Steps Towards Learning

A guide to overcoming language barriers in children's education

Save the Children
UK

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in children's education

We're the world's independent children's rights organisation. We're outraged that millions of children are still denied proper healthcare, food, education and protection and we're determined to change this.

Save the Children UK is a member of the International Save the Children Alliance, transforming children's lives in more than 100 countries.

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Cover photo: Kiêt, five, holding up his drawing in preschool class at Muong Tung Commune School, Dien Bien province, north of Vietnam. Like other ethnic minority children, they don't speak Vietnamese as their first language. But Save the Children introduced bilingual education at his preschool and now they can learn in both Thai and Vietnamese, which makes lessons easier to follow. To date, Save the Children's Ethnicity Minority and Bilingual Education project has helped 114,000 children aged 4 to 14 in Dien Bien, Quang Ninh and Dac Nong Provinces. (Photo: Kullwadee Sumnalop/Save the Children)

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Foreword

Whenever I give a presentation on the importance for children to gain literacy in school through their mother tongue, I suddenly switch in the middle to fluent Indonesian (or, if there are Indonesians in the audience, to less fluent French or barely comprehensible Thai). After a few seconds, the audience begins to look puzzled, then lost, and finally helpless. I then switch back to English and say, "What you just experienced, ladies and gentlemen, is what thousands or millions of children in your country or region experience every day in school. They cannot understand what the teacher is saying." I have no idea whether this little trick has any lasting impact on listeners but, at least for a moment, I hope they feel a little of the confusion and anxiety that young children in a similar situation feel.

The point is clear – a point that this publication underlines with great effect. Children cannot learn if they do not understand the language of their teacher or their textbooks. This affects enrolment, first of all. Families know that their children will not learn easily and that they will not be able to follow what their children are doing in school. Or children enroll, but, unable to understand much of what the teacher is saying or to read easily what has to be read, they soon drop out. Look at countries with a high drop-out rate in the early grades and you will likely find countries with a large number of language groups (or a large minority) and a language policy that insists on exclusive use of the official language.

It doesn't have to be this way. There are many quite credible reasons why using mother-tongue-based approaches are not always easy to implement. But an increasing number of programmes demonstrate that problems can be overcome, and not necessarily at great expense of time or resources.

More difficult to resolve is what can be an underlying but unspoken reason for refusing to use mother tongue – the fear that this will empower groups seen as historically, currently or potentially disloyal to the state, thus threatening national unity. I think the argument must be made that groups whose language and culture are clearly recognised, valued, and even promoted by the state will be more – rather than less – loyal to the nation.

And an important way to recognise, value and promote minority and local languages and cultures is through their presence in education systems and schools – as more than mere 1-hour-a-week subjects. Sensitising officials at high levels of the system (and parents and community leaders at the bottom), and building the capacity of ministry and school staff at all levels to plan and implement mother-tongue-based, multilingual education approaches are therefore essential objectives. This book will be a most useful tool in fulfilling these objectives.

Sheldon Shaeffer
former Director of UNESCO's Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education

Introduction

The language used in school can destroy children's education

In many countries of the world, large numbers of children start school, only to find their teachers are speaking to them in a language they don't understand. In other places, teachers start by communicating with children in their own language, but as soon as written words and numbers are introduced, teachers use a language children don't understand. Children learn to copy and often memorise the words and numbers, but don't understand them and can't apply them usefully. In these situations, many children drop out of school altogether, while others fail their examinations and spend years repeating grades.

Adults often have powerful reasons for choosing a school language that children do not know. Nevertheless, it has been shown that if the school language is different from the language children use at home with family and friends, this is a major cause of educational failure for many children. In many countries, inappropriate use of school language is working against efforts to strengthen the quality of education, wasting precious resources.

In Save the Children's experience, many government officials and education practitioners are concerned about problems with school language, but are unsure what to do about it, especially when these officials and practitioners are not able to completely change the way they run schools.

What is this guide about?

This guide summarises and explains what is known worldwide about the difficulties that children experience with unfamiliar school language. It offers evidence, arguments and practical steps to help stop language preventing children from learning.

The guide focuses on developing countries, as this is where the majority of children who do not speak the language of school live. It offers strategies to help improve children's chances of doing better in school, even when it appears very difficult to change the way language is currently used in education.

Who is this guide for?

The guide is intended to be useful to anyone involved in education where children do not use the language of school at home. It should be especially useful to local, district and provincial education officials, as well as school principals, teachers, and education project or programme staff working in non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

This guide should help you:
- raise language challenges with superiors, and share the evidence and arguments for a better approach
- understand how a better language approach could be introduced in the schools you work with
- issue guidance for introducing changes in schools to make learning easier for children
- guide schools in managing parents' expectations, so that demands for education in national or foreign languages can be dealt with constructively.

What does this guide contain?

This guide is divided into six sections:
- Section 1 discusses why school language is often different from the language children use in daily life, and describes the problems this causes in education worldwide.
- Section 2 presents research that explains why children have problems when school language does not match the language they speak at home, and outlines the implications of this knowledge for education.
- Section 3 suggests ideas for changes at school and community levels that can help children cope with language issues more successfully.
- Section 4 provides teaching ideas to help children affected by language issues to learn and participate in school with greater success.
- Section 5 offers strategies for dealing with particular challenges to achieving good practice in school language.
- The final section lists further reading and good practice resources.

The guide is kept relatively short, to allow for easy translation into local languages.

Where to look

If you are interested in:
- evidence on good practice for school language: pages 7–10
- ideas for how to set up a good-quality school language programme: pages 11–14
- ideas for how to change to better practice in school language: pages 15–19
- responses to challenges and concerns around improving school language: pages 20–26
- ideas for changing others' opinions and practices around language and education: pages 20–26.

Questions to keep in mind

How do you know if children are having difficulty with the language used in schools that you are involved with? Here are some questions you might ask yourself:
- Do children use a different language at home from the one used for teaching in school?
- Are these children very silent in class?
- Can the children frame sentences properly, or do they answer questions with only one or two words?
- Do children find it difficult to follow the teacher's instructions?
- Are there only one or two children in the class who can easily answer questions?
- Can children copy text from the blackboard, yet are weak at completing tasks or passing tests?

If the answer to two or more of these questions is 'yes', language is likely to be one of the biggest obstacles to children's educational progress.

The ideas for change contained in this guide do not give all the answers needed to improve school language in the wide range of education contexts worldwide. However, they show that it is always possible to make changes that make learning much easier for children. Many more ideas are contained in the 'Further reading and resources' section.

If people involved in education can start to make conditions in school more supportive of children's language learning, it will become much easier to move towards a stronger approach as soon as conditions and resources improve. Building up local, national and international momentum towards child-friendly school language will enable millions of children to realise their rights – to an education that they can understand.

1 What's the problem with language in education?

Nearly 7,000 languages are spoken in the world today. It's the norm for several different linguistic groups to live in the same country. However, a country's linguistic diversity is rarely reflected in its school system. Approximately 221 million school-aged children are estimated to be speakers of local languages – languages that are used in communities and families, but are not recognised in schools or official settings.[1]

Many countries use one or more languages in school that are not local languages. The language of education is normally the official national language, or a foreign language considered important for people to learn. Some governments stipulate that one or more of these languages must be used in school. Others (such as South Africa and India) have policies stating that primary schools should use the languages spoken by children at home – often called their mother tongue or first language. However, even in these countries, in practice, many government or private schools still use official or foreign languages for teaching, including at early grades. Given the figures above, it is likely that large numbers of children will not know the school language when they start their education.

