward multilingualism in the classroom were very positive, viewing pedagogical translanguaging as beneficial for learning and equitable access to education.

3.2. Teacher reflections during post-lesson interviews

Teachers' post-intervention feedback on the use of structured lesson planning with multilingual scaffolding was overwhelmingly positive and is summarised in the points below, where teachers reported that they:

- increased learner engagement for listening and reading comprehension
- developed learners' production skills through peer discussions and writing
- supported their vocabulary learning and inference-making abilities
- improved their comprehension of English and EVS (environmental science) texts as witnessed through their individual performance on reading assessments, and
- established learner agency through peer interactions and collaborative learning.

Moreover, the training workshops and on-going collaboration with researchers in class helped teachers to:

- practise MultiPed actively during classes
- develop practical strategies in design and implementation of the lessons multilingually
- provide feedback to scaffold learning English comprehension
- attend to learner needs and provide encouragement to make cross-linguistic comparisons to support multicompetence in English as well as regional language
- attend to learners affectively and build their motivation to use their language repertoires during communication.

3.3. Key MultiPed outcomes from classroom observations

- Structured lesson plans are effective
- Home languages are a strength
- Read-aloud with pre-defined pauses on meaningful chunks in the sentence matters
- Peer-activities building on students' oral language skills improve text understanding
- Vocabulary in context supports reading

3.4. Use of home languages alongside English

- improves access to EVS concepts
- leads to more engaged classrooms and happier students
- enables teachers to become reflective planners
- enables a gradual and feasible move towards English usage
- is feasible in real classrooms

3.5. Students' reading comprehension outcomes

Students were assessed in their reading comprehension (RC) of narrative (from English textbooks) and expository (from EVS textbooks, also in English) texts in English medium schools. RC was tested using either multiple choice questions (MCQs) in English only or MCQs in the regional language (Assamese / Hindi) only. This means students were assessed through the use of either English only for both the text and the MCQs, or multilingually through the use of English texts with home language MCQs. Multilingual assessment involves the strategic activation and use of children's regional languages during assessment conducted to test comprehension of English texts. This approach ensures continuity between learning (which follows pedagogical translanguaging) and assessment practices.

Our findings show that students who received MultiPed in Assam (the intervention group) benefited significantly from this in their comprehension of expository texts with English MCQs. Where no statistically significant differences were found between the control and the intervention group, we suggest that the absence of a difference indicates that there is no perceptible negative effect on learning from adopting the MultiPed approach in the teaching of EVS. The findings from the comprehension of English narrative texts were mixed in that in some cases using English MCQs improved comprehension while in others no effect (positive or negative) was found.

3.6 Teachers' language use in classroom: the Teacher Talk Corpus (TTC)

The TTC comprises nine transcribed audio recordings undertaken at four Delhi Tamil Education Association (DTEA) schools in New Delhi. These are schools which use English as the medium of instruction, but Hindi and Tamil are also supported as language subjects in the curriculum. Seven teachers took part in the corpus study and consented to be recorded while delivering English lessons to students in Standards IV and V. The corpus contains 26,178 words and 5,576 utterances from approximately six hours and forty-seven minutes of recordings. The languages used by the teachers were English, Hindi, and Tamil.

Our findings from the TTC suggest that teachers use English-only sentences the majority of the time (n=3,199, 78.16%) while they also use language-mixed sentences in the classroom (n=894, 21.84%). English as the language matrix (i.e. the language that provides the template of the whole sentence) in both unilingual and bilingual utterances make up the majority percentage (n=2,464, 60.2%), which to a considerable degree reflects the de jure language of instruction of DTEA schools and the subject being taught i.e. English. De facto, Hindi and Tamil are also utilised by teachers in English classrooms. However, the proportion of Hindi-matrix utterances (n=1,405, 34.33%) is substantially higher than that of Tamil-matrix utterances (n=224,

5.47%), indicating a stronger preference for the regional language than the heritage language as the other language of instruction in DTEA schools.

