

Moving towards a translingual pedagogy for Indian higher education

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WARWICK

APPLIED LINGUISTICS

Plan for the presentation

1. Indian HE aspirations and language-in-education policy
2. Two key cautions
3. The problem and a solution
4. India's multilingual expertise
5. Translanguaging theory
6. Translanguaging in (HE) practice
7. Further examples



Indian goal of internationalisation

Guidelines for Internationalisation of higher education (HE) (MOE, 2021):

- Clear recognition of the importance of interesting foreign students (also in NEP; MHRD, 2020) and the ‘economic expansion’ this offers (MOE, 2021; pp. 8-9).
- Currently, relatively few (c. 50,000) foreign students in India in 2019-20 (p. 8) – c. 0.1% of total.
- Recognises need for “effective pedagogy to promote better learning outcomes for all students.” (p. 10). **But what would that look like, linguistically?**
- For foreign students: “Offering local language courses ... as needed” (p. 10)
- But no discussion of language-in-education policy issues. 🙄

3. Objectives

These Guidelines will be a step towards internationalisation of higher education with the National Education Policy, 2020. Systematic planning and implementation within the framework of these Guidelines by the Higher Education Institutions will help in achieving the desired outcome of making India’s higher education globally competitive in offering quality higher education. The objectives of the Guidelines are:

- ✦ To make **India an attractive study destination for foreign students**

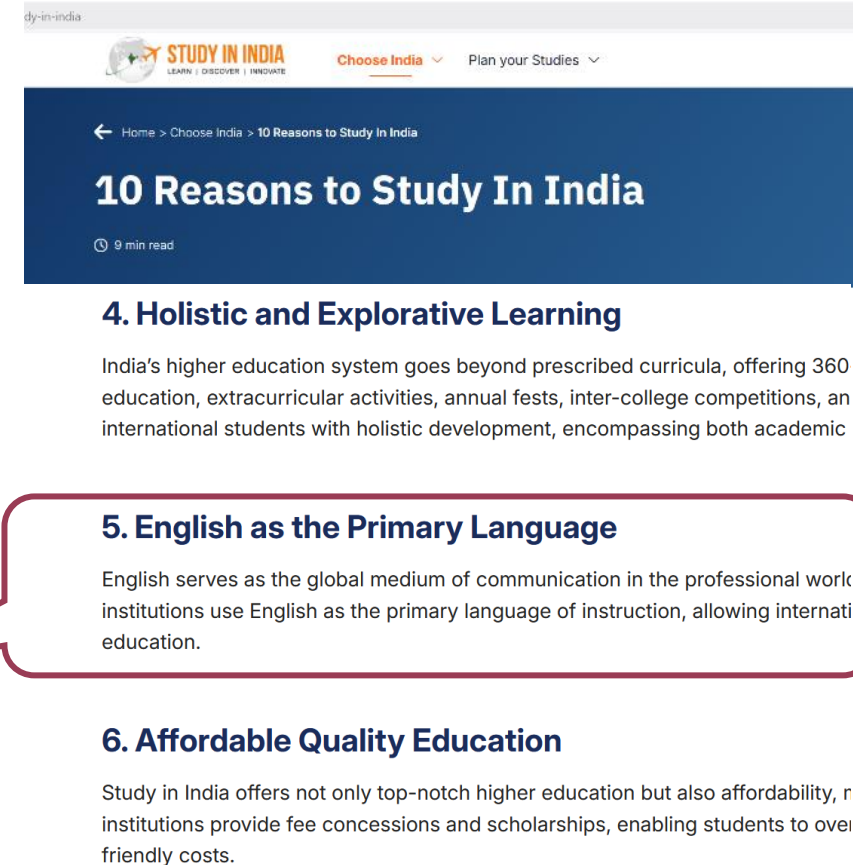
EMI: A key challenge of internationalisation

- In order to attract large numbers of international students to higher education (HE), there is a general assumption that English-medium instruction* (EMI) is required on relevant programmes (Bowles & Murphy, 2020; Galloway et al., 2018; Zhang, 2018), incl. in India (Gargesh, 2024).
- The ELEMENTAL project found a causal link between government reforms to monetize HE, university interest in attracting international students and imperatives to implement EMI (e.g., Hultgren et al., 2023; Hultgren & Wilkinson, 2022; Thomas et al., 2024).
- In India, Boruah and Mohanty (2022) reveal links between neoliberalism, middle-class elitism and EMI: **It may lock out the disadvantaged.**

*“English Medium Instruction (EMI) refers to the use of English to teach a non-language subject in a context where English is not the official language” (Galloway et al., 2018, p. 396).

Official policy vs unofficial policy: mixed messages?

- The NEP (MHRD, 2020) prioritises endogenous languages over English. 😊
- The guidelines for internationalisation of higher education (MOE, 2021) don't discuss language policy. 🤔
- Some government sources (e.g., GOI, 2018) argue that the use of English in Indian institutions is a key attractor for international students.
<https://studyinindia.gov.in/10-reasons-to-study-in-india> 😐
- Vagueness in policy can be dangerous (Boruah & Mohanty, 2022). 😞



Study in India

10 Reasons to Study In India

9 min read

4. Holistic and Explorative Learning

India's higher education system goes beyond prescribed curricula, offering 360 education, extracurricular activities, annual fests, inter-college competitions, an international students with holistic development, encompassing both academic

5. English as the Primary Language

English serves as the global medium of communication in the professional world institutions use English as the primary language of instruction, allowing internati education.

6. Affordable Quality Education

Study in India offers not only top-notch higher education but also affordability, r institutions provide fee concessions and scholarships, enabling students to over friendly costs.

Current extent of EMI in Indian HE

- Recent policy, incl. NEP (MHRD, 2020) prioritises endogenous languages over English.
- E.g., in Assam, undergraduate (UG) courses are mainly in Assamese
- Gargesh (2024) documents that EMI is not so common, esp. at UG levels
- But teachers expect EMI to increase (Mahapatra, 2025).

Table 27.1 India: Medium of instruction at undergraduate level

<i>Medium of instruction</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
English	11,913,731	38%
English/Hindi/IL	19,699,272	62%
Hindi/IL	135,985	0%
Hindi	74,566	0%

Source: AISHE (2020).

Table 27.2 India: Medium of instruction at postgraduate level

<i>Medium of instruction</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
English	2,671,439	60%
English/Hindi/IL	1,454,668	32%
Hindi/IL	331,400	7%
Hindi	26,827	1%

Source: AISHE (2020).

From Gargesh (2024, p. 373)

BITS Pilani – Example elite university

- I understand that BITS Pilani operates a ‘blanket’ EMI policy. But details seem vague...
“English is the medium of instruction”
- What does that mean in practice?
- Does it apply only to teacher language use?
- Spoken or written?
- ‘Official’ language use only?
- What about informal (e.g., pairwork, study sessions)?
- What about personal learning?

ADMISSION MODALITY

Admissions are made on an all India basis. English is the medium of instruction for all the programmes in the Institute. Selection is based entirely on candidate's merit, his/her preferences, facilities available and availability of seats. Some details of admission modality for all the three tiers of education are described in the following paragraphs.

A caution: What (probably) not to do?

1. Don't implement 'blanket EMI' policies

- Local learners 'locked out' of understanding.
- Indian languages become neglected, remain underdeveloped, undervalued as a result.
- Evidence consistently reveals issues with implementing EMI (see, e.g., Rose et al., 2026), esp. in low- and middle-income countries (Simpson, 2019).

2. Don't avoid English

- Indian learners may fail to develop necessary English to become 'global citizens' (MOE, 2021) of the future.
- Faculty staff may fail to develop (or may lose) English skills (for teaching, research and communication).
- International partners may not be interested to collaborate.

The key question: How to cater for the needs of Indian learners, the expectations of national policy *AND* provide for international learners?

Is the problem the construct of ‘medium of instruction’?

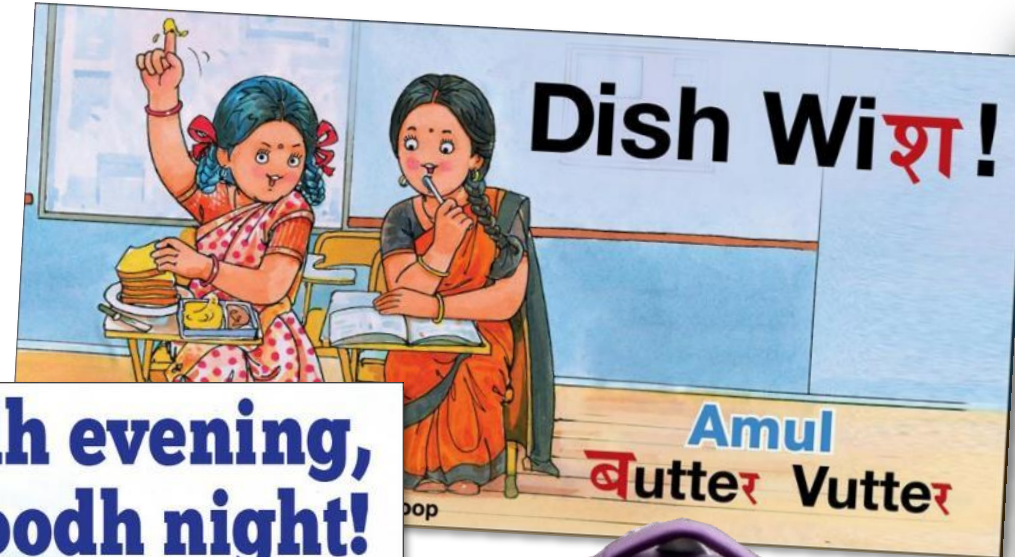
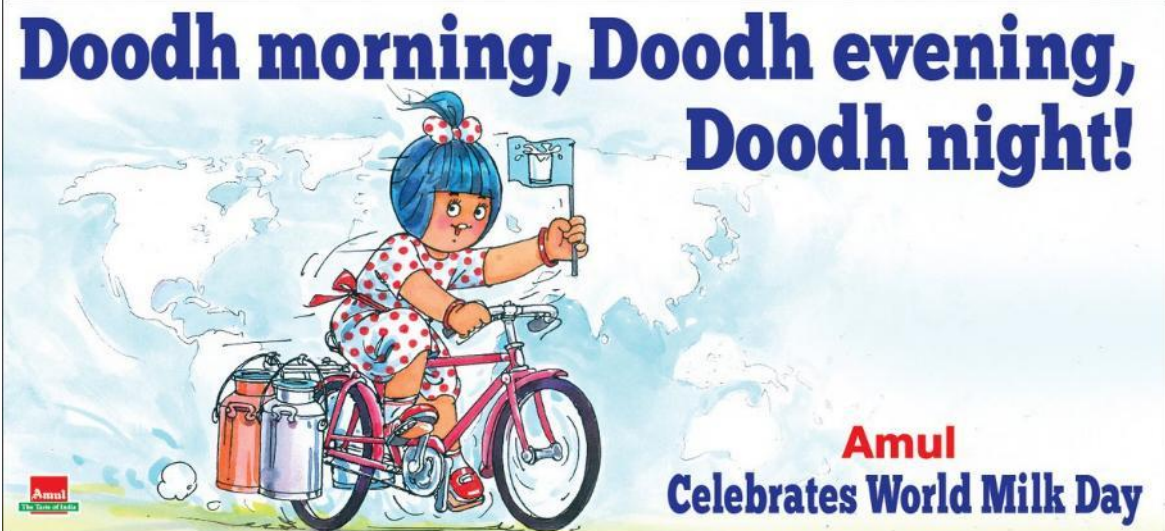
- Is **Medium of Instruction (MOI)** a vestige of colonialism?: the assumption that languages are separate, need to be kept separate, particularly in education.
- See Makoni & Pennycook (2005) on how languages were ‘invented’ (incl. in India).

Solution: Decolonise through Indian multilingualism

- Mohanty (2006, p. 265): Indians have “multilingualism as a ‘first language’.”
- NCERT (e.g., 2006, p. 12) “Linguistic purism, whether of English or the Indian languages, must yield to a tolerance of code-switching and code-mixing if necessary.”
- Anderson (e.g., 2019, p. 144): “India has the heritage and expertise to lead the world in reconceptualising how learners’ languaging resources (the total sum of their lexicogrammatical knowledge across all the languages that they use) can best be used to facilitate more effective learning of all subjects, including English”

Languaging in India... Multilingual creativity is part of Indian DNA

In the cityscape...



...in films...

From 'Jab We Met' (2007)

Aditya: गीत, I think हम लोगों को उतारना चाहिए.

Geet: Try करना चाहिए. बहुत मज़ा आएगा

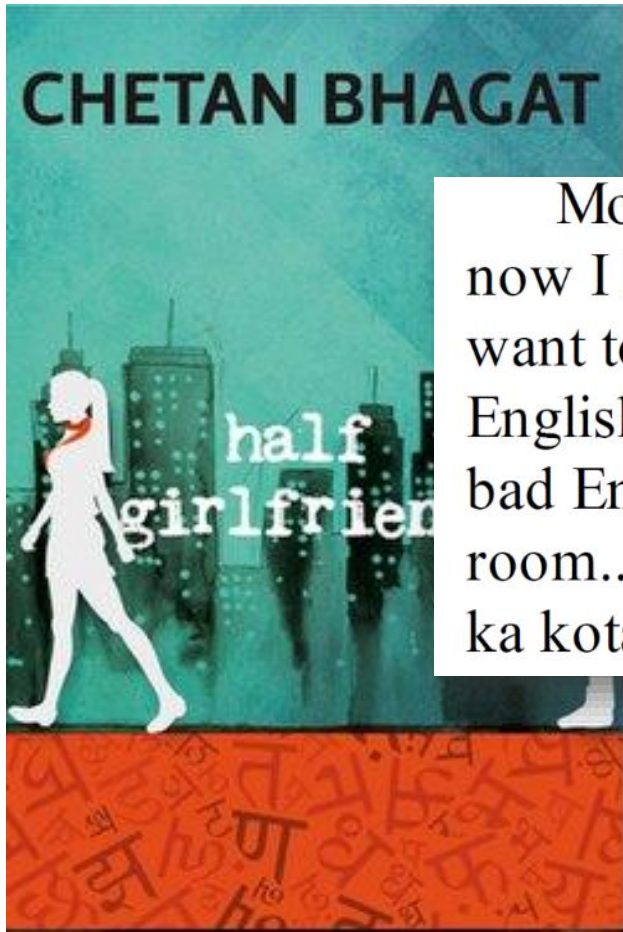
Aditya: एक second, एक second. मुझे तुमसे कुछ पूछना था. तुमने कभी किसी psychiatrist को consult किया है ?

Geet: Oh, shut up!

(adapted from Sailaja, 2011)



...novels...



Most students ignored me. Many sniggered. I wondered why. Well, now I know. My accent. Back in 2004, my English was Bihari. I don't want to talk now like I did back then. It's embarrassing. It wasn't English. It was 90 per cent Bihari Hindi mixed with 10 per cent really bad English. For instance, this is what I had actually said: 'Cumty room...bat!aieyega zara? Hamara interview hai na wahan... Mera khel ka kota hai. Kis taraf hai?'

Half Girlfriend (2014) by Chetan Bhagat

...advertising...



**GHOSH BABU KE
CAR ACCIDENT KA
KHARCHA INSURANCE
NE COVER KIYA**

Achha Kiya
INSURANCE LIYA

HEALTH | MOTOR | HOME | CROP & MORE

The advertisement features a man in a yellow patterned shirt and glasses, smiling and holding a car key. The text is presented in a speech bubble shape on a brown background. The top part of the bubble contains the headline in bold white Hindi text. Below it, the phrase 'Achha Kiya' is written in a cursive font, followed by 'INSURANCE LIYA' in bold black text. At the bottom of the bubble, the services offered are listed in a smaller font.

...advertising...

Note how English morphology is applied to a Hindi noun.

**Jitne apps,
utne jhanjhat.
Uninstall
the jhanjhats.**

Yono knows that more apps demand more battery, space, and attention. So it fits the features of many into just one app. And remains slim.

**Lifestyle &
banking, dono.**

yono
by SBI

Available for desktops, tablets, and smartphones.

The advertisement features a purple sign with white and blue text. In the background, a family of three (a man, a woman, and a child) are smiling and looking towards the camera. The man is pointing towards the sign. The background is a brick wall with some bottles on a shelf.

Translanguaging theory: A way to uninstall the झंझटs!

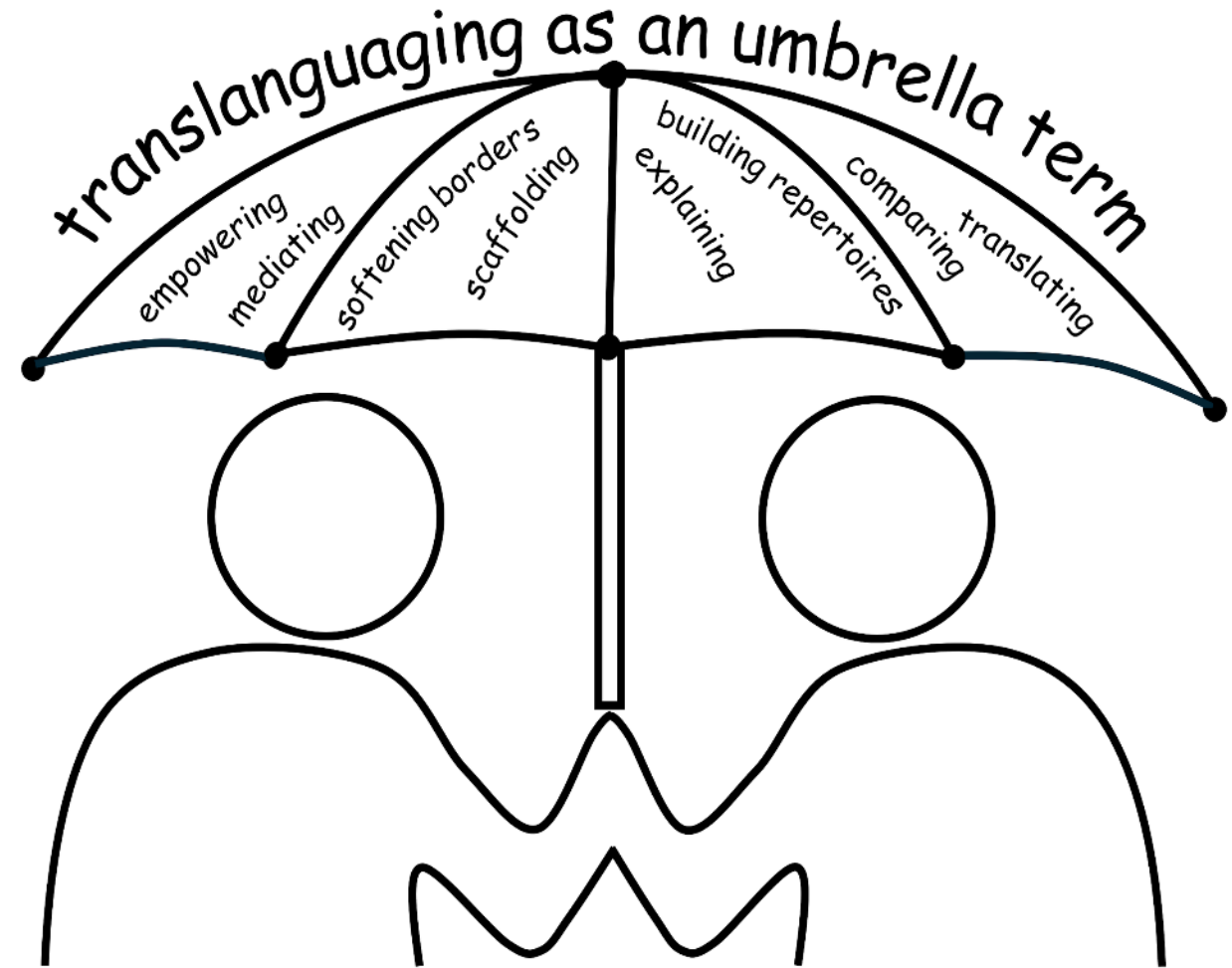
...translanguaging is an approach to the use of language, bilingualism and the education of bilinguals that considers the language practices of bilinguals not as two autonomous language systems as has been traditionally the case, but as **one linguistic repertoire** with features that have been societally constructed as belonging to two separate languages.

(Garcia & Li, 2014, p. 2)

- It places us, as bi/multilinguals, and our multilingual realities before the named languages that we make use of (Anderson & Dixit, 2026)
- It does not deny the importance of named languages, but stops assuming that they are the first order reality (see integrationist theory)
- **It takes us beyond monolingual visions of education...**
- And Indian teachers are expert at translanguaging! (Anderson, 2024).

Translanguaging as an 'umbrella term'

- Anderson & Dixit (2026)
Heugh (2021) and Cenoz & Gorter (2021) observe that, in practice 'translanguaging' has become an umbrella term for a range of language-inclusive practices and ideas in education.



How can it work in HE practice? (1/2)

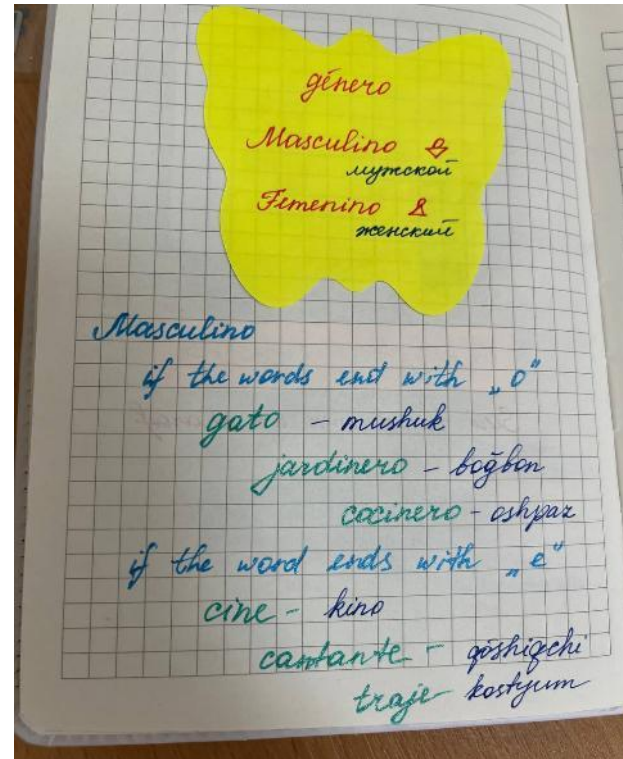
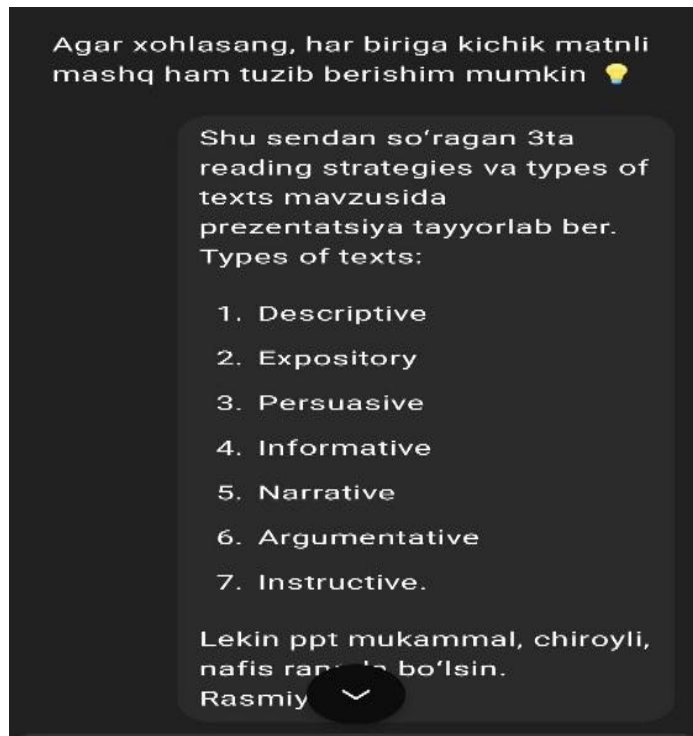
1. No monolingual policies – replace ‘English only’ or ‘Hindi only’ with ‘language appropriately’. ~~Medium of instruction~~ × Languages for learning ✓
2. Involve texts in multiple languages in our curricula, incl. English, Hindi, local languages (AI can help here) – even if a course is in Marathi, students can leverage their Marathi to access and ‘decode’ an English text on the subject.
3. Encourage students to compare and contrast how we do things in different languages – stop them from becoming ‘Bangla-unable’, ‘Hindi-dependent’, ‘language-siloed’, diglossic
4. Build language requirements into assessments but work towards these slowly – what do they need to do...
with English? / with Rajasthani? / with Hindi?

How can it work in HE practice? (2/2)

5. Exploit translanguaging opportunities:
 - translanguaging spaces
 - intrapersonal translanguaging (with self)
 - ‘parapersonal’ translanguaging (with devices/AI)
 - interpersonal translanguaging (with buddies)
6. Provide light, but increasing pressure for learners to do things through expected languages (if required) – e.g., using and improving their English; set personal, gradual targets for assignments, etc.
7. Be realistic: Forcing one language can often reduce learning and understanding (e.g. of content).