Why do educators use languages in school that children don't know?

The linguistic diversity of many countries can make educators or policy-makers feel it's simpler to have one or, at most, two main languages of education. It can seem easier to have a set of textbooks in one language, rather than in 20 or 300; it can seem desirable to have one language for teacher training and training materials.

In countries where many people live in rural areas without access to national or foreign languages, it seems to be a good idea to make these languages accessible to children through the school system. People often believe that young children are good at picking up language, and that children need to be surrounded by a language for a long time if they are to succeed in learning it. Therefore, it seems logical to fill the school environment with the language that children need to learn, from as early an age as possible – particularly if school is the only place where they will have access to that language. As the main activity of school is teaching the curriculum, it appears to make sense to ask teachers to do all their teaching in the desired language.

There can also be a powerful motivation for governments to promote one language across the nation, as a means of transmitting a shared identity. This may be the case in countries with diverse populations that may only recently have become unified. It can be equally important to give children access to international languages such as English, either for communicating with other linguistic groups in the country, or for improving the country's chance of competing in international markets. For all these reasons, many parents see that children need national or international languages to succeed in life.

Why do these decisions cause problems for children?

The need for child-centred education

All the above ideas make sense when education is seen from an adult's point of view. However, research and experience in education over the last century has pointed to a key principle – that education has a much better chance of success when it is built around how children learn and develop – mentally, physically, and socially.

Many children do well in education, even where it isn't 'child-centred' in this way; but these are often children who have a range of other supports for learning in their lives. They may have literate parents, who can provide plenty of reading materials, TV and radio, uninterrupted study time, comfortable living conditions, and so on. In many countries, the children still struggling with education are those affected by factors such as poverty, hunger, poor health, living in rural areas or far from schools, and with parents who missed out on education themselves.[2]

For these children, having a child-centred and child-friendly education is recognised as extremely important in ensuring that they succeed in school.[3] Children find it easiest to learn new concepts and information based on what is already familiar to them, working from simple to more complex knowledge.[4] Therefore, education needs to be delivered in a way that enables children to link new knowledge to familiar things, using language that they already know.

When is it a problem for school language to be different from children's home language?

- when a child speaks only their mother tongue at home with their immediate family and friends
- when parents have never had the opportunity to go to school and are not literate themselves, either in the mother tongue or in the second language
- when children's first language is an oral and not a written language, and there are no written materials in that language.

An example from Bangladesh

Barun is eight years old and is in his third year of primary school in Khagrachari district, Bangladesh. He is from the Tripura indigenous community, whose language is Kokborok. From the beginning of his schooling, Barun did not understand lessons or books because he did not speak or understand the national language of instruction, Bengali. He had only spoken Kokborok at home, and had no previous exposure to Bengali. His teacher could not speak to him in his language or understand him.

After three years of schooling, Barun still does not understand or speak Bengali well. If Barun doesn't

understand the teacher, he says he doesn't know the answer. This often leads to the teacher punishing him by pulling his ear. Barun says, "I will go to school regularly and enjoy my classes in school if the teacher teaches me in Kokborok."[6]

What do children say about school language?

In many countries, children tell Save the Children staff and partners that they are frightened when they go to school and do not understand what the teacher is saying to them. Some children are turned away from school by teachers if they do not know the school language. Others say they are bored and confused at school.[5]

School language is causing drop-out

Having an unfamiliar language of instruction has a strong negative effect on children's school attendance and achievement. Research conducted for UNESCO in 2008 found that in 26 countries, the language of instruction was linked to more than 50% of school drop-out among children who didn't speak the school language.[7] The World Bank backs this up, estimating that half of the 75 million primary school-aged children who are out of school are affected by not speaking the language used in school.[8]

Data from Africa, where many countries use an unfamiliar school language from Grade 1 or from Grades 3–4, suggest that language is linked to poor achievement. Assessments from the Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality (SACMEQ II) in 2000 to 2002 showed that:

- only 44% of learners in 14 countries achieve even a minimal level of literacy by Grade 6
- only 14.6% of learners achieve the national standard for literacy by Grade 6.[9]

Figure 1 gives provincial-level scores from South Africa's 2005 Grade 6 Systemic Evaluation tests in maths, language and science. It shows the dramatic gap between children who learn in the same language as they speak at home, and children who do not use the language of school at home.

Figure 1: Test scores from South Africa, 2005

(Alidou et al, 2006)

ANNA KARI
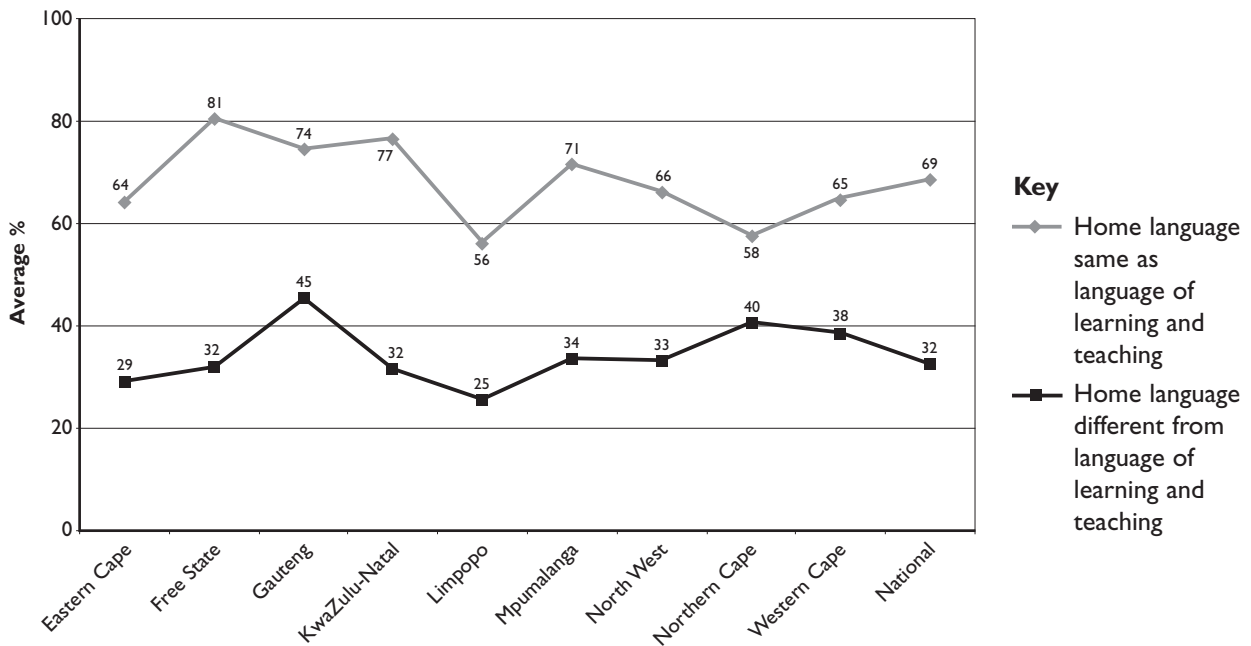
A mother-tongue class in the Dinka language, Southern Sudan.

According to Professor Kathleen Heugh, these studies show:
- the language models used in Africa fail the majority of students
- early change to English/French/Portuguese/ Spanish medium of school instruction is a primary cause of failure and drop-out rate.[10]

Data from Asia bear this out. In Vietnam, minority ethnic children who speak minority languages at home are far behind in examination achievement compared with children who speak Vietnamese, the language of education.[11] In Bangladesh's Chittagong Hill Tracts, where indigenous people do not speak Bangla – the language of instruction –

the primary school drop-out rate is 60%, twice the national average.[12]

It's clear from this evidence that education systems that use language unfamiliar to children in school, and simply hope that children will pick up that language, are failing.

It's possible, however, to take a child-friendly approach to language that ensures children enjoy and understand their education, and learn national or foreign languages successfully. Knowledge of how such approaches can work in practice is growing all the time; sections 3 and 4 of this guide offer advice for good practice based on this experience.

2 What's the role of language in children's learning and development?

Children become thinkers and learners through their first language

Language is a set of signs, each of which expresses and contains an idea. The language that surrounds children from birth drives their learning and development. This starts with a baby responding to the language spoken around them. By the time a child starts primary school, he or she has had about five years of learning their first language, through being constantly surrounded by it in the home and community. The process of learning to think and interact through the first language works best when it involves stimulation from adults and other children in the home, and continues with input from teachers at school.[13] This gives children a strong foundation of both concrete and abstract ideas.

Large-scale research conducted from the 1960s onwards has demonstrated that it takes children about 12 years from birth to fully learn their 'mother tongue' or 'first language'.[14] This is longer than was previously thought.

If a child uses two languages continuously at home from birth, they may become truly bilingual. Both languages are their 'mother tongue' – they have two first languages. However, in Save the Children's experience, large numbers of poor, rural children in multilingual societies are unlikely to be in this situation, as both parents tend to be from the same or similar language groups, and use one main language at home.

Learning to read

Literacy is the process of linking an idea associated with spoken first language to written text (for a deaf child, signed language is the equivalent of spoken language). A child starts to become literate through linking the idea behind a spoken word with the visual form of that word in writing.

Learning other languages

At around age 12, after children have 'learned their first language', they find it a great deal easier to learn and use other languages. This is because they have enough knowledge of concrete and abstract ideas to work out for themselves the meaning and use of much new language.[15]

Before that 12-year point of having developed the foundation of language and thinking, children are not as good at learning other language skills (second language) as adults or older children.[16]

This does not mean that young children cannot learn second languages. However, it must be recognised that they are likely to need more support than adults would: they will not just 'pick up' the second language without careful help.

What happens if children can't use their first language in education?

- If a child doesn't fully learn new ideas and words in their first language, they will not be able to transfer these ideas to a new language.
- If a child doesn't learn about abstract or academic concepts in their first language, they will find it almost impossible to understand or use second-language words that relate to those concepts.
- Learning to read and write in an unfamiliar language works against literacy. When a child doesn't already know the idea expressed by a word, learning to write or say the word is not literacy – it's simply repetition.
- Languages develop through use. If children's first language is not used for education, the child's community language will never become fully developed for more abstract and academic use.

How much second language does a child need to know to start learning in that language?

Research across several countries has shown that it takes both children and adults at least five years of learning a second language to be able to understand an academic lesson in that language.[17] To understand the whole curriculum in a second language, particularly from upper primary level, children will need to have learned the language for between six and eight years. If teachers are not well trained, and if second language materials are not in good supply, the process is estimated to take at least two to three years longer.[18]

What strategies for language and education have been tried in the past?

There have been several different approaches for children who don't speak official languages. One is to assume that children will pick up the school language, and to deliver education as if children understood the school language. This is termed 'submersion'.[19] Sometimes this approach uses both a national and a foreign language for instruction from the start of school, as in the Philippines.

Another strategy has been called 'immersion'. This involves giving children structured support to learn a second language, and using it to deliver all or most of the curriculum.

In some Western settings an approach called 'two-way bilingual education' has been used. Children spend several years learning the curriculum in their first language, with constant support to learn the second language. As children move through secondary education, they progress to learning the curriculum in the official school language for approximately half the time. However, about half of their school instruction remains in their first language.

Several countries, particularly in Africa, have tried an approach known as 'early exit bilingual education'. This starts preschool or primary education in the child's first language, and transfers to education in the second language after two or three years. It usually involves introducing the second language to the child before the change-over.

What's the evidence for or against these approaches?

Submersion

Submersion is not based on any recognised education method. There is no credible research from any country that shows children doing well with a submersion approach. Children who don't have constant access to the language of school in their daily lives have been shown to do particularly badly with submersion.[20]

Immersion

Some research indicating that the curriculum can be successfully delivered through 'immersion' came from Western countries, such as Canada, in the 1980s. The children were immigrants who, while they spoke a different first language, were

surrounded by the language of school constantly. They were living in mainly urban areas, with constant access to TV and radio in the national language, and with friends and schoolmates who spoke the national language as their mother tongue.[21] Another key feature was that the children received specific support to learn the second language, alongside continuous support to maintain and develop their first language.

Since then, wider-ranging research from various countries has been published that shows that second-language immersion, even with support for first language, is far less successful than first-language instruction. A particularly strong research study from the USA was published in 1997. In this ten-year study, produced by Wayne Thomas and Virginia Collier, a large number of education schemes for children who did not have English as their first language were compared. Where these children were taught in the same way as native speakers of English, they did much worse in achievement tests than the average national performance of native speakers. Where children got special support to learn English but learned most of the curriculum in English, they did slightly better, but did not perform as well as native English speakers.

Two-way bilingual education

The children who performed best in the Thomas and Collier study were in two-way bilingual education. These children significantly outperformed average English native speakers, in English as well as in other subjects.[22] Although these children were surrounded by English in their daily lives, the language they used at home was the most effective language for them to learn in.

Thuy (right), 5, and Le, 6, from Dien Bien province, Vietnam. Save the Children has introduced bilingual teaching at their preschool, so children learn both in their local language – H'mong – as well as the national language of Vietnamese.

Early exit bilingual education

In 2005 a major study of school language in 14 African countries looked at what was happening to children who transferred from first-language instruction to second-language instruction after two to four years. It found that even children who had been learning the second language as a subject for three or four years dropped down to low levels of performance within one or two years.[23]

This is usually because the primary school curriculum requires children to know a great deal of language, especially by the time they get to year 4. Kathleen Heugh describes how, in many parts of Africa, most children manage to learn only about 500–600 words in the second language by the end of year 3. Active knowledge of about 5,000–7,000 words is needed for a child to be able to understand the whole curriculum from year 4 of school.[24]

Heugh's research shows that no early-exit model of moving quickly from first-language instruction to second-language instruction has succeeded in Africa.[25]

Implications of the research evidence for education

- Children need to learn at school through their first language until the age of 12.
- Schools need to know which language children speak at home, and should plan to bring this language into education to the greatest extent possible.
- Children should learn to read and write in their first language. The skills of reading and writing only have to be learned once. As children learn the vocabulary and structure of a new language, they will easily transfer these skills, and learn to read and write in the new language quickly.

- It's possible to introduce second-language skills to children successfully from early stages of school.
- If it's important for schools to teach children a national or a foreign language, educators need to plan for the language to be taught in a structured way.
- Teachers must be supported and trained to teach the second language to children.
- The pace of second-language teaching will need to be slow at first. New language should only be introduced after children have learned the related content in their first language.
- Children should learn second language from the beginning of school until at least grade 6, before they can cope with the curriculum delivered in that language.[26] In situations where conditions for education are difficult and resources are limited, it is more likely that children will need to learn the second language until grade 9 before it is used for instruction.
- Because learners create meaning by linking ideas and language, an abrupt change of school language will disrupt learning. Changing the school language should always involve a gradual, structured transition period.

All these points are very important for the education of children who live in communities that speak mainly one local language, and do not have access to second-language materials and media. They become vital where children also face other difficulties in education, such as poverty, discrimination, living in rural areas or having illiterate parents.

3 Working towards better school language use in multilingual countries

Positive changes are already happening in several countries. Several states in India are piloting innovative multilingual programmes in their extremely diverse language situation. Bolivia, Guatemala and Peru have introduced bilingual education and intercultural education. This prepares students for living in a multicultural society, and includes first-language instruction with a focus on understanding one's own culture and behaviours, respect for cultural diversity, and valuing others' identity. Papua New Guinea has set up community schools that use local languages in learning and literacy for about 450 of its 820 local languages, extending to more and more languages.[27] This involves linguists working with communities to create writing systems for local languages.

An approach called 'mother-tongue-based multilingual education' (MTBMLE) is seen as one of the most practical approaches to dealing with the need for multiple languages in education in the South. Several education authorities and NGOs have set up MTBMLE programmes. There is a great deal of information available on how such programmes have been set up (see the Further reading and resources section).

What are mother-tongue-based multilingual education programmes?

MTBMLE makes the child's language, culture and context the foundation of learning. It starts by using the child's language throughout school, and gradually introduces a second or even a third language as the child progresses through education. The child's first language ideally remains the key language of education throughout, but in any case the second language does not become the main language of instruction for at least five years.

How to develop a mother-tongue-based multilingual education programme[28]

Setting up a good quality MTBMLE programme involves:
- making sure that a local language has a written form. This may require the development of new writing systems through participatory approaches with communities and linguists
- raising awareness among teachers of the importance of children's home language in education, and promoting the delivery of the curriculum through children's home language
- working with teachers to adapt national curriculum plans and materials so that the curriculum can be delivered through local language, using concepts familiar to children
- training teachers in the principles of second-language learning, and introducing additional second-language learning elements into the curriculum
- setting up or supporting school–community groups to monitor language issues, raise awareness of the value of MTBMLE, mobilise the community to bring more culture and language into schooling, and encourage better communication and exchange between parents, teachers and children
- monitoring children's educational achievement to make sure positive results are being generated.
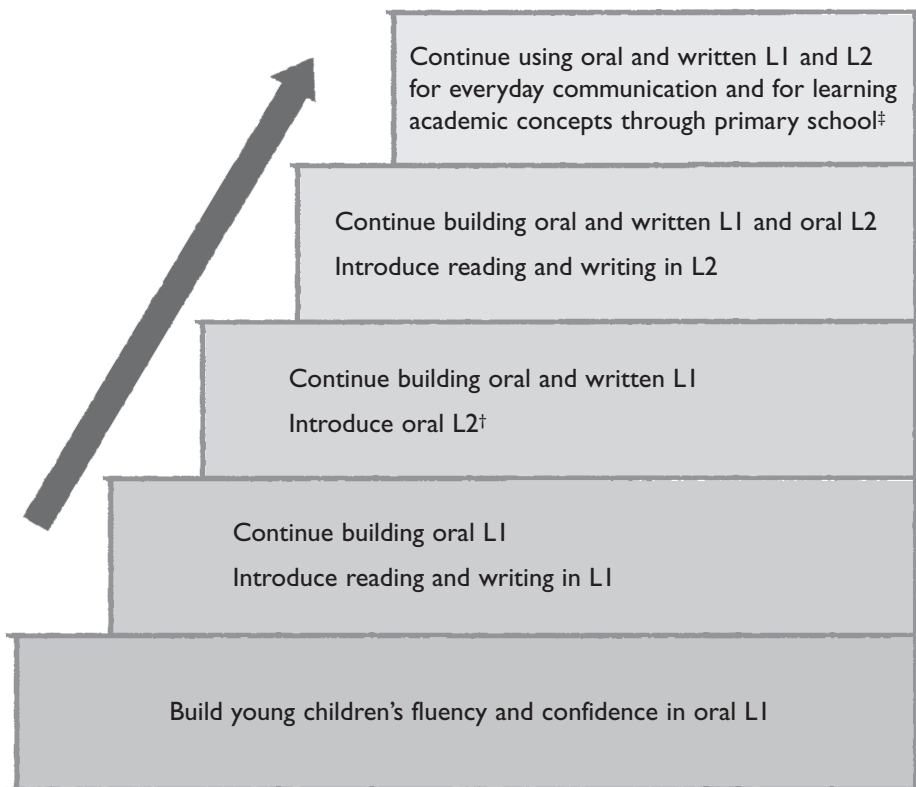
How is teaching done in a MTBMLE programme?[29]

- Build teachers' capacity to use interactive teaching methods in teaching both first language (L1) and the official school language (L2).
- Provide plenty of meaningful oral and written activities, to build children's confidence in themselves as learners.
- Allow time for students to develop competence, confidence and creativity in oral and written L1, before moving to academic language.
- Give a full year to oral and written L1, before introducing L2.
- Introduce oral L2, focusing on 'everyday language'.
- Begin building students' vocabulary in academic L2, and continue doing that throughout primary school.
- Continue to focus on building competence, confidence and creativity in oral L1 and L2, while students are becoming familiar with written L2.

- Teach the L2 as a *subject* for at least one year before teachers begin using it, with the L1 as the language of instruction.
- Continue to build competence, confidence and creativity in both/all languages throughout primary school (while supporting academic development in both).
- Continue using the children's L1, alongside the official school language, in the classroom up to and including grade 6.
- Once the official school language is used as the main language of instruction, continue to use the L1 to introduce and explain new concepts.

Another benefit of good-quality MTBMLE is much more active involvement of parents and communities in the life of the school. The 2006 ADEA study, by Alidou et al, showed that mother-tongue education has improved communication and interactions in the classroom, and the integration of African cultures and indigenous knowledge systems into formal school curricula.[30]

Figure 2: Five general phases of strong MTBMLE programmes using two languages[*]

Continue using oral and written L1 and L2 for everyday communication and for learning academic concepts through primary school[‡]

Continue building oral and written L1 and oral L2
Introduce reading and writing in L2

Continue building oral and written L1
Introduce oral L2[†]

Continue building oral L1
Introduce reading and writing in L1

Build young children's fluency and confidence in oral L1

Notes

[*] Some researchers (e.g., Jim Cummins, 2001) point out that oral L2 can be introduced early in the programme, as long as first language (L1) is used, together with the second language (L2), for an extended period of time – ie, throughout primary school.

[†] In some cases, it is possible to introduce the L2 earlier, as long as the children can continue using the L1 as one of the languages of learning throughout primary school.

[‡] If appropriate, a third language can be introduced in the same way as the second language, towards the upper grades of primary education.

Source: Susan Malone, 2005

Some of the evidence supporting mother-tongue-based multilingual education approaches

In Mali, children in bilingual education were found to be five times less likely to repeat the year, and more than three times less likely to drop out of school. End-of-primary pass rates between 1994 and 2000 for children who transitioned gradually from a local language to French were, on average, 32% higher than for children in French-only programmes.

In Guatemala, with long-term bilingual and intercultural education, grade repetition is about half that in traditional schools, while drop-out rates are about 25% lower.[31]

A ten-year project in Lubuagan, the Philippines, is showing that children in schools using MTBMLE are dramatically out-performing children in nearby schools who have to learn in Filipino and English (neither of which they use at home). The MTBMLE children are scoring far higher in all key school subjects, including mathematics, Filipino and English.[32]

What should managers and leaders do to make learning easier?

Even if it is not possible to develop a full mother-tongue-based multilingual approach, it will help a great deal if people involved with education come together and try out more child-friendly ways of using language in school.

Getting agreement to start a different approach

Open up discussions about school language with colleagues, teachers, government officials and anyone else involved in education that you have contact with. Encourage school clusters or teachers' groups to talk about what they see happening in school related to language. The questions at the end of the Introduction to this guide may be helpful in this.

Take steps to make education authorities aware of the languages children in different areas of the country speak as their first language. This information can be gained through language surveys, if necessary.

Local education authorities should develop a plan to respond to this language situation, based on the principles above. Invite nearby school supervisors, trainers and other local officials to take part in training, discussions and action planning around school language.

If a minority of children do not speak the language of school at home, try to negotiate lower or slightly delayed learning targets for these children in the early years of primary school. This will allow more time for strengthening their first language and introducing the second language, which should lead to much better performance later.

Encourage schools to create a record of children's language levels in first and second languages, and of their general attendance and attainment levels. This can be referred back to as a baseline when you want to see whether introducing a new approach has improved children's learning.[33]

Working with community members

If there are school management committees, ask them to consider the language challenges that children face, and ask them to make a plan to help children use more of their first language in school.

Find members of the community who speak both languages and are fluent in children's home language. Bring one of these people into each class for each language group. They should stimulate conversation – listening, reading and writing among children in their home language. Such teaching assistants can also bring in local stories, traditions and music from the community, and can work in partnership with the teacher to help children understand the second language.

Encourage people to set up a programme of regular community learning sessions, where adults, older children and younger children get together to talk, tell stories, play games, make music, communicate and learn. These should have a strong focus on speaking, listening, thinking, reading and writing in the local language.

Reading and writing

Materials will be required to help children learn to read and write in their first language. Ask parents and the community to produce as much writing as possible in the local language or languages – for example, stories, maths and science information – and get teachers to collect and use it.

Encourage younger children to start writing in their local language wherever possible, and collect their work to use in their classes and in other classes.

Find out what published materials are available in local languages. Sometimes other districts or even countries in the region will have reading materials in local languages that can be used, either directly in lessons or as supportive reading materials for children.

Make sure that second-language reading materials are also made available to the greatest extent possible, on topics that will be familiar to children.

Moving from one language environment to another

If children will have to move from a first-language learning environment to a new school or grade that uses an unfamiliar language, make sure that a transition plan is worked out by teachers. This should gradually familiarise children with some of the second language that they will need in order to cope in the new language environment. Make sure that any new ideas and terms are introduced and practised first in the child's first language.

Contact the new teachers, and explain what the children's language situation is. Tell the teachers, realistically, how much second language the children are confident in using. Ask these teachers to encourage children to use as much of their first language as possible in school, and at first to use only as much second language as the children already know.

What changes should happen?

By making changes like this you will start to remove some of the biggest barriers to children's learning and success. Unless you are able to run a full mother-tongue-based bilingual or multilingual approach, you will not necessarily see dramatic changes in learning outcomes straight away.

However, you should see improvements in children's attendance. You should see happier children and teachers. You should see larger numbers of children more alert and confident in lessons. You should start to see children talking more in school – and this is a good thing! Parents should also be able to get more involved in their children's education and help their children with schoolwork.

4   Child-friendly teaching

Key ideas about children, language and school

Education needs to enable children to build on what they know and link ideas together. If children are faced with an unfamiliar language on entering school, it is extremely difficult for them to make those links. Learning new ideas and new language separately, in small steps, is easier than trying to learn a new concept in an unknown language – which is almost impossible.

In many schools, the language of school is used as if it were the children's first language. Moving away from this is the first step towards better learning for children.

Language is built up through constant and gradual use. Many children are not given the opportunities they need to use and practise either first or second language actively at school. Why is this? In everyday life, languages link to each other. When a child plays with friends from a different language group, the activities they do and the body language used will create understanding, which the child can link to the words used by the others, and he or she can then start using those words.

But in many schools, children are in a classroom separate from the outside world and are faced with a teacher who mainly speaks, giving little clue as to what the unfamiliar words mean. This situation is worse when teachers themselves are not confident in the language of school. They may not want children to ask them questions, and may not want

to talk about the meaning of texts or ideas in the second language, as they may feel that their lack of knowledge may be shown.

Encouraging children to talk much more in school – initially in their first language and later on in a second language – is a particularly important step to better learning.

Easy and effective changes teachers can make

1. Find out what language children are most familiar with

Teachers should try to find out what language every child in their class is most familiar with. They should think about this when they are arranging lessons and planning the work of the school.

2. Find out children's real levels of second language

Develop simple testing procedures for second-language skills, to record children's level of second-language comprehension and use. Notice how children respond to teachers' requests, commands and questions in both their first language and the school language. Later on, listen carefully to children's fluency in reading and speaking both languages. Check the children's understanding in a variety of ways and using different activities, such as giving commands, asking questions and giving instructions for playing games.

3. Plan to bring children's culture into the school as much as possible

Valuing and using children's home language and culture in school is important for improving children's confidence and ease of learning. This should include the use of traditional stories, images, natural and practical knowledge, and music.

4. Use children's first language much more in school:

a) for communication and understanding

If teachers speak children's first language, they should use it as much as possible throughout the school day, for conversations, instructions, and introducing curriculum content. (Teachers can ask some questions in the second language, but only if they are doing this to help children practise this language, not to check their understanding of lesson content.)

Where children use only one language in their lives outside school, try not to switch rapidly back and forth between languages all the time. Minority ethnic children interviewed by Save the Children in Vietnam have told us that they find this confusing.[34]

b) to stimulate children's development of their first language

Children should be encouraged to generate as much first language as possible throughout school. Ask children questions that make them provide detailed information in sentences, or express opinions and complex thoughts – rather than only asking questions requiring a one-word answer. Encourage children to ask each other for detailed information and for opinions and experiences.[35]

Ask children to tell each other about things they are studying, and things and people in their lives. Ask children to describe familiar pictures and items in detail, and to talk about their opinions, experiences and feelings about them. This will help children develop a better range of vocabulary, language structure and ideas, which will mean they will pick up second language relating to those ideas more effectively, and will be stronger learners.[36]

5. Use non-verbal ways of communicating meaning

Freqently using strong facial expressions, big movements and gestures, and familiar objects, will help children decode meaning from second language.

Encouraging teachers to do more

If there are school clusters or teachers' groups, ask them to talk about the issues around language. Get them to list and discuss the problems children have with understanding and using school language, and ask them to come up with ideas for better practice, based on the principles in this guide.

Teachers should make lesson plans and deliver these in the local language, listing clear learning objectives for each section of their classes. Then add one or two small segments to each lesson that are focused on teaching and practising the second language – not on delivering other curriculum content. These second-language segments should introduce and practise small amounts of the second language related to the lesson just covered.

Make sure that teachers are given time to work together to produce these new lesson plans, and that they are given a lot of encouragement and positive feedback from their superiors. Where you see teachers using a lot of local language and gradually introducing small amounts of second language, praise them openly.

Combining first- and second-language teaching

When a child starts to use a language in school that they don't know well, the language must be introduced gradually over a long period. This period should introduce small amounts of new language, using a familiar context in an environment where children feel comfortable to practise and make mistakes, without fear of reprisals. It is helpful to get children to use second-language structures as well as vocabulary.

When teachers communicate with children, they should only use language that the child is sure to understand – this will build the child's confidence in using that language. When giving instructions and asking for responses, use the same first and second language simply and repeatedly.

When using texts in a language that children don't use at home, first explain the story or meaning in children's first language. Then get children familiar with the main new vocabulary in the text (this means that if children don't know much second language, use very simple, short texts, or use only short, simple extracts). After reading/using the text, ask children plenty of questions to check that they understand its meaning. Each text should contain only small amounts of new vocabulary.

How teachers can develop language for everyday communication and for learning

Learners should gain competence and confidence in using both first and second languages for everyday communication (relating to familiar topics), and for learning academic subjects in school. Programmes that teach second language only as a subject, and then switch to using this language as the language of instruction, can run into problems because the children have not been prepared for using that language specifically for academic learning. If children are facing a transfer to instruction in second language at higher grades, it will help to build their ability to handle increasingly abstract learning tasks in the second language, as described below.

Everyday language	Academic language
• Topics and texts that are about things we know about, so we understand the context and can use that to help us understand what we read or say • Listen to and talk about things we have done or things we will do • Listen to and talk about things we think about in our daily lives	• Listen to and talk about things that are new or unfamiliar to us • Listen to and talk about abstract concepts (math, science) • Analyse ideas, evaluate ideas, build a knowledge and language 'bank'

(Taken from Susan Malone, 'Planning community-based education programs in minority language communities', unpublished resource manual for mother-tongue speakers of minority languages, 2005)

Taking a multilingual, multicultural approach to maths competencies

It is important to adapt teaching ideas from the standard curriculum into a multilingual approach. This chart shows how this can be done, using mathematics as an example. The main curriculum idea is divided into two learning outcomes or targets: one for content, and the other for second-language learning. Linked activities are then planned for both outcomes.

Curriculum competency	1. conceptual learning outcome 2. second language learning outcome	Indicator of success	Suggested activities
Understand more and less	1. Understand the quantitative difference between more and less 2. Learn the L2 terms to describe the difference	Children compare groups of items that are unequal in quantity and describe the difference in their first language (focus on understanding the concept) Children use the second language terms to describe 'more and less' correctly (focus on learning the second language relating to the concept)	Group familiar objects (stones or twigs or pieces of fruit) in two piles with more of the object in one pile. Children describe the difference in their first language When children have clearly understood the concept in first language, introduce and demonstrate second-language terms for comparing more with less. Add the new terms to a 'Math word bank'

Source: Susan Malone, 'Planning community-based education programs in minority language communities', unpublished resource manual for mother-tongue speakers of minority languages, 2005

Improving maths teaching in Chinese-language Uighur schools, Xinjiang, China

"Through discussions with education officials on language acquisition and classroom observations, we showed that [Uighur] children did not learn new maths concepts in Mandarin very easily, as they had difficulties understanding the language and understanding the concept. Together with a group of bilingual minority teachers, we developed 'concept' booklets so that maths teachers could teach new concepts in mother tongue first, and then do other activities using specific words and phrases translated into Mandarin. Not only has this initiative enabled the linking of mother tongue to Mandarin, but it has also forced teachers to focus on specific structures to teach in Mandarin, reducing the amount of language they use, and bringing their language level down closer to that of the children."

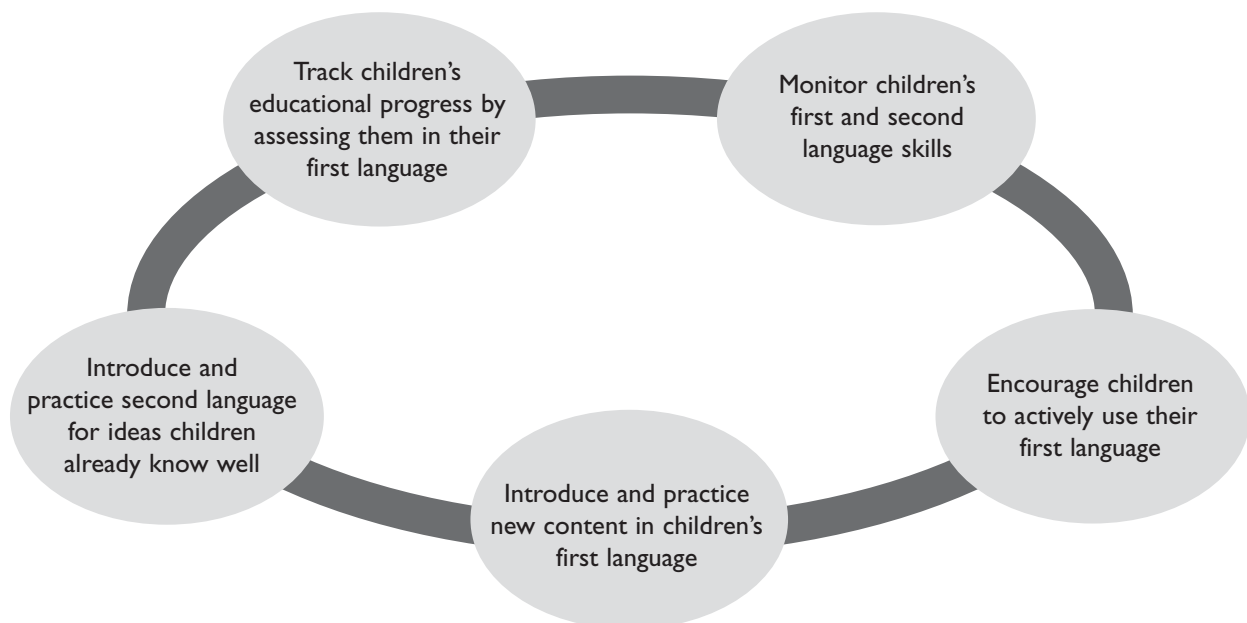David Strawbridge, Save the Children education adviser[37]

A picture drawn by a young child at a preschool in Dien Bien province, Vietnam. Children at this preschool are from the Thai ethnic minority in Vietnam. Save the Children has introduced bilingual education at the preschool, so children learn in both Thai and Vietnamese.

It's important to link key areas of the curriculum to the ways in which similar ideas are used in the child's community. Using communities' language and concepts for counting, proportions, relations and measuring, means that when children are introduced to maths concepts, they find them more familiar and easier to understand. The same principles apply to science, history and other subjects. Find out from children and adults what they do and say about these issues, and use these as the starting point to introduce related academic ideas. For example, bringing in items made by children's parents, and asking children to tell others and the teacher about how they are made and what they are used for, is a good starting point for various science, maths, history or social studies topics.

Figure 3: Strengthening language in the teaching cycle

- Track children's educational progress by assessing them in their first language
- Monitor children's first and second language skills
- Encourage children to actively use their first language
- Introduce and practice new content in children's first language
- Introduce and practice second language for ideas children already know well

Each of these strategies will help children's experience of education. Used together, they can lead to big improvements.

5 Some challenges to multilingual education and how you can overcome them

In some places it is seen as very difficult to manage schools according to the best language approach, because of several complex factors. However, some small steps can be taken, even in the most challenging conditions. These initial changes will make life easier for children. They can be added to gradually, establishing the foundations for a much more successful approach in the future. This section offers a range of such strategies, in response to challenges that are often raised.

> "It's important politically or economically for children to learn a specific language. It is difficult to ask our leaders to reduce the amount of that language in school."

Make opportunities to discuss children's struggles with school language at different levels among educators, officials and leaders – particularly where there are discussions about improving the quality of education or improving literacy. Ask whether problems with children's achievement might be caused by children not understanding their lessons.

Check whether the constitution or any policies or laws guarantee the right to use and develop local or minority languages. If so, let officials, teachers and parents know.

Make clear to educators, local government and policy-makers that using more of children's first language in school is likely to lead to more effective learning – including the learning of national or foreign languages. Argue that it is better to start using what is known from international evidence, rather than to continue wasting time and resources on an approach that is failing.

In political terms, it could be useful to mention that denying people the right to use and develop their languages can lead to instability and conflict. Examples can be found in Bangladesh, the Baltic states, and Spain.[38] Where governments have adopted mother-tongue-based multilingual approaches in Latin America, the disadvantage and low achievement experienced by minority groups appears to be reducing.[39]

Request assistance from international partners and donors to build capacity in mother-tongue-based multilingual education, especially teacher training. This will show that there is demand for a better approach.

Education officials should consider lower targets for the amount of second language that children are expected to use in early grades of education – and high targets for the amount of home language that children are asked to use.

> **"Parents want their children to learn national or international languages, so they prefer instruction in second language."**

Most parents also want their children to maintain and develop their home language and culture – but they sometimes assume that the only option for getting an education and a good career is for their child to learn in the main language – particularly when educators only offer them *either* first-language education *or* second-language education.

Make sure school principals, teachers and officials understand what works best for children. Advise them to explain to parents that children *will* be able to learn second and even third languages, and learn them better, if they start by using their first language in school for several years. Emphasise that this will also mean parents can help their children with study.

Get parents and other community members together to discuss how to make school work better for children. Discuss language issues with them and share good practice principles. Suggest that a new approach based on these will work better.

If you are proposing a change to a mother-tongue based multilingual approach, explain to parents that children should do better in school and, by the time they leave school, should have good skills in second language. Ask parents and teachers to support this approach for at least two years, and see how their children are doing in school.

> **"We don't have any teachers who can speak local languages."**

Some education authorities have arranged classes for teachers to learn local languages so that they can communicate more easily with children. In other settings teachers have been encouraged to learn local languages from the communities in which they work.

Investigate ways to recruit and train more teachers who speak (and ideally write) local languages well, and who also speak and write the main national or foreign language.

Training local-language speakers to become teachers

Because speakers of local or minority languages often don't do well in school due to an unfriendly language of instruction, they don't make it through higher education and thus cannot qualify as teachers. To change this situation it will be necessary to make it easier for local-language speakers to become teachers, even if they do not initially have the level of education required. People who have had primary or secondary education can be selected as community teachers or facilitators and given short but frequent teacher training sessions in their local areas. They can quickly start teaching and are given ongoing support and mentoring by more experienced teachers. Gradually they should build up enough training and experience to qualify and be paid as full teachers. In Vietnam 'bilingual teaching assistants' are being recruited from some minority ethnic communities, and are working in partnership with qualified teachers to plan and deliver mother-tongue-based bilingual education.

> **"Primary school teachers don't know how to teach national or foreign language as a second language."**

In any setting where teachers are receiving training, try to build up in-service training and materials for primary school teachers on how children learn in relation to language; how to develop children's use of their home language; and how to introduce second language gradually.

Teachers should create and share lesson plans with each other. These lesson plans should be divided into teaching new ideas in children's home language, and introducing small components of second language.

Planning lessons and using materials to help children learn a second language in a gradual, structured way should help teachers improve their own second-language skills.

Teacher training should always be done in the home language of the teachers themselves, so that it is as easy as possible for teachers to understand.

At later levels of education, it would be useful to arrange for specialist second-language teachers to teach the second language in separate subject lessons.

> **"Teachers have to deliver the national curriculum in a very detailed way. Teachers might lose their jobs or damage their career prospects by using a multilingual approach."**

Often teachers are allowed to make changes in the way they deliver a certain proportion of the curriculum. Encourage them to use this flexibility to teach parts of their lessons in local language.

Teachers or other stakeholders can ask education managers to give some teachers permission to try a more flexible approach. If you can record positive changes as a result of making such changes, it will become easier to continue and expand the approach.

Showing support and recognition for teachers who use local languages for teaching will help.

KALPESH LATHIGRA

A primary school class in Anhui province, China. Save the Children supports inclusive education for children from minority ethnic groups.

> **❝Teachers where I work have very little access to training and resources. Many of them have low levels of education.❞**

No matter how constrained or difficult the situation for teachers, it's still important to let teachers know that they will be helping their students if they use a lot of local language in the classroom – and the more they can encourage children to talk, read and write in their home language, the better the children will be able to learn.

Arrange as much regular time as possible for teachers to spend time talking to each other about language issues and other issues affecting children, and trying out new ideas.

Encourage teachers to tell each other what they already do to help children understand better in lessons. This helps teachers feel more positive about the situation, and they can then be encouraged to come up with more ideas to help children learn and communicate, step by step.[39]

Wherever teacher training is taking place in areas where children speak a different language at home from that used in school, it should have a strong focus on language – particularly when looking at literacy.

> **❝Many of the languages that children use at home don't have a written form; there are no textbooks in these languages.❞**

Identify local people who can speak, read and write both local and official languages – or who are literate in the official language, and can start teaching children to read and write in the local language. Ask these people to develop a set of

'listening stories' in children's home language that are interesting and meaningful to children and that are about people, places and activities from their own culture. The stories can be about one page long – taking about four to five minutes to read.[40]

If there is no writing system or alphabet for communities to use, find out whether there used to be one and, if so, encourage its revival. In the short term, give extra time to strengthening children's pre-literacy skills – making marks on paper, drawing, holding writing implements. Make sure that children are used to hearing, talking about and retelling stories in their home language, and used to describing and discussing their lives. Having strong skills in these areas will help children cope with the difficult task of learning to read in an unfamiliar language.

If there is no immediate alternative to introducing literacy to children in an unfamiliar language, it is even more important to make sure that the concept behind the written text is taught and reinforced in the child's first language. The written text should then be carefully introduced, linked to the child's understanding of the concept. Plan extra time to do this.

> **❝The languages that children use at home are not well-developed enough for education.❞**

The exclusion of local languages from education and other areas has prevented them from developing. This is then used to justify further neglect and exclusion. If children, parents and the wider community can be involved in using their language for education, they will find that the concepts necessary to lead into abstract, academic ideas are in fact contained in the language, and can be extended and adapted. This will result in the language developing more rapidly for academic use.[41]

"We have classes with children from several language groups."

