Integrated Teacher Education Programme Students and Home Language Use: An Attitudinal Perspectives

Grace Sangkim[1], & Dr. Kabita Kumari[2]

Abstract: This study examined students' attitudinal perspectives on the use of home language across key pedagogical domains, including language of instruction, feedback and assessment, peer interaction, classroom communication, and rapport building. The sample was drawn from 50 first-year students enrolled in the Integrated Teacher Education Programme (ITEP) at Mizoram University, Northeast India, selected through simple random sampling. Although English is the official medium of instruction at Mizoram University, the ITEP cohort represents a linguistically diverse population, reflecting the region's multilingual reality. Data were collected using a self-developed questionnaire designed to elicit both structured responses and open-ended reflections. The findings revealed that students expressed largely neutral yet cautiously favourable attitudes towards the inclusion of home language, recognising its benefits for comprehension, expression, and rapport building. Responses to the open-ended questions further highlighted a nuanced and somewhat ambivalent stance. While many students supported the integration of home language due to its immediate pedagogical advantages, others emphasised the centrality of English as a global academic medium, essential for wider communication and future professional opportunities. Overall, the study underscores a complex interplay between the pragmatic value of home language and the aspirational role of English, reflecting both the challenges and possibilities inherent in multilingual educational settings.

Key words: Attitude, Home Language, Integrated Teacher Education Programme (ITEP), Multilingualism, Multilingual Education.

Introduction: Language stands as a critical and defining factor in the educational experiences of children across India, a nation characterised by profound linguistic diversity (Sarajubala Devi, 2024; Mohanty, 2023). This diversity, while a cultural asset, creates systemic challenges when the language of the home fails to align with the formal Medium of Instruction (MOI) in schools. This pervasive mismatch, where children are typically taught in a dominant regional language or English (L2) instead of their home language (L1), is a core generator of linguistic inequality within the system (Jolad & Doshi, 2021). Language is the essential tool for cognitive processing and identity formation; consequently, when the MOI is unfamiliar, it erects an immediate and formidable barrier to learning, hindering both comprehension and critical thinking (Vogelzang et al., 2025).The struggle to learn through an inaccessible L2 leads directly to academic setbacks, hindering mastery of core subjects and contributing significantly to low attainment levels. More distressingly, this linguistic disadvantage contributes to the widening of educational disparities across social strata. Achievement gaps between socio-economically disadvantaged groups (SEDGs), specially tribal and marginalised students, and their peers tend to grow year after year, reinforcing existing societal inequalities (Kalyanpur et al., 2023; Sarma & Sarma, 2025). This cycle of disadvantage is often intensified by the existing societal belief that proficiency in English is the sole gateway to economic opportunity and success in higher education, a perception that reinforces the exclusion of local and regional languages despite the educational advantages of L1 instruction (Sah & Li, 2024).

In response, the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 mandates a structural shift, advocating for the use of L1 as the MOI until at least Grade 5, and preferably until Grade 8, and further suggests promoting Indian languages in higher education to dilute the dominance of English .While pedagogically sound, the implementation of this mandate is severely hampered by extensive practical challenges. The required transformation is monumental, impeded by a critical shortage of teacher capacity specifically, educators who are proficient in the diverse range of local languages and trained in effective multilingual pedagogies. Furthermore, the development and dissemination of high-quality, culturally appropriate teaching materials and textbooks in numerous Indian languages remains a persistent infrastructural hurdle.

1. *Medium of Instruction (MOI):* The medium of instruction (MOI) refers to the language used by educators to deliver academic content and assess student learning. In recent years, English Medium Instruction (EMI) has gained prominence in higher education as institutions respond to globalisation and internationalisation agendas. Despite its perceived advantages, EMI often

[1]**Research Scholar, Department of Education, Mizoram University, Aizawl-796004, Corresponding Author: Grace Sangkim, Email: gracesangkim3@gmail.com**

[2]**Assistant Professor, Department of Education, Mizoram University, Aizawl-796004**

creates linguistic disparities for students who are not native English speakers, restricting meaningful participation, and academic performance (Gülle, 2024; Lai & Idris, 2025). Moreover, the widespread use of English tends to reinforce post-colonial language hierarchies, privileging English while marginalising indigenous and minority languages. However, instruction grounded in learners' mother tongue supports deeper cognitive engagement and leads to more inclusive and equitable educational outcomes in multilingual contexts where English may otherwise function as a barrier to learning and access (Garrido & Niez, 2025; Karunanithi & Sivanadhan, 2025; Khadka, 2025; Ximenes, 2025).

2. ***Integrated Teacher Education Programme (ITEP):*** The Four-Year Integrated Teacher Education Programme (ITEP) under NEP 2020 aims to prepare high-quality school teachers by integrating academic content with modern pedagogy, values, and practical training (Devi & Konwar, 2025). ITEP emphasises grounding teachers in cultural heritage, languages, traditions, ethics, and current educational advances (National Council for Teacher Education, 2025) . Offered by higher education institutions, it will become the minimum degree qualification for school teachers by 2030, replacing fragmented pre-service models and addressing teacher shortages (Bhattacharya & Puri, 2025) . This dual-major bachelor's degree promotes professionalism and aligns teacher preparation with 21st-century classroom needs.