3.7 New educational materials

The MultiPed Translanguaging Intervention programme of the MultiEd project included the production of new educational materials aimed a) to be used by the teachers trained to deliver MultiPed and b) to develop an online teacher training course for Multilingual Education: Teaching, Learning and Assessment (The MultiPed Teacher Training Course: Self-access online training for teachers) where the principles and the implementation of MultiPed would be further disseminated to interested teachers across India and beyond.

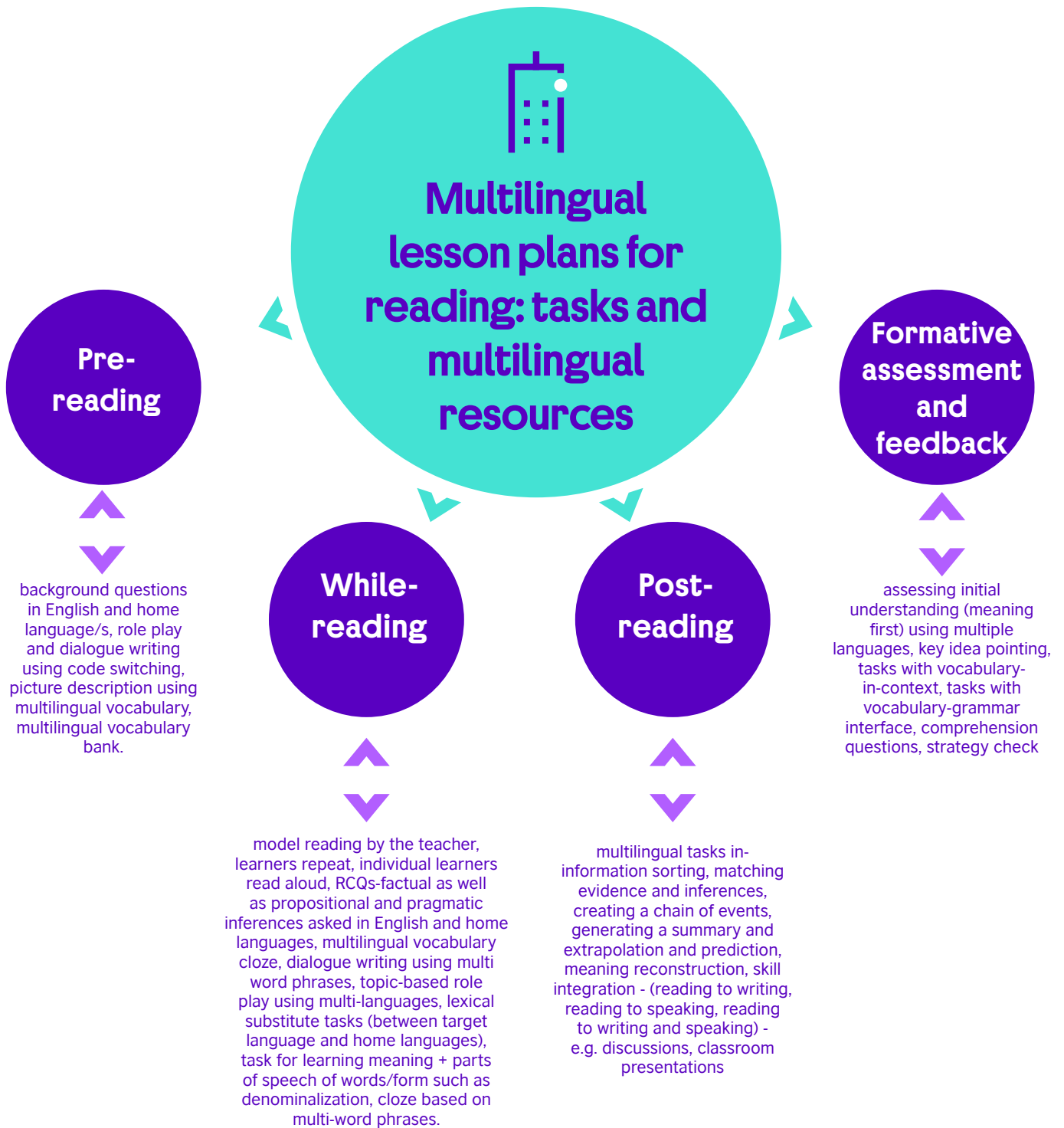
3.7.1 Multilingual lesson plan template: guidelines on how to improve reading comprehension outcomes

