

## **Request for Information (RFI)**

**For:** Multilingual Research in India

**Date:** 9 June 2023

### **1 Overview of the British Council**

We support peace and prosperity by building connections, understanding and trust between people in the UK and countries worldwide.

We uniquely combine the UK's deep expertise in arts and culture, education and the English language, our global presence and relationships in over 100 countries, our unparalleled access to young people and influencers and our creative sparkle.

We work directly with individuals to help them gain the skills, confidence and connections to transform their lives and shape a better world in partnership with the UK. We support them to build networks and explore creative ideas, to learn English, to get a high-quality education and to gain internationally recognised qualifications.

We work with governments and our partners in the education, English language and cultural sectors, in the UK and globally. Working together we make a bigger difference, creating benefit for millions of people all over the world.

We work with people in over 200 countries and territories and are on the ground in more than 100 countries. In 2021–22 we reached 650 million people.

### **2 Introduction and background**

2.1 The British Council is seeking further information on goods and/or services within the marketplace to meet the requirements set out below. We look forward to hearing about your capabilities and expertise but would emphasise that the purpose of this RFI is not the preparation by you of significant new material. Instead it represents an opportunity for you to demonstrate how your goods and/or services can fulfil our requirements as set out below.

2.2 British Council India is undertaking a three-year research programme focussing on Multilingual education in India. The objective of this Request for Information (RFI) is to invite interest in potential partnerships to co-develop the concept and scope, conduct the research, co-develop research outputs and contribute to the research through match funding. A background and draft concept are outlined in this section. Please note this concept will further be fine-tuned and finalised when suitable partners are on board.

## **2.3 Multilingualism, English and the Indian education system**

### **2.3.1 Multilingualism and English**

In *English Next India*<sup>1</sup>, David Graddol observed that India's eleventh five-year plan proposed significant expansion of technical and vocational education to match the pace and potential scope of India's economic growth. As a response to this, through its upskilling programme, India attempted to make English 'universal' instead of keeping it as a 'preserve of the elite'. Graddol posed an important question: *Can India find a way of engaging with globalisation by reinventing itself as a modern society with a unique cultural, linguistic and intellectual offer?* and argued that English could act as a catalyst but India would need to recognise and leverage its unique cultural linguistic diversity while responding to needs emerging from globalisation. Early on, Graddol foresaw the importance of linguistic diversity and the place of English; "the final goal must lie beyond English". The recent *Future of English*<sup>2</sup> research reiterates this prediction stressing that while English will continue to be a global lingua franca, in India the focus will rightly be on local languages as a medium of instruction, especially at primary level, and English will be taught as a subject. This is reflected in the New Education Policy (NEP) 2020 that acknowledges the importance of local languages their role in providing a more holistic and effective learning experience especially in the early years. In its reference to English as 'Indian languages and English...', the policy, arguably, also shows that English has a role alongside the many languages in India.

### **2.3.2 Multilingualism in the Indian education system**

With 23 scheduled languages and 19,500 other active languages, India is intrinsically a multilingual country. This finds its way into the classroom as well. Education policies dating back to 1986 have acknowledged and promoted multilingualism in several ways. However, NEP 2020 brought multilingualism to the centre stage and proposed a few concrete steps such as more guidance on the three-language policy, acknowledging the need for high quality teaching learning materials in bi-lingual formats (in students' and teachers' local languages and in English especially for science and mathematics in grade 6) and thereby demonstrated a stronger push towards multilingualism within education systems.

### **2.3.3 The British Council's work in the area of multilingualism**

The British Council's evidence-based position on English Medium Instruction (EMI), now referred to as English Medium Education (EME), emphasises the importance of using familiar local languages rather than English for learners to achieve academic success, especially in early years. Children need to be taught in a language they understand.

Multilingual education has a direct and positive impact on systemic inequities, it has seen to be improving the quality of education for all learners and could be cost-effective for practitioners<sup>3</sup> and policy-makers. While multilingualism offers many effective learning opportunities for teachers and learners in the classroom especially while teaching English, it does pose several questions for teachers such as what

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/publications/case-studies-insights-and-research/english-next-india#:~:text=This%20book%20examines%20the%20complex,will%20impact%20on%20India's%20future.>

<sup>2</sup> [Future of English | British Council](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Multilingual education: An essential strategy for transforming education systems | Multisectoral Regional Office in Bangkok \(unesco.org\)](#)

language to use or not use and when and how? How much of the home language should be used? Is mixing languages an effective strategy? If yes, to what extent and for what purposes? etc.

