



How Effective can Hinglish be for the Classroom?

Dr. P Rebecca

HOD English, BSK College, Maithon (BBMK University, Dhanbad)
Jharkhand

DOI: [10.33329/rjelal.13.1.32](https://doi.org/10.33329/rjelal.13.1.32)



Article info

Article Received: 28/12/2024
Article Accepted: 22/01/2025
Published online: 02/02/2025

Abstract

The use of Hinglish in Indian classrooms can be a boon for slow learners and students from rural and semi-urban areas. It facilitates better interaction between the teacher and taught. It helps students to clear their doubts and have better grasp of concepts. The use of bilingualism is a boon for our students and has enhanced studies in remote areas as well as semi-urban areas. Students can now have access to better study materials and their sense of alienation from the English-speaking crowd can be much reduced if teachers in classes use Hinglish instead of focusing on just English as a mode of communication.

Key words: alienation, self-esteem, Hinglish, NEP2020, pedagogy, communication.

Hinglish or the use of Hindi as well as English in the Indian classroom has never been a very attractive proposition for teachers of the English language and is scoffed at as a means to discourage thinking and expressing in English because of the availability of an alternate language. I beg to differ here keeping in mind the standard of students hailing from the regions of Bihar, Jharkhand and West Bengal, multilingualism seems to be a very appropriate mode of teaching. I am talking of these states because of my association with students of these states. Students who have studied in the vernacular medium tend to lack fluency in English and their comprehension of lessons taught by the teachers in the classroom is quite below the acceptable standards. In our regions,

therefore, Hinglish, a coinage that clubs the two languages, Hindi and English together can prove useful. Hinglish is a colloquial form of the language spoken in India, with a mix of Hindi and English vocabulary, grammar and sentence structure. Teaching English through the medium of Hindi is, therefore, considered the need of the hour seeing the low grasping level of our students.

India lives in villages or one may say the majority of India does. Cities are beyond the purview of poor peasants whose children hardly ever make it to any reputed school or college. They are taught in the village schools where the standard is lamentably low. By the time children pass their Board exams they are able to speak a few sentences in English and

may be do a little bit of translation. Such children do not gain admission to the big city colleges but end up becoming dropouts to continue the family tradition of farming on a very small piece of land or by getting admitted to any government college. Some students who are exceptional may, however, find a seat in a reputed college and get the desired level of exposure. Sadly, few are these exceptional ones.

Is our education system flawed? Yes it is. The coming of the New Education Policy has overburdened the teachers as well as the taught. Students are migrating to universities where Graduation gets over in three years rather than four years as prescribed in the NEP. The theory of MDC (Multi Disciplinary Course) is another problem for the students. Hindi medium students having somehow scored a meager 45% marks are compelled to study Science and Commerce subjects. As it is, they are somehow in the situation to study arts subjects and on top it they are asked to study MDC. One of my students said, 'Madam if I was so intelligent wouldn't I be studying Science?' The syllabus of NEP is flawed because it is compelling students to undertake subjects which they are not familiar with nor have any inclination to study. The syllabus, too, is vast and not suitable for students in government colleges coming from rural or semi-urban backgrounds.

Given the fact that our students must study what they do not wish to, do teachers have the liberty to teach their subject of expertise in just one language? I think they cannot profess to do so. Hinglish here comes as a savior for the students. Basic terms are taught in English while the explanation is in a hybrid vocabulary using both the languages. Granted that this leads to a very slow progress in the academic development of the student but at least he understands his subject. The biggest drawback however is that this leads to the level of expression remaining as poor as it always was. There is improvement in comprehension but the answers in the examination which finally decide the fate of the students rests wholly on the

ability to express. Poor language, poor expressions, bad grammar, faulty spellings all merge together to ensure the students get poor marks in the examination jeopardizing their entire career. Did Hinglish help them? Yes it did, they were able to understand their subject. Did it improve his future prospects? No it didn't. And the worst part is that he will never be in grasp of his subject. Am I in support of Hinglish? I think, Hinglish should be used only if the students one is teaching belong totally to the vernacular medium and do not understand anything of your lecture.

Translation works when it comes to literal explanations, say of a poem where the teacher can translate the poem line on line and help the students in understanding the beauty of the work but if the topic of discussion is Verner's Law or Phonemes how do you explain the whole thing? Under such circumstances it becomes desirable that a certain cut off percentage be assigned during admissions to help the departments have access to such students who have a certain command over the language. I do not say that all universities and colleges face the same problem that we do here because cutoffs are very high in some institutions resulting in their getting the cream among the students admitted there. Such students never face the 'unable to comprehend' problem nor do teachers ever need to think of alternative languages to get across to their students.

There is a lot of discrepancy in the educational standards we come across in our government colleges and those in bigger places. We come across simple, poor students who never had access to English medium schools and somehow without many books and tuitions manage to get a bare 45% in their examination in the subject of their choice and sometimes not even that. Under that circumstance they are compelled to take the subject in which a meagre number is scored, compulsion in language selection leads to disinterestedness and

ultimately to further bad results. The cycle is unending.

Hindi and Bengali are two languages used in our region. Our students can be made to understand some topics in these regional languages but this must not be adopted as a normal practice. It also helps in the psychological de-alienation of students who feel themselves aloof from the crowd that understands English. For a moment all learn a lesson bilingually. For a moment, he is one of the crowd. For a moment, he is not an alien. It improves his creative thinking, problem solving capacity and enhances self-esteem.

Come to examine the scientific basis of this use of Hinglish, bilingual students' brain function stands improved because the mind is challenged to recognize, find meaning and communicate in more than one language. Students who learn a second and third language have better memories and are more cognitively creative than those students who use single language as a mode of study. Research has proved beyond doubt that bilingual people have better direction sense and are more efficient at remembering/ recollecting names than those who speak one language.

Social benefit is that students learn how to appreciate different cultures once they come to have a knowledge of different languages because they begin to read, comprehend and understand the folk tales, songs, expressions without the need for translation. Students are able to engage in languages through folk tales, songs, idioms and other primary sources of information without requiring translation leading to more meaningful cultural exchanges.¹

Academically, bilingualism in the Classroom allows us to gain proficiency in speaking more than one language. It helps us stay aligned with our cultural identity and brings value to our social interactions. The benefits of bilingual education in India include academic advantage, self-confidence, and increased self-esteem.

There are two things to be taken note of. Firstly, National Education Policy, 2020 states that the "medium of instruction till at least Class 5, but preferably till Class 8 and beyond, will be regional language of students". Secondly, on Mother Language Day 2022, PM Narendra Modi said, "Education in mother tongue is linked to mental growth and development of children."

Bilingual classrooms are the need of the hour for the comprehensive development of children from an early age. Teaching and learning in a regional language improves conceptual understanding and establish a better connection between school and home learning. Even when people use digital methods or platforms, they look for natural comfort, which is in their local language. Innovation in the field of education technology focuses on eliminating language barriers that limit students' learning and understanding. Our purpose should be to enhance digital learning and teaching by enabling content in regional languages with Hindi or English.

Regional language for students is more than just language. It is their cultural, social, and personal identity. Even the dropout ratio drops where bilingualism is used for instruction. They are able to indulge in critical thinking and examine things from different perspectives. It helps students to validate their identity and create a strong foundation for learning which obviously leads to educational success. Even on digital platforms for education the navigation options should be in both Hindi and English for maximum benefit of students.

When students learn in their preferred language, they understand concepts better because of the clarity of expression. They tend to get involved in learning more because they are able to better analyse, reason and think about the topics taught.² Further, better clarity of concepts helps them cope with their historical learning gaps because when taught they are taught in a regional language, they understand better, grasp fast, and are able to retain concepts

for a longer time. Hinglish, therefore, motivates students to learn at the same time it induces them to ask their doubts without any hesitation. It improves classroom interaction. It is the need of the hour for better pedagogy.

As teachers of English, it is our duty and moral obligation to ensure that our taught find our lectures interesting, informative and comprehensible. Our students coming from poor backgrounds and belonging to the non-creamy, non-elite layer of society cannot be kept back from receiving the same benefits of quality education as their richer, socially abler counterparts. As teachers of English, we can help them in getting equal opportunity at education by coming down to their level and interacting in their language, by giving them study material in which their mother tongue is used to explain difficult topics. This will give us the satisfaction of having done the utmost for our students who will develop academically, socially and personally. While the teachers will gain respect and confidence of their taught, it will inspire them to try newer methods of reaching their less-privileged students in simple language be it English or their vernacular tongue.

Teachers of English dream to convey beauty of the written words to their students and this is possible only when our students understand the written text in their own language because to them English remains an incomprehensible, hard to understand, grammatically difficult language. Shakespeare in Hinglish would be much more appreciated than in Old English or even modern English. Any Old English, Romantic, Victorian or modern writer cannot be understood by our students without giving them the extra support of their mother tongue. Then, the look of comprehension mixed with appreciation, the flash in the eyes, the redness on the cheek, the smile on the lips says it all. The teacher's work is done to perfection. Nothing more remains to be achieved. The teacher has transmitted

knowledge to his taught and been satisfied in return. Mission accomplished.

References

- [1]. Nord Anglia Education. (2022, April 2). *The benefits of bilingual education*. <https://www.nordangliaeducation.com/vis-hcmc/news/2022/04/02/the-benefits-of-bilingual-education#:~:text=Bilingual%20education%20has%20many%20cognitive,understanding%20of%20their%20native%20language>
- [2]. iDream Education. (n.d.). *Bilingual education in the classrooms*. <https://www.idreameducation.org/blog/bilingual-education-in-the-classrooms/>