One of MultiPed's objectives was to develop, together with the teachers trained in the project, multilingual lesson plans which were then used in the classrooms as part of the pedagogical translanguaging intervention. Figure 3 presents a lesson plan template for reading development:

3.7.2 The MultiPed teacher training course: Self-access online training for teachers

The MultiEd team has piloted an online teacher training course on multilingual education, which consists of four modules with three to four units per module. The aim of the course is to enable teachers to familiarise themselves and develop sufficient skills to deliver multilingual education in pedagogically and linguistically informed ways. The course presents fundamental aspects of multilingual education in teaching, in learning and in assessment, providing ways to address challenges by using flexible and adaptable lesson plans while building on state-of-the-art concepts in pedagogical translanguaging and applied linguistics. The teacher training course is complete with quizzes and tasks/ tests to help teachers monitor their progress and achieve a certificate of completion.

Figure 3: Multilingual lesson plan template for reading



Recommendations

4.1 Recommendations for policy-makers

A. *The purpose of learning to read is to be able to learn from your reading*

Reading comprehension (in any language) needs to be targeted as the primary goal of literacy development from early school years. Rote-learning and reading aloud on their own are not sufficient for improving learning outcomes. Good reading comprehension skills support critical learning and empower students to become successful in whichever career path they choose to pursue.

B. **English as the medium of instruction can be effectively supported by students' other languages**

The MultiPed Translanguaging Intervention programme showed no detrimental effects from the use of Indian languages while teaching (in) English on reading comprehension in content subjects (EVS, which used expository-style texts).

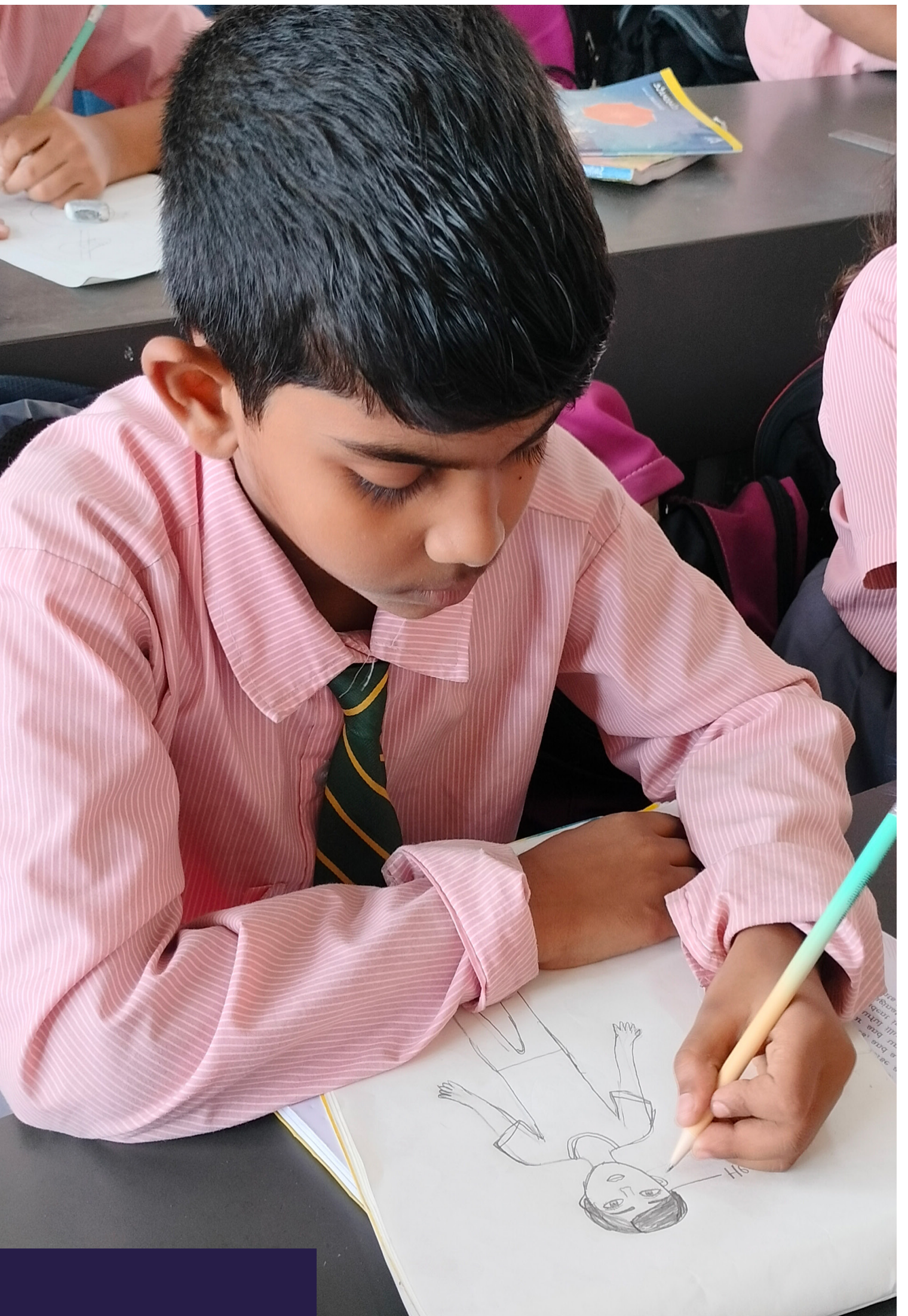
Most importantly, students in the MultiPed programme actively engaged with the lesson content, showed increased attendance rates, according to their teachers' testimony, and showed signs of improved well-being and appreciation of the school context.

