

English Language Teaching Research Partnerships (ELTReP) Award programme 2012–2016

Explorations: Teaching and Learning English in India
**Issue 10: Using inclusive practices
and multilingual approaches (2)**

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Contents

Issue 10: Overview Using inclusive practices and multilingual approaches (2)	4
An exploration into English language teaching in multilingual contexts <i>Ramanujam Meganathan</i>	6
English for beginners in multiple mother tongue classroom contexts in primary schools <i>Mizo Prova Borah</i>	23
Using CEFR-based bilingual rubrics to improve the writing ability of ESL learners: A multiple case study <i>Santosh Kumar Mahapatra</i>	38

Explorations: Teaching and Learning English in India

Issue 10: Overview

Using inclusive practices and multilingual approaches (2)

The papers in this issue of *Explorations: Teaching and Learning English in India* investigate the two professional practices of using inclusive practices and using multilingual approaches. The first professional practice involves recognising and valuing diversity among learners and encouraging inclusive education within a supportive learning environment. Through this professional practice, teachers treat all learners equitably and with respect. The second professional practice includes recognising and valuing the multilingual nature of societies, schools and classrooms and using appropriate strategies for the multilingual classroom. Through this professional practice, teachers take learners' linguistic backgrounds into account and capitalise on its diversity.

Each of the papers in this issue examines learners' perceptions in bilingual or multilingual contexts. **Ramanujam Meganathan** reports and comments on the perceptions of both students and teachers of the value of the learning experience provided at a number of English medium high schools in Delhi. **Mizo Prova Borah** investigates the perceptions of students, teachers and parents on the learning experience of lower primary school students in ten schools in Assam. **Santosh Mahapatra** analyses learner responses to the use of bilingual rubrics and the impact on learner performance and present positive findings on the advantages of using rubrics of this type.

About the authors

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About the English Language Teaching Research Partnerships (ELTReP) Award programme

India has a long tradition of educational research but the results of this have not always reached the wider world. Through a range of programmes, British Council India places considerable emphasis on encouraging and supporting inquiry. A key

strand of that work between 2012 and 2016 has been the English Language Teaching Research Partnerships (ELTReP) Award programme. The programme aimed to facilitate high quality, innovative research to benefit the learning and teaching of English in India and to improve the access of ELT policy makers, professionals from India and the United Kingdom and the global ELT community to that research. All writers contributing to the eleven issues of *Explorations: Teaching and Learning English in India* were selected and supported in their research by the ELTReP Award programme.

All three papers in this issue have been written by practitioners in the field, whether teachers, lecturers, educational department personnel or other roles that involve day-to-day contact with the teaching and learning of English. The researchers, many of whom will be seeing their work published for the first time, have designed and implemented their studies and present results which in each case are innovative and thought-provoking. Each paper reflects the creativity, detailed awareness of context and practical suggestions of a wide range of writers, from different backgrounds and working in different situations.

We very much hope you enjoy *Explorations: Teaching and Learning English in India* and that you feel the insights the papers provide into a variety of educational environments are applicable to your own context, wherever you may be working.

Acknowledgements

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Papers 1 and 2 in this issue were edited by Professor Brian Tomlinson in collaboration with the writers themselves. We would like to extend our sincere thanks to Professor Tomlinson. Paper 3 was edited by Andy Keedwell, British Council.

The opinions expressed in the papers in this issue are those of the individual authors and do not necessarily represent or reflect the views of the British Council.

1

An exploration into English language teaching in multilingual contexts

Ramanujam Meganathan

1. Introduction

This study explores English language teaching in multilingual situations, where learners speak more than two languages. The following issues were investigated in two multilingual schools in New Delhi:

1. the role of English and the English language curriculum
2. English language teaching-learning processes and classroom practices
3. the perceptions of teachers and learners of the existing practices of English language education.

The research attempted to seek answers to the following questions:

1. How do teaching-learning processes and practices in multilingual contexts support English language learning?
2. What role does English play or is perceived to be playing in school contexts?
3. What is the place and role of the languages of children in the learning and teaching of English?