More research is needed to find out what works well in such situations. However, continuing to use a language that most of the children do not speak will certainly not work.

A teacher faced with many languages in school should note down which children speak which language, and find out how many children in the same class speak each language.

Children from the same language community should be encouraged to work together within the classroom and at home. They should be encouraged to talk and use their language for learning and for understanding concepts.

Invite into the class one trusted and committed adult for each language group, to assist the children in understanding the lesson. These adults can manage learning and communication activities within each language group, helping children speak, understand, read and write more productively. Some people may do this on a voluntary basis. If such an approach is adopted on a larger scale and requires the adults to give a significant amount of their time, it may be important to consider payment. It is more cost-effective to spend a little more to promote the educational success of children, rather than spending time and money on teaching that will not lead to learning.

Consider a 'mother-tongue-based multigrade' approach. This brings together children from the same language group, but different age groups, in one class. Teachers give different levels of learning activities to the different age groups of children. The teacher conducts most of the lessons in children's first language, with structured introduction of the second language. Such an approach could be used for a part, rather than the whole, of the school day. It usually requires some training to ensure that teachers can deliver multigrade classes to a good standard.

Arrange for older children to support younger children from the same language group in school and in homework – as long as older children get enough time to develop their own studies.

Similarly, group children of the same first language in pairs, making sure that students who know less second language are paired with students who know more second language.

If a common language is used frequently in local communities to communicate between different language groups, test a range of young children's understanding and speaking in that language. If children show good skills in the language, it may be appropriate to use that language for school instruction. However, it will also be necessary to build in significant time at and outside school for children to develop the language they use at home.

"Our examination system uses the main national or foreign language."

If teachers are worried that they have to teach in the official language because public exams will be in that language, explain the evidence – children learning in their home language with exposure to second language do far better than children learning in unfamiliar language without their home language, even when they are tested in second language.[42]

If tests don't specify what language they have to be in, use the home language of children. Even when testing children's second language skills, give the main test instructions in children's home language.

If the teacher cannot speak the children's first language, a community adult can give test instructions and help the teacher understand how well the child performed.

Where tests must be in the official language, try doing two tests – one in the official language and one in children's home language. Encourage colleagues to look at the results – who does better in which tests? Your results may give you valuable evidence to use in convincing others about the value of mother-tongue-based approaches.

Emphasise to school inspectors and teachers that the best way to monitor how well children are doing in school is not to measure how many words they can copy down from the blackboard – but to measure how confidently they speak their own language, and the level of second language they can understand and use for tasks.

If children will unavoidably have to sit important tests in a second language, gradually introduce specific second language words that they will need to understand key exam instructions. Help children practise the most vital second language they need for the exam. This must be done after the ideas behind the second language are introduced in the first language. This may mean that children will need some extra lessons – these could be organised in the community. Also, try to record when a child is taking a test in a language that they do not use at home, so that their language situation is recognised.

"We don't have the money to try a different approach."

Arranging for teachers to use much more local language in schools will have a big positive effect as a first step, and does not cost anything in most settings.

Encouraging community members to come into school and share their culture and language with children also has very little cost associated with it.

In the longer term, constantly raise the need for more support, advice and resources for multilingual education with your colleagues and superiors.

Arrange meetings, telephone conversations or even email exchanges to share experience of what educators in other areas are trying out to strengthen children's first and second language.

Mother-tongue-based multilingual education saves money

Cost-benefit analysis of mother-tongue education systems has shown that they cost more to set up, but the costs of moving to mother-tongue approaches are not as high as might be expected. Additional costs of developing such approaches on a large scale include:
- scripting and developing local languages for academic use
- writing, developing and publishing textbooks and materials
- developing programmes to train teachers in mother-tongue-strengthening approaches
- better teaching of national or foreign language as a second language.

Moving to a fully multilingual school system is estimated to cost up to an additional 4% or 5% of a country's education budget. However, mother-tongue-based multilingual education leads to reduced repetition and drop-out rates, resulting in significant cost savings to the country's education budget. When fewer children have their education interrupted by repetition and dropout, it takes less time – and therefore costs less – to get the same number of children through basic education. Guatemala's savings have been estimated at more than US$5.6 million a year, owing to reduced repetition and drop-out rates resulting from mother-tongue-based bilingual education.

(Adapted from Heugh, in H Alidou et al, *Optimizing Learning and Education in Africa – the Language Factor. A stock-taking research on mother tongue and bilingual education in sub-Saharan Africa*, Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA), 2006, www.ADEAnet.org)

" We're in an emergency situation, with different groups of people moving into school. "

If children have been displaced by an emergency, they will face greater barriers to integrating into the school system of the host area if they do not speak the local language. Several approaches can help displaced children learn more in their own language, while having access to the surrounding language. These include:

- involving teachers from the displaced community in schooling – perhaps in partnership with 'host' community teachers
- making learning and literacy materials available in the displaced children's language
- encouraging schools to explore and celebrate diversity of culture, including language
- running supplementary language and literacy classes for displaced children and adults to boost their own language development and help them learn the host language.

Pushing inclusion of minority groups in surrounding schools too fast, or without community support, may endanger those involved. Special classes or materials for just one ethnic group can reinforce a community's perception of discrimination and segregation. If integrated classes are not possible, educational interventions should include activities that bring the targeted groups together within the community – for example, through sports, art or music.[43]

" What should happen when children move from non-formal or accelerated learning into mainstream school? "

In emergency or post-conflict situations, and in other situations where large numbers of children have not been able to attend school, accelerated learning approaches enable children who have missed education to catch up and reintegrate into mainstream school. Many such programmes are run by NGOs. Accelerated learning programmes (ALPs) often face challenges over the language of instruction to use.

An ALP should be in the language spoken by children at home. ALP teachers should speak the first language of children, as well as the main national or foreign language. However, it needs to be recognised that this language is often different from the language of formal school, and children are likely to find the change back to formal school difficult when they graduate from the ALP. Accelerated learning programmes should introduce the language of formal education as a second language gradually, from an early stage.

The final stages of any ALP should include a language transition phase, so that children can gradually be familiarised with daily school language and key terms for curriculum content. However, new curriculum content should still be introduced in children's first language.

Often, children in an ALP are required to take a test to ensure their acceptance into mainstream school. ALP staff should ask for this test to be in children's mother tongue, in order to show the child's genuine levels of ability. It may be useful to conduct the test in both the official language and the child's first language.[44]

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Steps Towards Learning

A guide to overcoming language barriers in children's education

Many children around the world go to school to find their teachers speaking to them in a language they don't understand. Or they are expected to read and write in a language that has no meaning for them. It's a key reason why so many of them fail to perform at school.

This guide offers evidence, arguments and practical steps to help stop language preventing children from learning. It includes strategies to help children do better in school, even where achieving change is a big challenge.

Who's this guide for?

Steps Towards Learning is intended for anyone involved in education where children's mother tongue is not used in school. It will be particularly useful to local, district and provincial education officials, as well as school principals, teachers and education programme staff in non-governmental organisations.

This guide will help you to:
- raise language issues with others and put forward the case for a better approach, based on strong evidence
- understand how to introduce a better language approach in the schools you work with
- issue guidance for making language changes in schools to help children learn
- guide schools in managing parents' expectations, so that demands for education in national or foreign languages can be dealt with constructively.

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