C. **Structured use of pedagogical translanguaging practices in classroom teaching in English-medium Schools needs to be streamlined**

MultiPed recommends the implementation of **structured pedagogical translanguaging**, i.e. the structured and planned use of regional and home languages alongside English — in EMI schools or in English language classes — to improve students' understanding of content and language and, consequently, to improve learning outcomes.

D. **MultiPed (Multilingual pedagogical translanguaging intervention programme) should become a core/mandatory module in pre-service teachers' educational qualifications programmes of study across the country**

Multilingual education can be delivered if a student-centred, structured approach to pedagogical translanguaging is adopted throughout primary school education. Educating pre-service teachers on a) the benefits of delivering pedagogical translanguaging to multilingual learners and the de-stigmatisation of the use of Indian languages while learning (in) English, b) the appropriate teaching pedagogy for



enabling students to become good, critical learners of language and content knowledge and c) the benefits of peer-group learning activities in class, are essential for preparing teachers to go into EMI but also non-EMI schools with English as a school subject.

- E. In-service teachers** require Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programmes and expert support for at least a period of one school year to be in a position to develop and apply the right skills for pedagogical translanguaging in the form of the MultiPed programme.
- F. In contexts affected by poverty, limited print exposure at home, and internal migration, pedagogical translanguaging can play a critical role.**

Education authorities should invest further into disadvantaged children who lack parental support in literacy and numeracy. ***Educating disadvantaged groups in a language they don't understand may lead to more missed opportunities for education and progress for these groups.***

Pedagogical translanguaging in the form of MultiPed provides the basic essentials for empowering students to think, understand and learn content and language in school (textbook) languages.

- G. As state governments expand English medium provision, it will be important to ensure that this shift is accompanied by sustained pedagogical support for teachers and learners.** Without adequate preparation, professional development and appropriate learning resources, students may face challenges in developing strong foundations in literacy, numeracy and academic language needed for successful transition to secondary education. In MultiLila, we noted that only 90 out of 1520 children attending Std IV or Std V in EMI schools in Delhi and Hyderabad attempted to use English in their oral production. In MultiEd, we saw a higher level of student engagement and a subsequent improved level of enjoyment and well-being in the classroom as well as a certain degree of improvement in students following the Multilingual Pedagogical Translanguaging Intervention programme (MultiPed) often reflected in their reading comprehension of expository texts (EVS). MultiEd's implementation of pedagogical translanguaging in MultiPed offers a way forward for the use of EMI in government schools in India promoting the development of regional and home languages in class at the same time.