4. How do teachers and learners perceive English language education in schools?

2. Research design

Urban India marks the multilingual character of the country with its migrant population from across the country. New Delhi is one such city where various linguistic communities have schools for their children. The mother tongue or first language of children is the language of the community they belong to, say Tamil, Bengali, Telugu, Punjabi and so on; the language in the social domain is Hindi and the medium of instruction (in quite a number of schools) is English. The classroom processes adopt knowingly or unknowingly multilingualism as a strategy i.e. the languages of children are used as a resource for the teaching of subjects as well as languages, including English (NCERT, 2005; NCERT, 2006). The two linguistic minority schools explored are Tamil and Bengali schools:

1. Delhi Tamil Education Association Senior Secondary School (DTEA), Lodhi Estate, New Delhi
2. Raisina Bengali School, Chittaranjan Park, New Delhi

2.1 Two linguistic minority institutions

2.1.1. Delhi Tamil Education Association School (DTEA)

DTEA schools known as Madarasi were established in 1923. The DTEA schools cater to the educational needs of a cross section of the Tamil population living in Delhi. Tamilians who are employed in various departments of government of India at Delhi and those who migrated to Delhi for other work send their wards to the schools. Today there are eight schools located where the Tamil population is concentrated.

2.1.2. Raisina Bengali School

The Raisina Bengali Schools cater for the educational needs of the Bengali population in Delhi. There are four schools in different locations of Delhi, all of which use English as the medium of instruction and follow the curriculum of the Central Board of Secondary Education.

Both the schools have a minor percentage of learners from other language communities.

2.2. Instruments used for the study

1. Ethnographic observational field notes:

Each school was visited for four weeks by the researcher to observe classrooms, morning assembly, staff meeting(s), and co-curricular and extra-curricular activities.

2. Semi-structured and open interviews:

Interview schedules for the three main groups of participants in the research, learners, teachers and administrators were developed to collect their reflection(s).

3. Questionnaire: A questionnaire with twenty two items on the various aspects of English language teaching-learning in schools (with a four-point scale (strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree) was administered to learners of classes 8, 9 and 10 in both the schools.

4. Classroom observation schedule:

A classroom observation schedule consisting of various aspects of classroom activities and teacher-learner interaction was used to record classroom processes along with audio recording.

Secondary data: Policy and curricular documents such as the curriculum framework, the syllabus and the materials for the teaching-learning of English were analysed.

All the instruments were developed in consultation with members of faculty and experts from my department and other departments of NCERT, New Delhi. They underwent piloting in one of the schools and also in another government school and modifications were made to suit the context.

2.3. Participants of the research

Participants for the research were chosen from the two linguistic minority schools mentioned above. In a way, these are case studies of the practices of English language teaching in typical English medium schools where students belonging to linguistic minority communities study. The participants of the research from the two schools were students studying in classes 8, 9 and 10 from both the schools.

Learners: Most of the learners are from the lower socio-economic strata of society. There were 61 boys and 55 girls from DTEA and 57 boys and 52 girls from Raisina Bengali.

Teachers: 12 teachers (6 teachers each from DTEA and Raisina Bengali schools).

Classrooms observed: Twenty classrooms were observed in each of the two schools.

Focus group discussion: Two focus group discussions, one in each school were conducted on various issues, aspects and problems of English language education.

3. Discussion and major findings

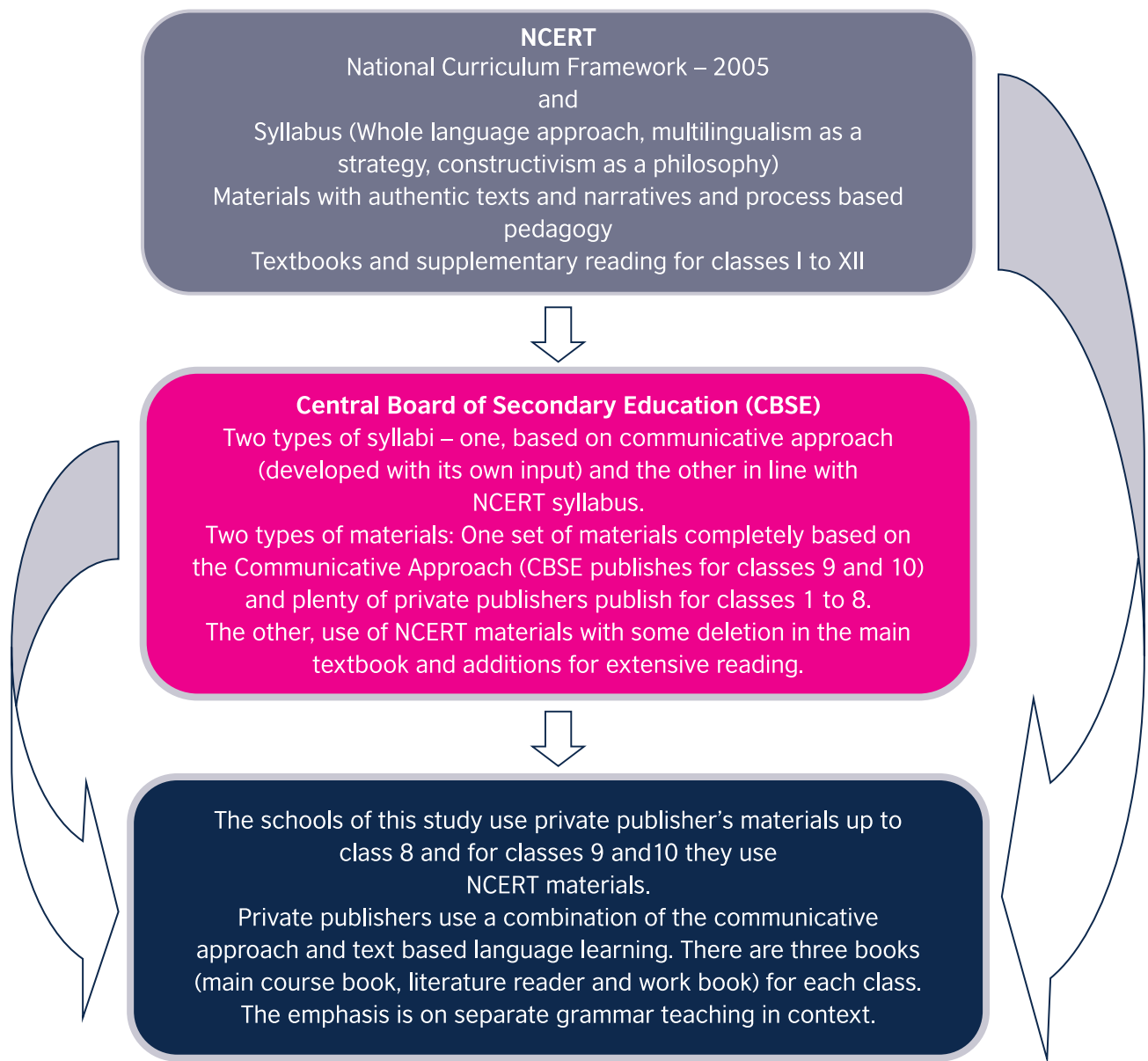


Figure 1: Curriculum implementation / adaptation in the schools

3.1. English language curriculum in the schools

The National Curriculum Framework (NCF, 2005), the syllabus and the materials developed as a follow up to it are either adopted as such or adapted with modifications by different states and school systems. Many states adapt the National Curriculum Framework 2005 with modification. Some states develop their syllabus and textbooks

on their own based on the guidelines of the NCF (Meganathan, 2011; Yadav, 2014). English language education has seen tremendous developments in terms of materials during the last two and half decades since the introduction of the Communicative Approach by the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) in 1990. There are many materials produced by private publishers based on the communicative approach. Schools,

particularly private and government aided schools such as the ones chosen for this study have freedom to select materials on their own up to class 8. Both DTEA and Rainsina Bengali School have chosen to have textbooks from private publishers. DTEA used the materials developed by the Curriculum Company called *Ez Vidya, My studio-English*. Rainsina Bengali School used the textbooks published by a popular publisher, Ranta Sagar. Both the materials reflect the philosophy of the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2005 and adopt a communicative approach with an eclectic perspective. Curriculum implementation shows that an ‘in between’ top-down and bottom-up situation, where the school adopts indirectly the national level syllabus developed by NCERT or CBSE and at the materials level they have freedom to select the materials by any private publisher. This leads to a loss of ‘curriculum ideas’ or ‘curriculum shedding’ as well as ‘curriculum increase’ or ‘curriculum burden’. Both the materials have three books for each class viz. main course book, workbook and literature reader. The NCERT curriculum has one book only up to class 5 aiming at familiarising learners with the English language through songs, stories and vocabulary and structures in contexts. NCERT’s materials integrate grammar with the main textbooks and from class 6 onwards there is a separate extensive reader along with a main textbook.

3.2. The English language classroom

English language classrooms in both schools operate like any other typical ‘low resourced’ (Meganathan, 2014) English language classroom situations in India with lots of constraints. Teachers in the classes reported below adopt whatever methods and strategies they believe work in their classrooms. Lack of pedagogical understanding on the part of teachers and knowledge of recent or emerging approaches (for example the constructivist/progressive pedagogies as advocated by the NCF 2005 or communicative/task based approaches) was noticed. Teachers resort to reading aloud and explanation while teaching reading and teach explicit grammar instead of letting learners discover the rules on their own or drawing the attention of learners to form from meaning.

Classroom 1, DTEA School, Class 5 Section C:
number of students present: 35 (boys 22 girls 13)

The classroom was spacious with six rows of three desks each. There were some charts displayed on the class notice board and the teacher was already there when I entered the class. She made all the children settle down and started her class.

Teacher: [She shows a book and says:] ‘This is a book.’ The book is on the table. [She places it in her hand bag].

Then she asked the whole class: ‘Where do you live?’

Students replied: ‘I live in Delhi.’

T: Last summer vacation I went Mysore. I went to Mysore by flight. How did you come to school?

Students: By bus/bus

T wrote on the black board

This is a book.

The book is in the bag.

I live in Delhi.

I went to Mysore.

Yesterday I went to market with my mother.

[she asked the students to read

She marked the words ‘on’ ‘in’ ‘to’.

Then she marked the naming words, ‘book’, ‘table’ ‘Mysore’].

T: Words which link naming words and other words are called prepositions. Let us now see what a preposition is. Prepositions are words used before the naming words, nouns.

T: ‘The book is on the table.’ [T kept asking the whole class through examples.]

T: I come to school by bus. What is the preposition here?

All students: to

T: Now tell me, what is a preposition?

S: Prepositions are words which appear before the nouns.

T: I am going to teach prepositions 'below' and 'under' in different ways. Under. What is the meaning of under?

There was silence. Then T said:

T: One thing lower than the other thing.

[T demonstrated with action.]

This ball is under the handkerchief.

[T keeps the ball under the table.]

The ball is below the table.

The duster is below the table.

'Under' denotes things covered by it.

The duster is below the table.

[T then asked students to make sentences using *under* and *below*.]

[Now T spoke in Hindi: *abhi hum banayinge sentences with 'below' and 'under'*.]

Student 1: The rat under the table.

Student 2: The dog is below the table.

Student 3: The dog is under the table.

The teacher wrote the following sentences

1. Most of the Indian temples are _____ the hill.
2. The flowers are _____ the basket.
3. I placed a pen _____ file.
4. I saw a golden palace _____ the hill top.
5. Rat is _____ the chair.
6. I went _____ market yesterday.

7. She asked learners to fill in the blanks taking turns. She read each sentence many times.

Then the bell rang. She said: 'We will continue in our next period tomorrow. All of you should take a look at what we have done today when you go home.'

Classroom Two Raisina Bengali School
Class 9 B Writing

Number of students: 54

Teacher entered the class and asked the students about their term examinations.

T: When is your term examination?

Ss: Next week, madam

T: Let us do one thing today. Let's do writing, letter writing today so that you can do well in the exam the writing part OK.

Ss: Yes, madam.

T: I can't shout any more. Please keep quiet. We will do a complaint letter. That is a complaint on the damaged good you bought or to replace the gadget you bought. This is one type of complaint. Other type of complaint you make it to Municipal Commissioner about the conditions of roads and other civic facilities, to Jal Board about water problem, monkey menace on road. Now let's do the first type of complaint to the agent who supplied you the refrigerator. Here is the question. Please write down. [She wrote it on the board].

You are Manu of 125, MB Road, Kolkata, You have brought a 265 litre frost free refrigerator from Life style, CR Dash Market, Kolkatta. After using it for a month you found the refrigerator is not working well. Write a letter to the sales manager of the company to replace it as it under guarantee period.

[All students wrote down the question.]

T: Is it a formal letter? Or an informal one?

S: It formal letter, business letter.

T: Good. Now let me tell you how you are going to write it. How do you start?

[She explained the business letter step by step. She wrote the format of a business letter on the black board. She completely dictated the letter including the matter for the body of the letter. She said:]

I have bought a refrigerator on

[All the students wrote whatever she dictated.

She then recapitulated whatever has been taught. She then gave another letter for homework.]

You are Parvin of 175, Gandhi Road, New Delhi. Write a letter to the dealer of Television sets at 140, Gole Market, New Delhi from where you have bought a TV week and found it not working well. Add necessary details.

Both lessons reveal a kind of uninformed eclecticism. The training given to them by the textbook publishers familiarises them how to deal with the books in their classroom and most teachers feel that they are not able to adopt the ideas and strategies presented in the training programmes. Here is what two teachers feel about the methods of teaching in their classroom and in the school:

There is not room for using all the methods with these children (sic.). We need to complete the lessons and do lot of copy checking and CCE work. So we follow whatever works well. Our children learn English and when they reach class 9 or 10, they are good and may not be able to speak, but otherwise their language is good. (Class 5 English teacher)

Another teacher says:

We need to explain everything and write on the blackboard so that they can get something. It is not possible to use all the techniques given by the trainers.

Teachers ‘teach the way they were taught’ because most of them are not professionally trained as English language teachers. This phenomenon, as described by Lorte (1975), is an apprenticeship of observation. They are other subject teachers and have studied English as a language in their school and in the university. They attempt to teach recalling their school experience as learners. So they adapt ‘reading out and explain’ the reading text and teach grammar explicitly.

3.3. Perception of learners

A four-point scale questionnaire with twenty two items on the various aspects of English language teaching-learning in schools was administered to learners of classes 8, 9 and 10 in both the schools. This section reports and reflects on the perceptions of learners on 1: classroom activities, 2: teacher interaction, 3: textbooks, 4: activities in school, 5: assessment and 6: language preferences.

An overall score was created for assessing the perceptions of learners on the twenty two items under the five aspects mentioned above. The mean perception scores of learners reveals that the learners have a positive perception about the practice of English language teaching in the schools. There is a significant increase in the perceptions of learners from grade to grade. There is no significant difference in terms of gender in the perceptions and there is no difference found in the perception between social categories.

There is no difference between the schools in the perceptions of learners on various aspects of language learning in the school. It can be stated that the schools cater to the urban learners who hail from middle classes or poor households. Category-wise mean perception of the learners also reveals that there is not much difference among the learners in terms of gender.

Students’ perception of each item was also organised in terms of percentages and a summary of the percentages is given below.

Table 1: Learners' perceptions of various aspects of English language education

Descriptives	N	Mean	Std. Error of Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum (1)	Maximum
Classroom activities	220	8.5136	.14600	2.16548	3.00	14.00
Teacher interaction	225	19.1333	.21418	3.21270	7.00	27.00
On textbook	225	9.3778	.15905	2.38568	3.00	13.00
Activities in school	211	5.7014	.10147	1.47388	2.00	10.00
Test and assessment	198	5.2020	.10976	1.54447	1.00	11.00
Language preferences	225	9.3422	.14951	2.24270	4.00	15.00

1. Classroom activities

Learners of both the schools said that they like to read in groups and learn English through activities and games. More than 80 percent of learners like such activities and both boys and girls like such activity-based learning of English. A few find it confusing and difficult to do, but the majority agree that project work is effective for learning English.

2. Teacher interaction

Learners from the DTEA school feel that it is not a problem if their teachers ask questions that are not in the textbooks while the Raisina Bengali school learners are not comfortable when their teachers ask questions that are not in the textbook. As a whole, all the learners from both the schools and from both sexes feel that they can approach their teachers when they face problems and their teachers talk to them in a friendly way. However, DTEA learners feel that they are afraid of their teachers as opposed to their counterparts in Raisina Bengali. Learners of both the schools are unanimous in saying that their teachers read out the text line by line and explain. This shows how the English language classroom operates without much understanding of language pedagogy or any strategies for the teaching of English. This is further discussed in the section on teachers' perceptions.

3. Textbooks

Learners feel the textbooks are interesting and the narratives (stories, poems and other texts) in the textbooks relate to their day-to-day life experiences and they can connect with them. The two aspects which reflect the typical conventional practice of ELT in Indian schools are revealed when the majority of the learners say that they learn best by memorising whatever is in the textbooks and that grammar should be taught in detail. More than 80 per cent of learners feel the same on aspects of the textbook.

4. Activities in school

The opinions of learners of both the schools and of both sexes are encouraging as they feel they have fun in school and feel that they learn English in their school. However, the fun and feeling of learning English sees a slight decline as the learners move to class 10.

5. Assessment

Learners report in their perception that the schools conduct regular class tests and learners feel that the tests are useful for the learning of English and the tests are a mixture of both written and oral tests. About 15 per cent of learners in both the schools said that the weekly/monthly tests are not useful and their teachers conduct only written tests.

6. Language preference in the English language classroom

Most of the learners like to speak in English in the language classroom in both the schools. The percentage of girls in class 8 in DTEA wanting to speak in English is higher than the boys. The percentage of boys not liking to speak in English is higher in class 10 of DTEA. At least six to twenty per cent of learners in Raisina Bengali do not like to speak in English in their English language classroom. Overall an average of 15 per cent of learners do not feel like speaking in English in their English language classroom because their language proficiency is very low. Here are the responses of two learners from the interview.

Muje English nahi athahe (English does not come to me) (sic.)

Muje English me bolnekeliye problem hai (I have problem in speaking in English)

Teachers also feel that there is no support from home for learning of the language.

FG1 T1: Mostly no support for our learners' parents, most of them are not proficient in English. They have to earn and work. Most of our parents are not in very good government or private jobs. Mostly daily wagers or contract workers, petty shopkeepers and so on. Many parents don't even bother to know what their wards are doing. They have no time.

Quite a few learners feel that their teachers use their mother tongues (Tamil or Bengali) to explain and some more say that their teachers use Hindi, the dominant language to explain the texts and poems. Teachers use more Hindi than Tamil and Bengali to explain the texts and ideas for better understanding and to create 'sub texts'. However, most learners say that most of the time is spent in English only.

3.4. Perceptions of teachers

3.4.1. On curriculum, syllabus and materials

Teachers were asked to respond to a questionnaire on a four-point scale on various

aspects of English language teaching and on classroom processes and the organisation of activities. The responses of the teachers are in line with the socially desirable responses expected of an ideal teacher. The majority of the teachers (10 out of 12) feel that the new curriculum is effective, they understand the syllabus and the objectives of language teaching are clear to them. The textbooks are of interest to learners and the materials are effective. However some (four out of 12) teachers feel that the language of the textbook is not suitable for the age of the learners.

3.4.2. On teaching and how students learn

All the teachers are bothered about is 'coverage of syllabus'. The confusion in the way reading is dealt with in a typical Indian classroom is also revealed for they adopt conventional methods as well as constructivist methods such as the teacher reading out aloud to the whole class, students' individual reading, pair and group work reading. In their interviews teachers strongly felt that reading out aloud at least once to the whole text in one go or in parts helps learners to understand the text.

Teachers are not willing to discuss social issues in their English language classroom. This shows that the teachers do not want to get into controversy while teaching any texts or narratives or conducting any activities. This has implications for the critical pedagogy the NCF 2005 advocates, leaving no room for reflection or critical thinking on the part of the learners.

Teachers believe that group work, pair work and 'letting students question' during teaching supports learning. The teachers' opinion on continuous comprehensive evaluation (CCE) reveals that the scheme is not popular as learners are made to take many tests which increases teachers' work load in terms of maintaining files and records. Teachers of both schools do not use audio-visual aids and computer technology for teaching in their classroom very much.

3.5. Teachers' perception of the textbooks

Another questionnaire using a five-point scale was administered to ten teachers (five in each

school). The teachers think that the textbooks are effective in terms of comprehensiveness for learning vocabulary, language skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing and study skills and grammatical competencies), sensitivity to learners, effectiveness in approach and methodology, guidance for teachers and learners. However, some teachers expressed their reservations on the balanced development of all the language skills, promoting of problem solving skills, doing real life tasks and developing accuracy and fluency. Most of the teachers feel (eight out of ten) that the books are not priced reasonably. This is because the textbooks published by NCERT are very low priced as no textbook up to class 8 is priced beyond fifty rupees. We can notice the contradiction in the statements of teachers for they feel that the books are ideal for teaching-learning of English but their students are not proficient enough to deal with them. Here is what two teachers have to say:

T1 (DTEA): *The books are good but our students find it difficult to understand. We need to read out and explain every word.*

T (Rainsina Bengali): *See our children are like government school children. These textbooks are by private publisher meant for sophisticated English medium schools. We have to face this problem every day.*

3.6. Life in school, language use, multilingual spaces and practices in the schools

It is interesting to note that the learners' language life appears dual. Learners use Tamil or Bengali for their conversations with their peers and outside classroom interaction with teachers and other staff when the interactant happens to be the same mother tongue speaker. They use Hindi, the dominant language of the region to speak to teachers and other staff who do not belong to their language community. Learners' 'other life' in school i.e. social communication, cracking jokes, making fun of the teachers or friends happens in their language and the classroom interactions with the teacher happens in English with a few exceptions where the teachers use Tamil, Bengal or Hindi to explain, complement or supplement

ideas. Here is an extract from my field notes:

I was just standing on the veranda on the second floor waiting for the teacher to enter class 9A. Children moved around and made a lot of noise. One boy approached me and asked me in Tamil:

Student 1: *'Sir neegla Tamila?' (Are you a Tamilian?)*

Me: *Amappa. 'Nii entha class?' (Yes. Which class are you in?)*

Another student joined him and asked me. *'Sir neenga ethukku vanthirikinga' (What is purpose of your visit sir?)*

Me: *'Summa ungalaiyellam parthupeesiity pohalamunna than' (Just to meet you students and your teachers, and interact with you about your studies)*

Then many more joined the group and started giggling and joking in Tamil.

Another incident in the Principal's room:

Today I went to the school at 8.30 a.m. and the man at the gate asked me to show my identity card and let me in. As I sat one teacher (lady) entered the room and said, 'Madam one fellow in class VII Karthik has done some mischief. *Avan eppothume ippadithan.* He always does some mischief or other and disturbs the class.' The Principal said, 'Bring him right now.' I was planning what would I be doing during the day in the school. After a few minutes the teachers brought in the boy and said, 'Here he is.' The Principal took a look at him and asked:

'Why don't you change? What do you want to do in life? Where is the needle?'

The teacher showed and gave it to her.

'See I have given you warning many times. Why are you repeating?' *Bar bar kyun aise karthahai?* (in Hindi). The boy replied in Hindi, *'Mane kuch nahi kya mam.'* (I have not done anything, mam.)

Principal: 'Then what is this?' (showing the needle)

The boy: '*Mane apna pass rekatha.*' (I just kept it with me.)

Principal: 'Why did you bring it to school? What is the use of it? Did any teacher ask you to bring this?'

The boy: 'No mam. I just brought it.'

The Principal said, 'This is the last warning. Don't repeat it. OK.'

I noticed the Principal was speaking to him in English and the boy was replying in Hindi though the mother tongue of both is Tamil.

Blackledge and Creese (2010) call this the 'official' and 'carnival lives' of learners in the classroom. The 'official' conversations take place in English (except in the Tamil and Bengali language classroom) and the 'carnival life' language is Tamil or Bengali, the languages of the community or Hindi, the language of the society. Conversations among the learners mostly take place in their mother tongue.

Language use in the classroom in both language classes demonstrates another phenomenon which Cummins (2005) describes as 'two solitudes', a classroom teaching situation where the languages are taught using the concerned language (say using English only to teach all the content subjects) and the other languages (say Bengali, Tamil or Hindi) are taught using the respective languages only. There is not much code switching or translanguaging of any sort, though teachers use a bit of other languages in their teaching. This is not encouraged. Rather teachers feel a sense of guilt when they use Tamil or Bengali in English or other content subject classes. Natural code switching, code mixing or translanguaging is rare even though it is natural for any Indian to do so as a necessity. Let me quote Cummins (2005:88) to understand why the schools follow or expect the teachers to adopt this practice:

1. *Instruction should be carried out exclusively in the target language without recourse to the students' L1.*

2. *Translation between L1 and L2 has no place in the teaching of language or literacy. Encouragement of translation in L2-teaching is viewed as a reversion to the discredited grammar / translation method... or concurrent translation method.*
3. *Within L2 immersion and bilingual / dual language programmes, the two languages should be kept rigidly separate; they constitute 'two solitudes'. In these schools it is 'three solitudes' and there are children who know more than three languages - as a subject, a medium of instruction, a language of society and a language of identity and community. School as a whole and teachers do not see the benefits of languages working together, in other words the complementary and supplementary roles of languages.*

3.6. Multilingual spaces

1. Morning assembly

The morning assemblies of both the schools are multilingual where all the three languages are used for prayer, news reading, any special announcements, celebration of days relating to their ethnicity and linguistic aspects, birth anniversaries of poets, political leaders and social reforms from their language/state. Here is a depiction of morning assembly in the DTEA School.

All the commands are given in English. Then *Tamizhthai Vazhthu* (Invocation of Tamil Goddess) is sung, as it is in all schools in Tamil Nadu.

This is followed by New Reading in English and Tamil, then Sanskrit sloga, followed by the Pledge on national integration and patriotism (All Indians are my brothers and sisters and I respect my country.....). Then *Thirukkural*, the famous Sangam Tamil scripture is recited (one couplet from the 1330 kurals). This is followed by a speech by principal or a teacher mostly in English and sometimes in Tamil, by a student and then the National Anthem.

2. Special notice boards

Both the schools make efforts to create their

language environment in the school by providing a print-rich environment and opportunities for learners to notice their mother tongue or first language. Here is an example called ‘Word Treasure’. One word with its Hindi and Tamil/ Bengali synonym is written every day and the same word is read out in the morning assembly.

3. School competitions on special occasions

Both the schools personalise competitions for students of all stages on special occasions pertaining to their culture and language. The birth anniversaries of the Tamil poet Subramania Bharati and the Bengali Poet Rabindranath Tagore, birth anniversaries of Gandhi, Nehru and eves of Tamil and Bengali New Years are celebrated in school.

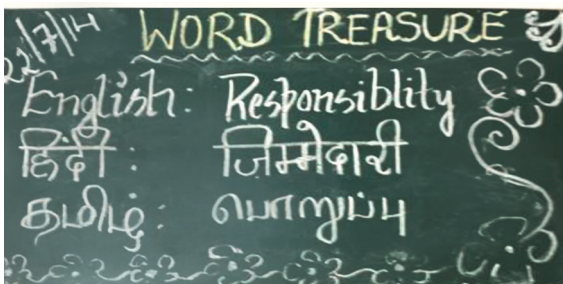


Figure 2: Word Treasure – a trilingual notice board for vocabulary learning

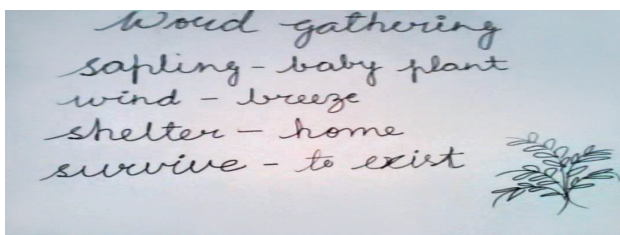


Figure 3: Vocabulary learning through word meaning notice board outside the classrooms