Literature Review:

Hlatshwayo and Siziba (2013) examine students' perceptions of multilingual education at a South African university and report that learners frequently experience linguistic disadvantage in English-dominant tertiary contexts. The neo- liberal monolingual English practices in South African higher education perpetuate myths about skills development, hinder multilingual education, and disadvantage students linguistically, despite evidence that multilingualism enhances learning, competence, and conceptual development in tertiary institutions.

Lindahl and Baecher (2023) highlight that language education has long been shaped by monolingual, English-only ideologies. Recent multilingual and translanguaging research challenges this view by demonstrating that the use of students' home languages supports comprehension, classroom participation, and identity development. However, within teacher education contexts, pre-service teachers' acceptance of such practices remains limited, largely due to institutional norms and insufficient training in multilingual pedagogy.

Van Pinxteren (2023) analysed the role of medium of instruction and mother tongue across diverse educational systems, examining the link between student performance and medium of instruction through a systems approach. The study classifies education systems as colonial, decolonial, or transitional, and argues that improving outcomes requires a gradual shift toward indigenous languages despite practical challenges.

Pal et al., (2024) examine multilingual education within the framework of NEP 2020, arguing that instruction in the mother tongue and regional languages enhances cognitive development, comprehension, academic performance, and retention, particularly among marginalised groups, while also highlighting challenges related to teacher training, resources, and societal attitudes affecting sustainable and inclusive implementation.

Saini (2024) explores students' perceptions of multilingual instruction in Indian higher education under the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. The study indicates that NEP 2020 promotes multilingual instruction to reduce linguistic barriers and improve comprehension, but concerns remain about students' varied language proficiency and teachers' preparedness to effectively implement multilingual approaches in higher education.

Rinker and Ekinci (2025) synthesise research indicating that pre-service teachers often feel unprepared to address linguistic diversity in classrooms because monolingual orientations continue to dominate teacher education programmes. Their review emphasises that teachers' beliefs significantly influence instructional practices and that explicit, practice-oriented preparation in multilingual and language-sensitive pedagogy is essential for fostering positive attitudes toward home-language use among future teachers.

Theoretical Framework: Language attitude theory explains how individuals evaluate and respond to the languages present in their social environment. According to Baker (1992), language attitudes are multidimensional, consisting of affective (emotional responses), cognitive (beliefs and perceptions), and behavioural (language-related practices) components. These attitudes are shaped by influences such as family, schooling, social norms, and media, and often mirror dominant societal ideologies that privilege certain languages as more prestigious. In educational settings, teachers' negative attitudes toward students' use of their mother tongue (MT) often perceived as disruptive academically limiting can negatively shape learners' perceptions of their own linguistic identities. In contrast to such deficit views, Cummins' Linguistic Interdependence Hypothesis (1979) posits that cognitive and academic skills developed in one language can transfer to another when both languages are supported. Building on this perspective, García's (2009) concept of translanguaging conceptualises multilingual speakers as drawing from a unified linguistic repertoire. In classroom contexts, translanguaging legitimises the strategic use of multiple languages reflecting the authentic multilingual realities of Indian classrooms.

Objectives

1. To investigate the attitude of ITEP students towards the use of home language in classroom teaching and learning.
2. To compare the attitude of ITEP students towards using home language based on gender.
3. To provide suggestions for effective multilingual classroom practices based on the students' attitudes.

Hypotheses

1. **H_1:** ITEP students have positive attitudes towards using home language in classroom teaching and learning.
2. **H_2:** There is significant difference in the attitudes of ITEP students towards using home language based on gender.

Methodology

1. **Research Design:** This study employed descriptive survey design. It focuses on obtaining information that shows the existing conditions without the manipulation of any variables. This design enables the identification of patterns, frequencies and relationships among variables as they occur in a given context.
2. **Population and Sample:** The population of the present study comprised 100 first- year students from the Integrated Teacher Education Programme (ITEP) of Mizoram University in Northeast India. A sample of 50 students was randomly selected using a simple random sampling method. The sample included 22 male and 28 female students.
3. **Profile of the Participants:** The students who participated in the study came from a wide range of states across India including Jarkhand, Odisha, West Bengal, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Tripura among others. Although they represent diverse regions, a significant proportion of them belong to the states of Northeast India. This reflects a rich blend of linguistic, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds within the group. The students reported speaking numerous languages such as Santhali, Odia, Kudmali, War Jaintia, Assamese, Hindi, Pnar, Kokborok, Mizo, Garo, Nepali, Chakma and Mara. Many of these are indigenous or tribal languages spoken by ethnic communities of Northeastern and Eastern India. Based on the data, 62% of the students use tribal language, indicating that majority come from linguistic groups. In contrast, 38% speak non-tribal languages, which include widely spoken Indo- Aryan or Tibeto-Burman languages.

   All the participants are enrolled in the four-year Integrated Teacher Education Programme (ITEP) for the academic period 2025-2029. At present, they are pursuing their first year of the programme at Mizoram University, situated in Northeast India.

Table 1: Home Language Background of Participants (n = 50)

Home Language	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)	Languages Reported
Indigenous / Regional / Minority Languages	31	62%	Santhali, Kudmali, War Jaintia, Pnar, Kokborok, Mizo, Garo, Chakma, Mara
Widely Spoken / Dominant Languages	19	38%	Hindi, