

The Inclusion, Mobility and Multilingual Education Conference

Exploring the role of languages for education and development

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Translanguaging Practices in Developing Primary Grade School Skills: Evidence from Challenging Indian Contexts

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In a multilingual country like India, with 140 million children between ages six to thirteen in need of primary education, development of academic skills is expected to happen in a language that is not the home language of a large number of children from migrant communities or linguistic minority groups. The problem becomes manifold when these children are required to learn in English due to national language policy measures and parental pressure of practicing equity and paving the path for socio-economic advancement. Imparting education in a language that is not the learners' strong language creates gaps in understanding and contributes to the low levels of academic language skills.

The University of Cambridge, in collaboration with four other UK and Indian universities, has undertaken a project funded by ESRC-DFID UK in the area of multilingual education and multiliteracy. It sets out to examine learning outcomes in primary graders studying in challenging contexts in India. The project has found instances of use of translanguaging in 30 schools in three different locations across north, south and east India. Learning outcomes as school skills in these locations have been examined through learners' semantic fluencies in L1 and L2, reading and oral abilities in the language of instruction and mathematics. A preliminary set of findings reveal that school environments that support the use of translanguaging and bilingual use of learners' home language and life experiences in classroom show higher learning outcomes in young learners than the ones which do not use multilingual resources for education.