### **MultiLiLa research**

British Council was a key partner in the Multilingualism and Multiliteracy (MultiLiLa) research project conducted from 2016 to 2020, which generated significant evidence in response to these questions. This was a four-year research project exploring the development of multilingual children's school skills and cognitive abilities in EMI versus regional medium of instruction schools in India. The project tested learners' cognitive, literacy and numeracy skills at two points during the time of the project. It aimed to identify whether children who learn through the medium of a language which is not the same as their home languages have different levels of learning outcomes than children whose home and school language is the same.

Research was conducted in three sites in India: Delhi, Bihar and Hyderabad.

Key findings include:

- a. using learners' home language helps improve learning outcomes
- b. appropriate language use and effective teaching strategies are both important
- c. teachers use multiple languages as an informal strategy to teach.

A recent report by Macmillan education confirmed teachers use multiple languages while teaching and mix languages comfortably, however some seemed conflicted about how much and when to use home languages so that students learn best.

The MultiLiLa research identifies three key areas of further investigation:

- a. successful interventions exploiting multilingual practices building on work done in Delhi and Hyderabad
- b. materials and assessments
- c. teacher training.

### **2.3.4 Objectives of the research programme**

There are four key objectives for the MLE research project

- a. examine NEP's significant focus on multilingualism and the proposed three-language policy (that allows states to select languages, but mandates use of home language as medium of instruction at least until grade 5) and build insight into effective language policy implementation.
- b. examine how localised initiatives have focussed on use of home languages and integration of English
- c. build upon British Council's stand on EMI and existing work in the area (e.g. MultiLiLa's areas of further investigation).

Considering these objectives any further research should ideally aim to address the following broad 'problems' and opportunities.

- a. What constitutes effective language policies? What evidence is there from within India and elsewhere to indicate where there might be challenges in implementation of language policies and how these can be addressed?

- b. How can teachers be supported to use effective strategies to teach English in a multilingual classroom with more purpose?
- c. What is the place of English within the multilingual landscape of India? How can English continue to play the role of a link language in a way that is encouraging of local languages?

### 2.3.5 Potential scope of this research project

*Note: This outline is only a starting point, the research project could have a reduced or a more extensive scope. The supplier partners are expected to finalise the scope.*

The proposed research project could span over three years. NEP being in the implementation stage means while teachers will continue to need guidance and support, education systems and stakeholders who are key decision makers will also need insights to best implement the multilingualism policy, become more aware of challenges which will enable them to articulate a more detailed language policy for states.

The research project could benefit from a comprehensive framework that includes key stakeholders and vital outputs. To achieve this, the project could adopt both a grassroots/bottom up approach especially with **teachers and educators**, capturing existing best practices and 'learning' about the intuitive strategies teachers already use in such contexts. In addition, it could also use an exploratory research approach to examine what training and support teachers would benefit from and how. Similarly, it will be useful to include practices from the **community i.e., parents and immediate family members**.

India has a hyper-lingual context, however there are other countries with similar multilingual contexts possibly posed with similar questions. Therefore, the research project could take a review approach to establish best practice related to designing and implementation of language policies and case studies of specific contexts. This would bring insights to India especially for **higher level decision makers and policy makers**.

Lastly, if the scope allows, the project offers a good opportunity to undertake a Tracer study with **students** from multilingual contexts.

### 2.3.6 Research questions

*Note: This is a potential longlist. These will be fine-tuned in consultation with the research partners and the MLE advisory group which will include peers and experts in the area who will participate in focussed consultations over the duration of the project.*

| Stakeholder            | Key research questions   |
|------------------------|--|
| Teachers and educators | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What are some of the effective teaching practices in a multilingual classroom? For example, how can language mixing and codeswitching be built upon to improve language learning / content learning including English Language development?</li> <li>2. To what extent are these practices effective?</li> <li>3. How do teachers make decisions about what language to use?</li> <li>4. What support do teachers require? What role does technology and AI play in this?</li> <li>5. What assessment strategies work best in a multilingual context?</li> <li>6. How does pre-service and in-service teacher education prepare</li> </ol> |

|                        |  |
|------------------------|--|
|                        | <p>teachers for using 'language as a resource' approach in the pedagogy of English?</p> <p>7. What impact do policy decisions and implementation have on teachers?</p>   |
| Policy/decision makers | <p>8. What are the other multilingual contexts in South Asia?</p> <p>9. What lessons can be drawn from other multilingual contexts in South Asia or in the UK where English plays a role in the education system alongside other languages including learnings for developing bi-lingual teaching and learning materials?</p>  |
| Community              | <p>10. How can parents and immediate family members support learners to learn local languages and/or English?</p> <p>11. How can parents get involved in the language decision making process?</p> <p>12. What are parents' perceptions about their children learning local languages and/or English?</p> <p>13. What are parental attitudes towards learning of local languages and/or English in relation to their sons/daughters?</p> |

### 2.3.7 Key outputs

Note: These are tentative and will be finalised once the scope is finalised.