4.2. Recommendations for teachers, teacher educators and school administrators

The positive feedback from teachers in MultiPed, which focuses on how to face the challenges of large classrooms with diverse learning needs and multiple

home languages, leads us to present the following set of recommendations for stakeholders in education:

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Poverty, lack of rich print exposure at home, and internal migration make pedagogical translanguaging a necessity.



A. Reading instruction should prioritise comprehension as the foundation for all further learning.

Teachers play a critical role in moving beyond decoding and rote reading to developing students' ability to interpret, question and apply what they read. Strong comprehension skills enable learners to engage meaningfully with content across subjects and support their long-term academic success.

B. Multilingual pedagogy implemented through the design and use of multilingual and multimodal (oral and written) learning materials can be a driver for teachers' positive growth and the development of teacher leadership in the classroom and the school.

C. Multilingual pedagogy can lead to the successful integration of knowledge from multiple languages to scaffold learning.

D. Critical discussions and

reflections amongst teachers and teacher educators to improve the know-how in the implementation of multilingual resources in class holds the key to sustain multilingual pedagogy in Indian classrooms.

E. Pedagogical challenges in the form of teacher training, material development and rubrics for assessment as well as time and resources required to implement it in a sustained manner across the curriculum and across schools are a priority.

F. Planning for implementation of such a pedagogy would have to be accomplished **in a localised manner** based on teacher readiness and learner needs, especially in low-cost schools where children come from underprivileged socio-economic and marginalised family backgrounds with minimal literacy support at home.

4.3 Recommendations for parents, families and communities

Multilingualism in India is the norm and supports children's cognitive and school skill development. Schools in India need to follow a multilingual pedagogy which can enable students, teachers and families to achieve continuity and harmony during children's growth across home, community and school contexts.

The following are the recommendations for parents and communities who can contribute to children's support with homework and the use of multiple languages in day-to-day conversations.

A. Helping children understand what they read is essential for their success in school and beyond.

Children can only learn and develop their knowledge in Maths, Physics, EVS and each and every subject if they can understand what is written in their textbooks, phones, laptops and any other materials that provide information to them. Good readers become creative workers and creative leaders in whichever profession they choose to follow.

- B. Supporting comprehension at home through discussion, explanation and the use of familiar languages strengthens their confidence and ability to learn across subjects. Children's **multilingualism**, offered as a natural resource at home, the community and ideally, the school, too **needs to be nurtured and utilised for better learning outcomes and a deeper and longer-lasting understanding of school textbook content across subjects.**
- C. Multilingual pedagogy which includes the **development of children's home languages in school contexts alongside English** is and will be an asset for students' prospects in their future aspirations (studies and professional career development). **Multilinguals with good academic language levels in more than English only are known to have more flexible, adaptable life skills, better cultural awareness and work ethic.**
- D. Parents need to engage with the curriculum development and seek to understand and discuss the impact of multilingual resource use in classes to improve content understanding first and problem-solving skills, alongside English.
- Basic English language skills without content knowledge across school subjects cannot lead to better work and life opportunities.**
- E. Parents and communities need to be proud and assertive of their multilingual competence which has been shown to lead to improved social, emotional and academic well-being and success.
- Intergenerational practice of using multilingualism in communication should be fostered.**



Dissemination outputs

Tsimpli, I. M. (2024, April). *Multilingualism and language assessment of English as a second language: A view from India*. Keynote presentation, 26th International Symposium on Theoretical and Applied Linguistics, Thessaloniki, Greece.

Tsimpli, I. M. (2024, November). *Multilingual assessment of language and content knowledge: English alongside different mother tongues in primary schools*. Keynote presentation, New Directions East Asia International Conference “The Impact of Language Assessment on Individuals and Societies”, Bangkok, Thailand.

Vogelzang, M., Tsimpli, I., Patil, V. K., & Mukhopadhyay, L. (2024, November). *Supporting the development of Indian primary school children’s reading comprehension skills: A multilingually scaffolded intervention*. Language Sciences Annual Symposium. Cambridge, UK.

Vogelzang, M., Tsimpli, I., Patil, V. K., & Mukhopadhyay, L. (2025, March). *Supporting the development of Indian primary school children’s reading comprehension skills: A multilingually scaffolded intervention*. Bilingualism Matters Symposium. Edinburgh, UK.

Pilot studies

Torregrossa, J., Tsimpli, I., Mukhopadhyay, L., & Patil-Ingle, V. (2024). Introducing multilingual assessment in English-medium instruction schools in India. 33rd European Second Language Association Conference (EuroSLA 33), University of Montpellier.

Torregrossa, J., Tsimpli, I., Mukhopadhyay, L., & Patil-Ingle, V. (2025). The design and evaluation of a multilingual sentence repetition task for assessing syntactic abilities in EMI primary schools in India. 34th European Second Language Association Conference (EuroSLA 34), University of Tromsø.

Torregrossa, J., Tsimpli, I., Mukhopadhyay, L., Patil-Ingle, V., & Saville, N. (submitted). Multilingual assessment of reading comprehension among primary school children in English medium schools in India.

Related research projects – follow ups on MultiLila (2021-2023)

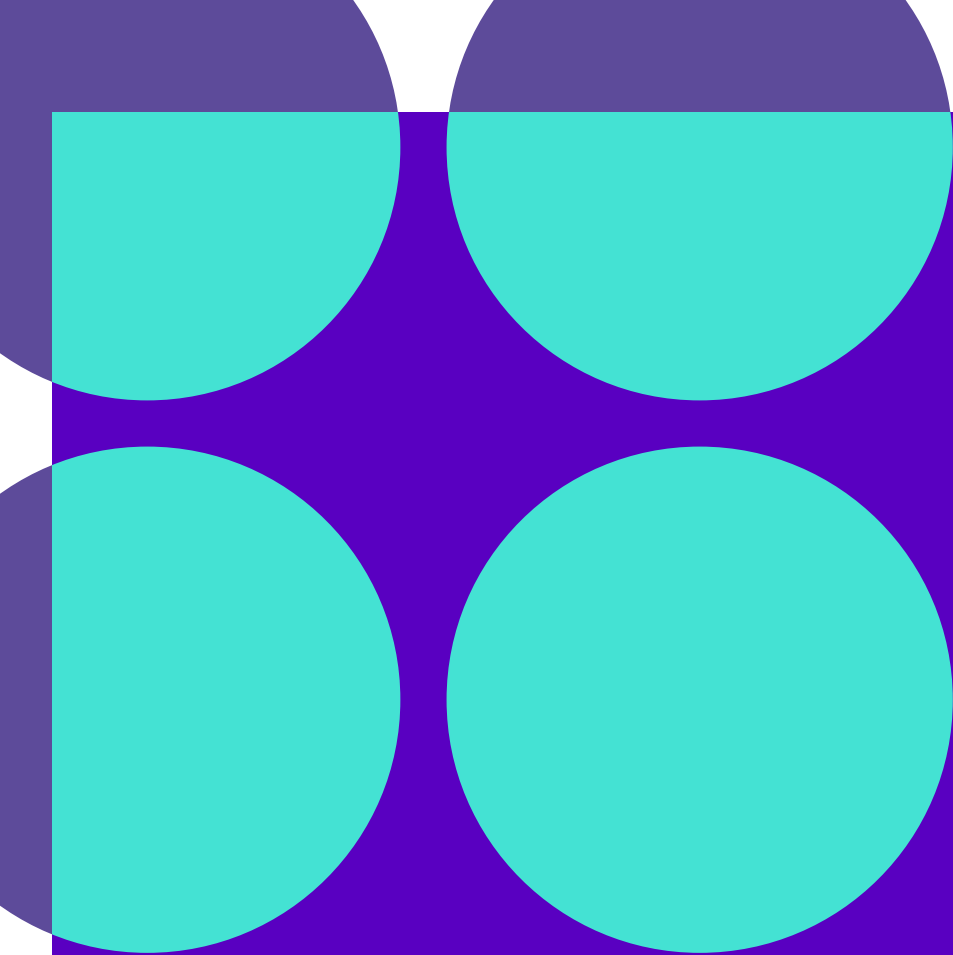
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