Evidence of translanguaging in HE EMI

(see Phyak, 2023; Sah & Li, 2022; Tai, 2022; Yuan & Yang, 2023; Yusupov, 2025)




Yet this is always covert, never policy – the झंझटs persist!



Sample student work on translanguaging with ChatGPT (presentation preparation)


Uzbek student's multilingual note-taking sample


Is it already happening?



- From 2018
- <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/madhya-pradesh-medical-university-allows-students-to-give-written-oral-exams-in-hinglish-1247124-2018-05-31>


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News / India / Madhya Pradesh university allows students to give exams in Hinglish

Madhya Pradesh university allows students to give exams in Hinglish

The university took the decision to allow 'Hinglish' besides Hindi and English as many students, especially those from rural areas, are not at ease in writing in English even when they know the correct answer.

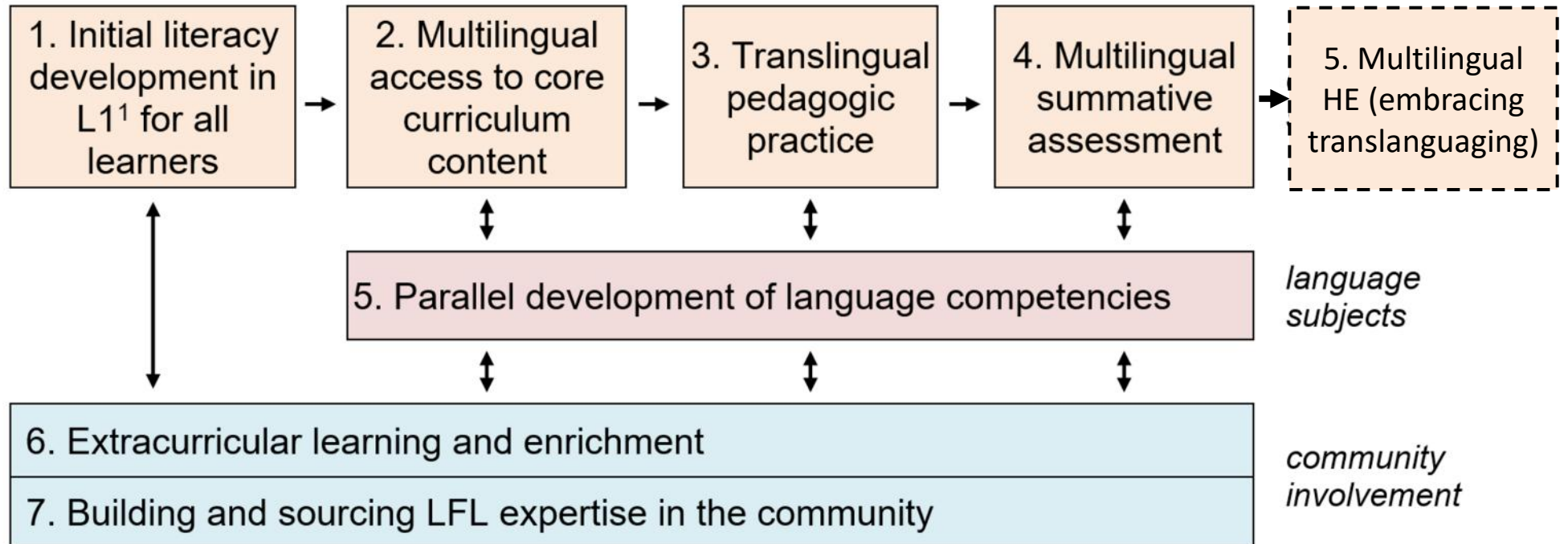


Extending the languages for learning framework to tertiary education?

Principles

1. Language inclusivity
2. Language equity
3. First language support
4. Cognitive independence

Elements



**consistent
with vision of
NEP 2020**

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BITS Pilani – Opportunities for translanguaging?

“English is the medium of instruction”

- English may be the official MOI, but how much of **language use for learning** does/should/can this cover?
 - Think about both written and spoken language use
 - Think about in class and outside class
 - Think about formal and informal interactions
 - Think about interactions among students
 - Think about use of devices, internet, AI, etc.
 - Think about **thinking** – this is where the learning happens!
- To what extent are other languages locked out, and to what extent do/can/should they still play a valuable role in helping learners, esp. for the disadvantaged?

Questions for discussion now or a seminar afterwards?

References / Q&A / Critique

Slides: <https://www.jasonanderson.org.uk/talks.htm> ->



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