

Exploring Teacher Experiences and Challenges in Implementing Multilingual Approaches in EMRS, Bhadradri Kothagudem

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Abstract—India, by its very nature, is a multilingual country, hence, making the question of multilingual education both inevitable and essential. The promotion of mother tongue and multilingual education (MME) has been a cornerstone of India's educational policy, particularly significant in tribal contexts where linguistic diversity plays a vital role in cultural preservation and learning outcomes. Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS), established for tribal students, aim to foster inclusive education while accommodating multiple languages. However, the practical implementation of multilingual approaches often presents unique challenges for teachers. This study explores the experiences and challenges teachers face in implementing MME in EMRS located in Bhadradri Kothagudem district, Telangana. Adopting a mixed-method design, the research combines questionnaire-based survey data from 40 EMRS Language teachers with in-depth semi-structured interviews conducted with these purposively selected participants. The questionnaire was prepared by the researcher to investigate the teachers' language proficiency, use of methods, materials, and challenges in implementing a multilingual approach in a classroom setting. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to identify patterns in teacher preparedness and resource availability, while qualitative narratives were thematically coded to provide deeper insights into pedagogical challenges. The findings reveal that while teachers strongly acknowledge the pedagogical importance of mother tongue-based instruction, they encounter significant obstacles, including limited teaching resources in tribal languages, inadequate training in multilingual pedagogy, and difficulties in managing classrooms characterized by linguistic heterogeneity. By documenting teachers' lived experiences, this research contributes evidence-based insights for policymakers, curriculum designers, and teacher educators. Strengthening institutional support and targeted professional development can enhance the

role of EMRS as inclusive educational spaces that balance linguistic diversity with academic achievement.

Index Terms—Bhadradri Kothagudem, EMRS, Multilingual Education, Mother Tongue, Tribal Education, Teacher Experiences

I. INTRODUCTION

India is one of the most linguistically diverse nations in the world, and its sociocultural landscape is inseparable from its multilingual character. The 2011 Census of India reports the presence of 121 languages and more than 270 mother tongues, reflecting the linguistic plurality of its population. For millions of children, the home language differs from the language of schooling, creating both opportunities and challenges in education. Linguists and educators have long argued that multilingualism is not merely a communicative reality but also a cognitive resource that enhances problem-solving skills, critical thinking, and creativity (Lenka et al., 2024; Schwab-Berger, 2015). However, when the linguistic diversity of learners is not adequately recognized in schools, it can become a barrier to comprehension and academic progress (Dash, 2018). Thus, in the Indian context, multilingual education is not a matter of choice but of necessity.

The recognition of mother tongue as the foundation of learning is not a new phenomenon in India's educational policies. The National Policy on Education (1968) emphasized the importance of the home language in early education, a principle further reinforced by the three-language formula. The National Policy on Education (1986, 1992) continued this emphasis, advocating for the inclusion of regional languages in the curriculum. The Right to Education

Act (2009) explicitly mandated that, “as far as practicable,” the child’s mother tongue should be the medium of instruction in the early years of schooling. Most recently, the National Education Policy (2020) gave strong impetus to the use of mother tongue and regional languages as the medium of instruction at least until Grade V, and preferably till Grade VIII. These policy documents collectively reflect the intent to promote linguistic inclusion in the country. Yet, the success of such initiatives depends heavily on how effectively teachers are able to integrate multilingual pedagogies within classrooms (Rajaniprashanth, 2024).

Tribal Education and the Role of EMRS

The need for mother tongue-based multilingual education (MTB-MLE) is particularly pronounced in tribal contexts, where language is deeply intertwined with cultural identity and heritage (Suman, 2024; Nand & Kakati, 2022). Tribal students often face the double burden of socio-economic marginalization and linguistic alienation when schooled exclusively in dominant regional or national languages (Mamidi, 2017). In response to these challenges, the Government of India introduced Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS) in 1997-98 under the Ministry of Tribal Affairs. These schools were designed to provide quality residential education to Scheduled Tribe (ST) students from Classes VI to XII, combining academic excellence with cultural preservation (Nand & Kakati, 2022). EMRS were envisioned as inclusive institutions that could nurture tribal learners through holistic education while respecting their linguistic diversity (Suman, 2024). In districts like Bhadradi Kothagudem in Telangana, which are marked by linguistic heterogeneity and sizeable tribal populations, EMRS are particularly significant. However, the promise of multilingual inclusivity in such schools depends largely on the everyday practices of teachers, who must reconcile policy ideals with classroom realities (Bandhu et al., 2025).

Teachers as Key Agents in Implementing MME

Teachers occupy a central role in shaping the success or failure of multilingual education. Their linguistic repertoire, attitudes toward multilingualism, and classroom strategies determine how effectively children from diverse linguistic backgrounds are

supported in their learning journeys (Lenka et al., 2024; Paudel, 2020). Previous research across Indian states indicates that teachers often acknowledge the value of mother tongue-based instruction but face structural challenges in implementing it. These include the absence of teaching-learning materials in tribal languages, insufficient professional training in multilingual pedagogy, and the practical difficulties of managing classrooms where multiple languages coexist (Rajaniprashanth, 2024; Myklevold, 2021; Nand & Kakati, 2022). Teachers in EMRS settings often serve as the bridge between tribal learners’ cultural worlds and the academic expectations of formal schooling (Mamidi, 2017; Dash, 2018). Their lived experiences, therefore, provide vital insights into the strengths and limitations of current practices in multilingual education (Bandhu et al., 2025; Schwab-Berger, 2015).

1.1 Rationale for the Study

Although there is a growing body of literature on multilingual education in India, much of it has concentrated either on policy discourses or student outcomes (Suman, 2024; Nand & Kakati, 2022). Far fewer studies have foregrounded the perspectives of teachers, especially those working in specialized institutions like EMRS (Bandhu et al., 2025). In Telangana, research on teacher experiences with multilingual pedagogy remains limited, despite the state’s significant tribal population and its active network of EMRS (Mamidi, 2017). This creates a gap between the theoretical advocacy of multilingual education and its practical enactment in tribal schools. By documenting teachers’ voices, this study addresses a crucial gap in understanding how multilingual education policies are experienced, negotiated, and sometimes resisted in practice (Lenka et al., 2024). Such documentation is essential for developing teacher training programmes, resource allocation strategies, and curricular reforms that are contextually relevant and effective (Rajaniprashanth, 2024; Schwab-Berger, 2015).

1.2 Objectives of the Study

Against this backdrop, the present study focuses on exploring teacher experiences and challenges in implementing multilingual approaches in EMRS located in Bhadradi Kothagudem district, Telangana. Specifically, the objectives of the research are to:

1. Examine teachers' language proficiency, pedagogical practices, and the extent of resource use in multilingual classrooms.
2. Identify the key challenges teachers face in implementing multilingual approaches, including institutional, pedagogical, and material constraints.
3. Provide evidence-based insights that can inform teacher education programmes, strengthen institutional support, and guide policy implementation in tribal education.

By situating teacher experiences at the center of inquiry, this research seeks to bridge the gap between policy aspirations and classroom realities, thereby contributing to the broader goal of ensuring inclusive and equitable education for tribal learners in India.

1.3 Research Questions

1. How do teachers' professional backgrounds impact their implementation of multilingual approaches in EMRS classrooms, and what challenges do they face in implementing them?
2. How can teachers' experiences, training status, and qualifications provide insights into the usefulness of multilingual resources, institutional support, and their attitudes and perceived effectiveness of multilingual education?

1.4 Hypotheses

1. There is a statistically significant relationship between teachers' qualifications, training, and teaching experiences and the use of multilingual methods, and materials for classroom teaching in EMRS.
2. Trained teachers with higher qualifications, and more teaching experiences perceive higher availability and usefulness of resources, support, and policy guidelines for multilingual education than untrained teachers with less qualifications, and less experiences.
3. There is a significant association between teachers' training status and teaching experience, and their perceptions regarding the effectiveness of code-switching and peer-pairing.

1.5 Theoretical Framework

The present study, Exploring Teacher Experiences and Challenges in Implementing Multilingual Approaches

in EMRS, Bhadradi Kothagudem, is anchored in well-established theories of language, learning, and pedagogy. Given the multilingual and tribal educational context of EMRS, these perspectives provide a meaningful lens to examine how teachers negotiate classroom practices, institutional challenges, and student needs. The pivotal theories and frameworks that have shaped the understanding of this study include:

Sociocultural Theory (Vygotsky, 1978): Sociocultural theory posits that learning is a socially mediated process in which language plays a central role. Within multilingual classrooms, teachers act as mediators by scaffolding student learning through multiple languages. By drawing on students' mother tongues alongside regional and national languages, teachers can expand learners' Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), thereby making academic content more accessible.

Translanguaging Theory (García, 2009): Translanguaging emphasizes the fluid use of a learner's entire linguistic repertoire for meaning-making and knowledge construction. In EMRS classrooms, where students speak diverse tribal mother tongues in addition to Telugu, Hindi, and English, translanguaging enables teachers to integrate these languages strategically. This approach not only supports comprehension and participation but also validates students' linguistic identities.

Language Policy and Ecology Framework (Hornberger, 2002; Spolsky, 2004): While individual teacher practices are important, they are embedded within broader ecological systems of policy and institutional support. This framework highlights how institutional constraints such as limited training, inadequate resources, or rigid assessment practices shape teachers' ability to implement multilingual approaches. At the same time, supportive policies and resources can empower teachers to adopt inclusive, multilingual pedagogies.

Funds of Knowledge (Moll et al., 1992): The funds of knowledge perspective positions students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds as assets rather than deficits. In tribal contexts, where community knowledge and oral traditions are rich, teachers can incorporate these resources into classroom pedagogy. By acknowledging and leveraging students' lived experiences, teachers make learning more relevant, contextualized, and effective.

Together, these theories provide a robust framework for examining how teacher proficiency, pedagogical practices, and institutional structures shape the implementation of multilingual education in EMRS. They highlight not only the challenges faced by teachers but also the opportunities for harnessing linguistic and cultural diversity as a resource for more inclusive and effective education.

II. REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

Bandhu et al. (2025) analyze the transformative role of education in holistic human development, focusing on the Eklavya Model Residential School (EMRS) scheme as a key driver of tribal educational empowerment in India. Grounded in UN Sustainable Development Goal 4 on Quality Education, the study emphasizes the role of education in fostering knowledge, employability, values, and social inclusion. Using secondary government data, it evaluates the EMRS initiative launched in 1997–98 to provide quality education to tribal children in remote areas. With 711 schools sanctioned, 410 functional, and over 1.27 lakh students enrolled, the authors note steady progress and institutional growth. They conclude that EMRS has strong potential to advance tribal education while promoting academic excellence, cultural preservation, and inclusive development.

Lenka et al. (2024) examine the Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS) as key instruments for advancing sustainable education among India's tribal communities. Using a qualitative approach, the study analyzes curriculum, pedagogy, and extracurricular practices, linking them to the UN Sustainable Development Goals. The authors highlight EMRS's positive impact on students' academic growth, social skills, and empowerment while noting challenges such as poor infrastructure and limited resources. They conclude that, despite these constraints, EMRS plays a crucial role in promoting inclusive education and sustainable development for tribal communities. Their study contributes significantly to the discourse on inclusive and sustainable education in India, reinforcing the notion that tailored educational frameworks can play a pivotal role in empowering tribal communities and fostering long-term national development.

Suman (2024) examines the challenges of implementing suitable media of instruction in

multilingual border-area schools of Telangana, stressing the need for multilingual education and translanguaging pedagogies for minority language communities. The study shows how dominant-language instruction marginalizes non-dominant speakers, reducing participation and motivation. Using qualitative data from two schools with 15 ninth-grade students and teachers, it analyzes oral and written tasks, interviews, and classroom interactions. Findings reveal that strategic use of students' mother tongue (L1) enhances comprehension and cognitive growth. Suman concludes that embracing linguistic diversity and translanguaging can create more inclusive and effective multilingual classrooms.

Rajaniprashanth (2024) explores the pedagogical challenges of teaching English in India's multilingual classrooms, where diverse linguistic backgrounds affect learning. The study highlights issues such as varying English proficiency, cultural constraints, and limited resources, noting that English dominance can hinder inclusivity and comprehension. It advocates translanguaging and multilingual pedagogies that leverage students' full linguistic repertoires, along with culturally responsive, task-based, and collaborative approaches to enhance engagement and proficiency. The paper stresses ongoing teacher training as vital for implementing these strategies and calls for a multilingual framework that values diversity and promotes equitable learning outcomes.

In their paper, "Empowering Tribal Education: Insights from Eklavya Model Residential Schools in Sixth Scheduled States of India," Nand and Kakati (2022) analyze the role of Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS) in advancing tribal education and empowerment in India's Sixth Scheduled states. Addressing the educational marginalization of Scheduled Tribes, the study shows how EMRS bridge access gaps while preserving cultural identity. It highlights EMRS as spaces where indigenous knowledge and modern education coexist, with teacher sensitivity playing a key role in student motivation and growth. Emphasizing holistic development, the paper notes how co-curricular activities and community engagement enhance students' self-esteem and cultural pride. Overall, EMRS are portrayed as transformative institutions fostering both learning and tribal empowerment.

Dash (2018) conducted an empirical study on the educational status of tribal students in English learning

within Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS), identifying key strengths and challenges in their implementation. Using a descriptive survey method across two EMRSs, two SC/ST schools, and one Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya (JNV), the study involved 40 teachers and 52 Class VIII students, supported by an English achievement test and interviews. Results showed JNV students performed best, while EMRS students outperformed those in SC/ST schools, indicating moderate success in reducing disparities. The study concludes that EMRS can enhance English proficiency among tribal learners but face ongoing challenges in infrastructure, teacher training, and contextual adaptation, requiring stronger policy and pedagogical support.

Mamidi (2017) examines the role of mother tongue-based education in early schooling as key to preserving linguistic and cultural diversity. Drawing on the Right to Education Act (2009) and National Policy for Children (2013), the study analyzes government schools in Andhra Pradesh's border areas to assess multilingual and exclusionary practices. Despite supportive policies, linguistic diversity, poor infrastructure, and limited higher education access continue to marginalize students whose home languages differ from the school medium. The study highlights the gap between policy and practice, stressing the need for context-sensitive pedagogy and teacher training to ensure inclusive multilingual education.

In her doctoral research, Schwab-Berger (2015) examined how teachers perceived and experienced the implementation of a multilingual approach in Swiss primary classrooms during its first year of introduction. Using a qualitative case study with eight Grade 5 English teachers, the research found that while teachers followed the new approach, they faced challenges in adapting materials and needed greater collaboration. The study emphasized the importance of ongoing professional support through learning communities to enhance multilingual teaching practices and strengthen both teacher capacity and student learning outcomes.

While prior studies discuss multilingual education broadly (in Telangana, India, or international contexts), none specifically explore how teachers in EMRS tribal, residential, and multilingual environments implement and experience multilingual pedagogies. Existing literature highlights policy

issues, language choice, and challenges in multilingual instruction, but there is limited qualitative understanding of teachers' real classroom strategies, emotional labour, and adaptations in multilingual EMRS contexts. Prior studies overlook the influence of institutional support, training, and language policy implementation in shaping teachers' multilingual practices within EMRS frameworks. Despite the expanding scholarship on multilingual education and the transformative potential of Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS) in advancing tribal empowerment and inclusive education (Bandhu et al., 2025; Lenka et al., 2024; Nand & Kakati, 2022; Dash, 2018), a critical research gap persists in understanding the lived experiences of teachers who implement multilingual pedagogies within these institutions. Existing studies have predominantly addressed policy frameworks, institutional development, or student performance, while neglecting the pedagogical realities faced by teachers operating within EMRS's linguistically diverse, culturally embedded, and residential contexts. Although research on multilingual and translanguaging pedagogies in Indian schools (Suman, 2024; Rajaniprashanth, 2024; Mamidi, 2017) has illuminated strategies for managing linguistic heterogeneity, these investigations are situated outside the EMRS framework and fail to capture the distinct challenges teachers encounter when mediating between institutional language policies and the sociolinguistic realities of tribal learners. This lack of focus on teachers' voices has resulted in limited understanding of how educators negotiate language hierarchies, exercise agency, or adapt pedagogical strategies amid infrastructural, cultural, and administrative constraints. Furthermore, insights from international contexts, such as Schwab-Berger (2015), underscore the importance of professional collaboration and reflective practice in sustaining multilingual approaches, yet comparable inquiries are absent in the EMRS discourse particularly in regions like Bhadradi Kothagudem, where complex linguistic ecologies intersect with limited professional development opportunities. This research, therefore, directly addresses the unexamined dimension of teacher experiences, emotional and pedagogical labour, and adaptive practices in implementing multilingual approaches within EMRS, aiming to fill a substantial empirical and conceptual void in current educational

scholarship on multilingualism and tribal schooling in India.

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The present study employed a mixed-method design following an explanatory sequential approach,

wherein quantitative data were collected and analyzed first, followed by qualitative data to further explain and contextualize the findings. This design allowed for a comprehensive exploration of teachers’ experiences and challenges in implementing multilingual approaches in EMRS of Bhadradi Kothagudem district.

The detailed list of the EMRS in the district is given below:

EMRS in Bhadradi Kothagudem District, Telangana			
Block	Village	Name of the School	Year of Sanction
Cherla	Rice-peta	EMRS Cherla	2020-2021
Dammapeta	Dammapeta	EMRS (G) Gandugulapally	2015-2016
Dummugudem	Seetharamapuram	EMRS Dummugudem	2020-2021
Gundala	Mamakannu	EMRS Gundala	2019-2020
Mulkalapalle	Mookamamidi	EMRS Mulkalapalle	2020-2021
Palvancha	Pandurangapuram	EMRS (G) Palvancha	2017-2018
Tekulapalle	Tekulapalle	EMRS Tekulapalle	2018-2019

3.2 Participants and Sampling

The participants comprised 40 language teachers drawn from seven EMRS schools in Bhadradi Kothagudem district, Telangana. The teachers represented three language subjects Telugu, English, and Hindi and included both Post Graduate Teachers (PGTs) and Trained Graduate Teachers (TGTs).

Name of the EMRS	Subject-wise No. of Language Teachers (PGT & TGT)		
	Telugu	Hindi	English
EMRS Cherla	1	1	2
EMRS (G) Gandugulapally	3	2	3
EMRS Dummugudem	3	2	2
EMRS Gundala	--	1	1
EMRS Mulkalapalle	--	1	3
EMRS (G) Palvancha	3	2	3
EMRS Tekulapalle	3	2	3

A purposive sampling technique was adopted to include only those teachers directly engaged in language instruction and involved in multilingual classroom practices. Demographic and professional details, such as teaching experience, language proficiency, and exposure to multilingual pedagogy, were also collected through the questionnaire.

3.3 Instruments

3.3.1 Questionnaire

Quantitative data were collected through a 46-item questionnaire developed collaboratively by the researcher and the supervisor. The instrument included both closed-ended and open-ended items organized around four thematic areas:

- Multilingual methods and material use
- Resources and classroom practices
- Institutional support and policy on multilingualism
- Teachers’ attitudes and perceived effectiveness of multilingual education

The questionnaire comprised multiple-choice questions, self-assessment scales (Yes/No and Likert-type items), and short-response questions. The items were designed to elicit teachers’ perceptions, practices, and challenges in implementing multilingual approaches.

3.3.2 Semi-Structured Interview

To complement and deepen the quantitative findings, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 10 language teachers selected from the questionnaire respondents. Interviews were conducted via phone calls, each lasting approximately 15–20 minutes. The interview protocol focused on broad themes including structural and linguistic challenges, availability of institutional and material support, training

opportunities, and teachers’ agency and adaptive strategies in multilingual contexts.

3.4 Data Collection Procedure

Prior to data collection, the researcher obtained official permission from the EMRS District Officer in Bhadradi Kothagudem through a formal letter. The officer facilitated the circulation of the questionnaire by sharing the Google Form link through the official EMRS communication channels. The Principals of the respective schools further disseminated the link among their language teachers. Data collection was carried out over a one-month period.

For the qualitative phase, teachers who expressed willingness to participate in follow-up interviews were contacted by phone. Interviews were audio-recorded with participants’ consent and later transcribed for analysis.

3.5 Data Analysis

Quantitative data were organized and analyzed using Microsoft Excel. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages were computed to identify trends in teachers’ responses. Chi-square tests were applied to examine the associations between selected variables, such as teachers' qualifications, experience, and their formal teacher-training course.

For the qualitative component, interview transcripts were analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The transcribed responses from 10 language teachers were coded manually. Thematic coding was carried out to identify recurring patterns and categories related to teachers’ challenges,

institutional dynamics, and adaptive strategies. The qualitative findings were integrated with the quantitative results to provide a holistic interpretation of teacher experiences.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

All ethical research protocols were strictly adhered to. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study and their voluntary participation was ensured. Informed consent was obtained from all respondents prior to data collection. Anonymity and confidentiality of the participants’ responses were maintained throughout the research process, and data were used solely for academic purposes.

IV. DATA ANALYSIS & FINDINGS

4.1 For the question no.s 4.3.3, 4.5 & 4.6

Variables		
Qualifications	Teaching Experience	Teacher-training Course
UG/ Equivalent (10%)	Below 5 Years (72.5%)	Trained (75%)
PG & above (90%)	Above 5 Years (27.5%)	Untrained (25%)

4.2 Language Proficiency of the EMRS Teachers

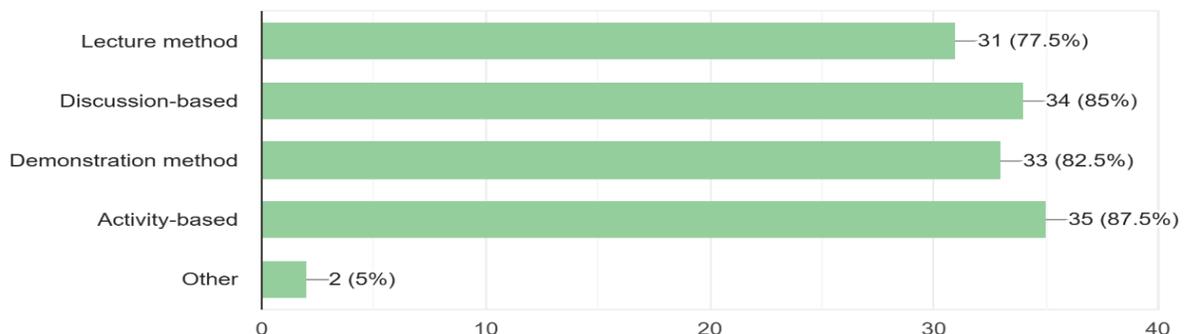
Language	Proficiency level (%)			
	Beginner	Intermediate	Advanced	Proficient
English	5%	45%	32.5%	17.5%
Hindi	5%	27.5%	40%	27.5%
Telugu	70%	--	2.5%	27.5%

4.3 Teaching Methods and Materials

4.3.1 Use of Teaching Methods in Multilingual Classroom

1. What teaching methods do you use in your multilingual classroom? (Select all that apply)

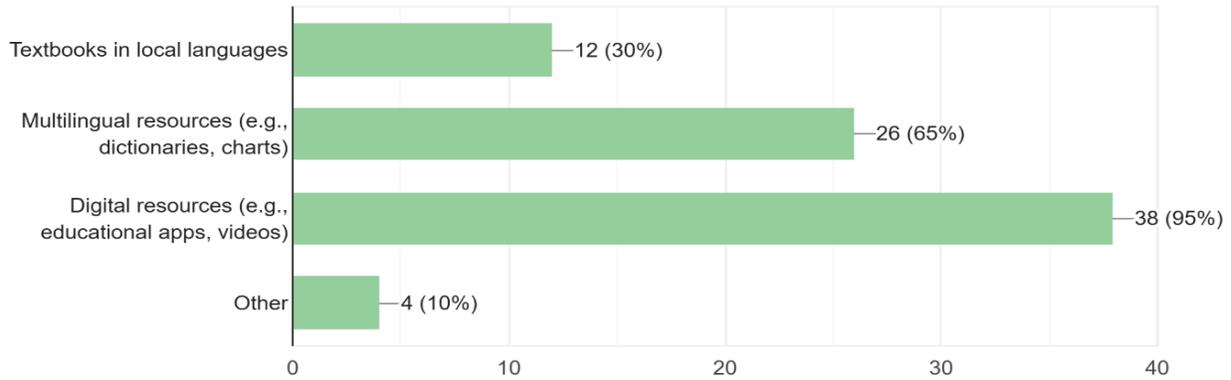
40 responses



4.3.2 Use of Multilingual Materials

2. What materials do you use to support multilingual education? (Select all that apply)

40 responses



4.3.3 Self-assessment Scale on Multilingual methods and materials use

Hypothesis 1: There is a statistically significant relationship between teachers’ qualifications, training,

and teaching experiences and the use of multilingual methods, and materials for classroom teaching in EMRS.

Dimensions	Variable	Yes	No	X2 (Independent Contingency)	Remarks at 5% level
Familiarity with using basic technology (audio, apps) to support multilingual teaching	UG/ Equivalent (10%)	2	2	0.045	NS
	PG and above (90%)	20	16		
Adaptation of multilingual strategies and TLMs effectively	Below 5 Years (72.5%)	14	15	9.103	S
	Above 5 Years (27.5%)	11	0		
Confidence in using multilingual methods and materials	Trained (75%)	11	19	0.95	NS
	Untrained (25%)	2	8		

Interpretation:

- i. It is inferred from the above table that teachers’ qualification levels did not have a meaningful influence on their responses. The slight differences observed in the frequencies are attributable to chance rather than any systematic relationship between qualification and familiarity with technology use as multilingual classroom practices.
- ii. There is a statistically significant association between teachers’ teaching experience (below 5 years and above 5 years) and their ability to adapt lesson plans for students with different home languages and to regularly reflect on their multilingual strategies.

The findings suggest that teaching experience plays a strong role in shaping readiness and confidence to implement multilingual education practices. The observed differences in responses are not due to random chance but reflect a meaningful relationship between teaching experience and effective multilingual pedagogical practices.

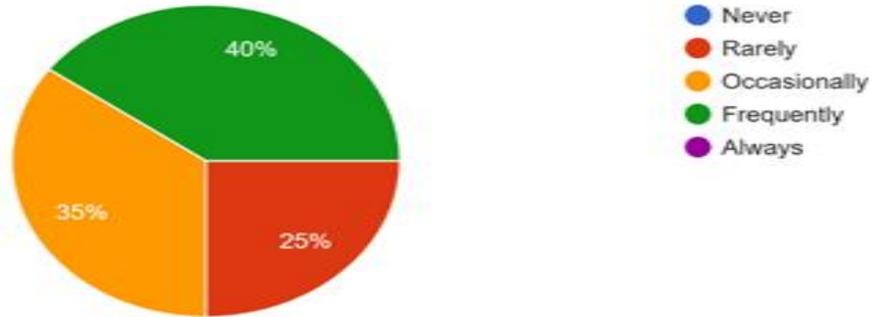
- iii. Trained and untrained teachers did not differ significantly in their confidence levels to implement multilingual materials and methods in classroom teaching. The slight variation observed in frequencies appears to be due to random fluctuation rather than a systematic effect of training.

4.4 Challenges faced

4.4.1

1. How often do you face challenges in implementing multilingual education?

40 responses

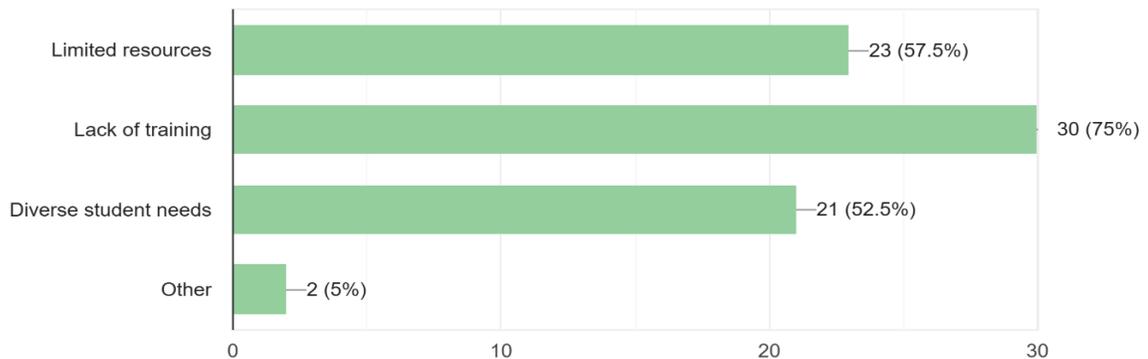


4.4.2

2. What are the most significant challenges you face in implementing multilingual education?

(Select all that apply)

40 responses



4.5 Resources, Support, and Policy

Hypothesis 2: Trained teachers with higher qualifications, and more teaching experiences perceive higher availability and usefulness of

resources, support, and policy guidelines for multilingual education than untrained teachers with less qualifications, and less experiences.

Dimensions	Variable	Yes	No	X2 (Independent Contingency)	Remarks at 5% level
Availability of storybooks/ print/ audio in students' mother tongue(s), and local languages.	UG/ Equivalent (10%)	1	3	1.616	NS
	PG and above (90%)	21	15		
Role of peer support for multilingual teaching, and community contribution for language and culture knowledge.	Below 5 Years (72.5%)	16	13	2.409	NS
	Above 5 Years (27.5%)	9	2		
Usefulness of assessment tools that respect multiple languages.	Trained (75%)	11	19	0.147	NS
	Untrained (25%)	3	7		

Interpretation:

i. It is inferred that although a higher proportion of PG-qualified teachers (21 out of 36) reported “Yes” compared to graduate teachers (1 out of 4), this difference is not strong enough statistically to conclude that qualification level influences these perceptions.

Teachers with PG and above qualifications appear to perceive higher availability of resources and support, but this difference is not statistically significant based on the chi-square test.

ii. There is no significant association between teaching experience and teachers’ perception of resources, mentoring, peer support, or community involvement for multilingual education. In other words, teachers with more than 5 years of experience do not perceive

significantly better resources, support, or policy guidance for multilingual education compared to those with less experience.

iii. Trained and untrained EMRS teachers do not differ significantly in their perceptions regarding the usefulness of multilingual-sensitive assessment tools. The minor variation observed in responses can be attributed to random fluctuation rather than a systematic effect of training.

4.6 Perceived Effectiveness and Attitudes

Hypothesis 3: There is a significant association between teachers’ training status and teaching experience, and their perceptions regarding the effectiveness of code-switching and peer-pairing.

Dimensions	Variable	Agreed	Disagreed	X2(Independent Contingency)	Remarks at 5% level
Allowing code-switching supports participation.	Trained (75%)	25	5	0.056	NS
	Untrained (25%)	8	2		
Peer-pairing across languages works well in the class.	Below 5 Years (72.5%)	26	2	0.85	NS
	Above 5 Years (27.5%)	10	2		

Interpretation:

i. The above table shows that trained and untrained EMRS teachers do not differ significantly in their perceptions regarding the effectiveness of code-switching in enhancing student participation. ii. Teachers’ perceptions of the effectiveness of peer-pairing across languages do not differ significantly based on their teaching experience.

In both cases, the minor variations observed in responses are likely due to random fluctuation rather than a systematic impact of training or effect of years of teaching experience.

Interview Findings: Thematic Analysis

The interview analysis with ten EMRS teachers revealed three integrated themes that captured their experiences with multilingual education in the Bhadradi Kothagudem context, where teachers themselves reported proficiency in Telugu, Hindi, English, Koya, and Gondi, and students represented an even wider range including Lambadi. These findings illuminate how teachers navigate multilingual classrooms, the institutional constraints they confront, and the strategies they employ to sustain learning.

Theme 1: Navigating Linguistic Diversity through Adaptive Pedagogy

Teachers consistently described their classrooms as linguistically complex, with students speaking multiple mother tongues such as Telugu, Hindi, English, Koya, Gondi and Lambadi. This diversity required them to adapt instruction continuously. Teachers reported using a blend of visual supports, simplified language, peer pairing, and intentional code-switching to make lessons accessible. Many began explanations in students’ mother tongues (when possible) and then transitioned to Telugu or English for formal teaching. This flexible use of language created a form of natural translanguaging, which teachers described as essential to maintaining comprehension and engagement. Students were often more responsive and confident when their linguistic repertoires were acknowledged, though teachers noted that participation patterns varied, with tribal-language speakers usually more comfortable in small groups. Overall, multilingual pedagogy emerged not as a formalised method but as an adaptive response shaped by classroom realities.

Theme 2: Structural, Material and Assessment Constraints

Despite their willingness to support linguistic diversity, teachers highlighted serious systemic barriers that limited the effective implementation of multilingual approaches. A recurring concern was the absence of teaching-learning materials in tribal languages. With no available print resources in Koya, Gondi, or Lambadi, teachers relied heavily on self-made materials, local oral narratives, or student-provided vocabulary. Assessment practices further constrained multilingual implementation: classroom teaching allowed linguistic flexibility, but examinations remained rigidly monolingual, mostly in Telugu or English. Teachers felt this discrepancy disadvantaged tribal-language speakers who could articulate concepts orally in their mother tongue but struggled to perform in the mandated written language. Limited institutional training on multilingual pedagogy and parental pressure for early English instruction added additional layers of strain. Teachers felt that though pedagogically sound, multilingual teaching was not adequately supported at the systemic or administrative level.

Theme 3: Teacher Agency, Coping Strategies and Perceived Impact on Learning

In spite of structural limitations, teachers demonstrated strong agency in managing multilingual classrooms. They described generating bilingual word lists, incorporating local stories, and forming peer-support groups within classrooms. Such strategies helped sustain students' engagement and bridged comprehension gaps. Teachers believed that integrating mother tongues improved learners' confidence, reduced anxiety, and enabled smoother transitions to Telugu and English. Many felt that multilingual teaching not only facilitated academic understanding but also reinforced children's cultural identity. Teachers emphasised that these gains could be expanded if the school system invested in resource development, teacher training, and assessment reforms. Teachers had to cope creatively with limited support.

V. DISCUSSION

By integrating quantitative results with qualitative thematic analysis, the study offers insights into how teaching experience, institutional conditions, and

teacher agency shape multilingual classroom practices in tribal education contexts. A key quantitative finding of the study is the statistically significant association between teaching experience and teachers' ability to adapt lesson plans for students with diverse home languages and to reflect on their multilingual strategies. Teachers with more than five years of experience demonstrated greater pedagogical flexibility and reflective practice than those with less experience. This suggests that sustained classroom engagement and experiential learning play a critical role in developing effective multilingual pedagogy. Qualitative findings further substantiate this result. Experienced teachers reported learning through reflection, experimentation, and peer interaction rather than through formal training alone. These findings align with earlier research highlighting the importance of classroom experience in shaping multilingual teaching competence (Dash, 2018; Mamidi, 2017; Schwab-Berger, 2015). Recent studies in the Indian context similarly emphasise that multilingual pedagogical expertise often develops through situated practice rather than preservice preparation (Bandhu et al., 2025; Lenka et al., 2024).

In contrast, the study found no statistically significant association between teachers' qualification levels and their perceptions of multilingual practices, confidence, or availability of resources. Similarly, trained and untrained teachers did not differ significantly in their confidence levels or perceptions of the effectiveness of code-switching. These findings suggest that formal qualifications and existing training programmes may not adequately equip teachers to address the multilingual realities of EMRS classrooms. From the qualitative data, important explanations for this pattern is found as teachers consistently reported that training programmes were generic and insufficiently contextualised to tribal and multilingual settings. Participants noted that professional development rarely focused on practical strategies for engaging with multiple tribal languages or for creating multilingual teaching-learning materials. As a result, teachers relied more on personal initiative and experiential learning than on formal credentials. This finding supports earlier research that points to gaps in teacher education programmes regarding multilingual and tribal education contexts (Nand & Kakati, 2022; Rajaniprashanth, 2024; Suman, 2024).

The absence of a significant association between teaching experience and teachers' perceptions of institutional support, mentoring, peer collaboration, and community involvement highlights systemic challenges within EMRS schools. Regardless of experience level, teachers perceived limited access to multilingual resources and institutional guidance. This indicates that structural factors, rather than individual teacher characteristics, pose major barriers to the effective implementation of multilingual education. During interview, teachers described shortages of multilingual materials, rigid curriculum structures, and assessment systems that prioritised dominant languages. Even motivated teachers felt restricted by syllabus completion pressures and examination-oriented practices. These findings echo previous studies emphasising how institutional and material limitations constrain multilingual initiatives in tribal schooling contexts (Dash, 2018; Mamidi, 2017).

Despite these challenges, teachers demonstrated considerable agency in responding to multilingual classroom realities. Teachers reported using informal strategies such as peer explanation, selective code-switching, and collaborative learning to support student understanding. Although quantitative findings showed no significant differences in perceptions of the effectiveness of peer-pairing or code-switching across experience or training categories, qualitative data suggest that these strategies are widely employed as pragmatic classroom responses. While teachers may not perceive these practices as formally validated or institutionally supported, they continue to use them to address linguistic diversity. Such findings are consistent with Schwab-Berger's (2015) observation that multilingual practices often remain under-recognised within formal school structures despite their pedagogical relevance.

The study underscores the need for teacher education programmes that explicitly address multilingual pedagogies in tribal contexts and provide practical, classroom-oriented strategies. Additionally, institutional support systems must prioritise the development of multilingual teaching-learning materials, flexible assessment practices, and sustained mentoring structures. By integrating teachers' quantitative responses with their lived experiences, the study contributes meaningful insights for strengthening teacher education, institutional support,

and policy initiatives aimed at promoting inclusive and equitable multilingual education in tribal schools.

VI. CONCLUSION & IMPLICATIONS

The present study reveals that while EMRS teachers demonstrate a strong willingness to adopt multilingual pedagogical practices, their efforts are significantly constrained by systemic and institutional gaps (Rajaniprashanth, 2024). Quantitative results indicate that teaching experience, rather than formal qualifications or training status, plays a meaningful role in teachers' ability to adapt lesson plans and reflect on multilingual strategies. At the same time, the lack of significant differences across qualification levels, training status, and institutional support highlights the limitations of existing teacher preparation and support mechanisms. Qualitative findings further illuminate how teachers navigate linguistic diversity through adaptive pedagogy and personal agency, despite facing structural, material, and assessment-related constraints. Teachers emerge as key agents of inclusion who rely on experiential learning and informal strategies to bridge linguistic gaps in tribal classrooms.

- Implications for Teacher Education and Professional Development

The findings underscore the urgent demand for teacher training modules that are contextually grounded in tribal and multilingual realities. Teacher education programmes both pre-service and in-service should incorporate training in tribal and mother tongues, equipping teachers with practical strategies for classroom communication, multilingual scaffolding, and inclusive assessment. Beyond theoretical orientation, such training should focus on classroom-based practices, reflective teaching, and peer learning models that acknowledge the linguistic diversity of EMRS students.

- Implications for Curriculum and Resource Development

There is a prerequisite for curriculum design and teaching-learning materials that integrate local languages alongside dominant school languages. The development of multilingual textbooks, supplementary materials, and digital resources in tribal languages would support teachers' classroom practices and enhance students' comprehension and participation. Additionally, assessment frameworks

should allow flexibility for multilingual expression, thereby validating students' linguistic identities and promoting equitable learning outcomes.

- Implications for Policy and Institutional Support
At the policy level, the study highlights the requirement of sustained institutional support for multilingual pedagogy at the ground level. Educational authorities should provide clear guidelines, mentoring systems, and resource allocation to support multilingual practices in EMRS schools. Policies must ensure practical implementation of multilingualism through funding, monitoring, and capacity-building initiatives tailored to tribal education contexts.

VII. DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

- Future research may extend the scope of the present study by involving larger and more diverse samples across multiple states to enhance generalisability.
- Comparative studies examining multilingual practices in EMRS schools across different regions could provide deeper insights into contextual variations and effective models of implementation.
- Longitudinal and classroom-based studies may further explore how multilingual pedagogical practices evolve over time and influence student learning outcomes in tribal education settings.

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