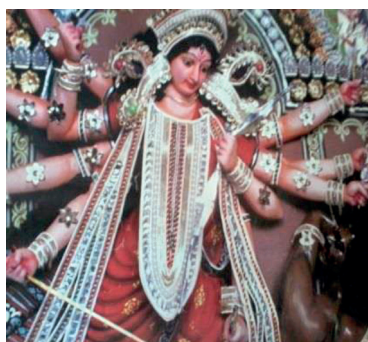


Figure 4: Portrait of Durga drawn by a learner class 9 for a competition. Durga is a household god of the Bengalis



Figure 5: Poster on environmental awareness

4. Findings

Language policy in the school: There is an effective implementation of the *three language formula*, the national language policy-in-school education in the schools. Three languages are offered to and opted for by learners. The home languages of learners, Tamil and Bengali are taught either as second or third languages and Hindi is taught as a second language. One major recent development is the progression of English from a second language to a first language though the language policy does not aim at giving first language status to English. Ideally Hindi or Tamil should be the first or second languages but they are given either second or third language status. This needs further examination for English cannot be the first language for Indians whose mother tongues are Indian languages.

Multilingualism as a strategy: The multilingualism of the learners and the use of the languages of learners in the classroom are not recognised as benefits for language and content learning. Languages are taught as separate entities and there is a watertight compartmental barrier while teaching the languages. Teachers do code switch and code mix languages in their classroom as this is seen as a problem. One major reason seems to be providing long term engagement with the language, particularly English, Tamil and Bengali. English has to be learnt for upward mobility and there is a fear that these children may lose their mother tongues if they do not do well now.

Learners’ mother tongue: Learners are losing their home language as their first language/

mother tongue. Many learners are not very proficient in their language, Bengali or Tamil. They can claim Hindi as their mother tongue for their proficiency in the language is as good as or better than their home languages.

The learners belong mostly to the lower socio-economic strata of society. Fifty per cent of learners in both schools belong to Scheduled Caste (SC) and Scheduled Tribe (ST) communities. This shows the trend of Indian upper caste children in urban areas who study in well-equipped private schools. This goes with the findings of Kurrien (2005) and Selvam and Geeta (2010) that the nature and type of schooling is reflecting the social and economic disparity that prevails in the society.

Learners feel that they are learning English in school. There is fun in school and learning is interesting. The materials are effective. However, the textbooks are communicative but the teachers follow conventional methods and strategies.

English language classroom: Teachers teach with their own understanding of ELT as most of them have not undergone any training. Most teachers agree that group work, discussion and project work are effective for promoting language learning, but they do not use them in their classroom much for they believe the language proficiency of learners is not good enough for such activities. Teachers believe that lack of home support and parental involvement in the learning of learners affects language learning in and outside school.

Schools make efforts to use the languages of learners by providing a print-rich environment and opportunities for noticing the language. However, there is a fear of learners losing their language as most of the learners living in Delhi are second or third generation whose grandparents or parents migrated to Delhi for jobs or business purposes. Some of them may go back but many are settled in Delhi or will have to settle down here or any other city away from their native home or state.

5. Recommendations

The following are suggestions for action:

- Curriculum adaptation at the school level needs to be carried out with sound understanding of language pedagogy, learner profiles and the languages available in the schools. The selection of materials, particularly textbooks, for use by all learners needs a great deal of thought.
- The professional development of the teacher is not recognised as important for the learning of children in the classroom. There is an urgent need to have a comprehensive training programme in English language education and pedagogy to understand aspects like multilingualism, language across curriculum and language acquisition.
- The schools do not benefit from the multilingual characteristics of the learners. There is a need for advocacy by the schools and institutions such as NCERT and SCERT to enable teachers and learners to understand the importance of language in learning and in society.
- The schools do not have facilities for the promotion of reading and the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). The schools should address this problem to support language learning.

6. Conclusions

This research reveals that the schools operate with constraints in terms of teacher resources and materials for supporting or creating an English language environment. There is a need to provide more support to the teachers and learners of English through training in language pedagogy and how to use multilingualism as a resource and a strategy for the learning of languages and content subjects.

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