#### Teachers and community (e.g. parents)

1. Research report that describes key findings about teacher practices and teacher training needs and pedagogies
2. Video for parents outlining benefits of multilingualism and how they can support their children in their learning journey
3. Video portfolio of current teacher best practice in the classroom featuring up to 10 teachers
4. Multilingualism and teaching English MOOC for teachers of English

#### Policy makers

5. A framework for implementing language policy and a round table for policy makers
6. Multilingual podcast series featuring up to five stakeholders or partners from the research project

### 2.3.8 Duration

The project will span over 3 years. The table below outlines a tentative timeline.

| Activity  | 2023 | 2024 | 2025 |
|---|------|------|------|
| Phase 1<br>Finalising concept, onboarding partners and consultation workshop with government partners and formation of the advisory group |      |      |      |
| Phase 2<br>Exploratory research and Review of best practice   |      |      |      |
| Phase 3<br>Conceptualising key outputs<br>(framework, report, podcast, videos, MOOC)  |      |      |      |
| Phase 4<br>Report and output finalisation<br>Feedback consultation with government stakeholders   |      |      |      |
| Phase 5<br>Dissemination  |      |      |      |

At this stage we are not looking for a detailed plan or delivery proposal as this will be requested at the Request for Proposal/Invitation to Tender stage. However, it would be helpful if you could also provide an indicative estimate of cost (not a quotation), likely timescales and outline expertise you can offer required to deliver the project described above.

### 3 Disclaimers, confidentiality and information governance

This section sets out the British Council's principles in relation to this RFI:

3.1 All information supplied to you by the British Council, including this RFI and any other associated documents, either in writing or orally, must be treated in confidence and not disclosed to any third party (apart from your professional advisers, consortium members and/or sub-contractors strictly for the purposes only of helping you to respond to this RFI) unless the information is already in the public domain or is required to be disclosed under any applicable laws.

3.2 This document is only a request for information on goods and/or services that the British Council may or may not wish to investigate further in the future. It does not constitute either an offer to provide goods and/or services to the British Council or oblige the British Council to involve the supplier in any future procurement exercise associated with such goods and/or services. Where indicative pricing has been requested, this is only intended to be used as guidance as to current market potential.

3.3 All costs and expenses incurred in preparation of the Supplier's response to this RFI are the supplier's responsibility.

3.4 This RFI and its accompanying documents remain the property of the British Council and must be returned on demand.

## 4 Information Required

British Council is looking to partner with an institute/organisation to conduct a research project focussed on the role of English and multilingualism in India in collaboration with the British Council India team to:

- Co-develop and finalise scope of research.
- Co-lead and participate in consultations at all stages of the research programme.
- Lead on implementing the research programme. This includes finalising the scope and research questions, planning the research, conducting all research activities, produce reports and key outputs and dissemination.
- Contribute towards the programme through match funding. (This is desirable but not mandatory).

### **Please note:**

- a. The respondent could bring maximum one more partner in case the respondent is unable to provide expertise for the entire scope of this programme. This is likely to be a project led by British Council India but with up to three consortium partners who will provide expertise and/or match funding.
- b. The programme will be designed and implemented in line with British Council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI), gender and safeguarding policies. Wherever possible, these will also be embedded as key themes within the scope of the research programme.

## 5 Instructions for Responding

5.1 Your response to this RFI should be submitted to [TeachEnglish.India@britishcouncil.org](mailto:TeachEnglish.India@britishcouncil.org) by Friday 30 June 2023 23:59 IST.

## 6 Clarification Requests

6.1 If you have any queries in relation to the content of this RFI, please submit a brief clarification request to [TeachEnglish.India@britishcouncil.org](mailto:TeachEnglish.India@britishcouncil.org). The British Council will try, but is under no obligation do so, to respond to all clarification's requests received 5 working days prior to the date for submission of responses to this RFI.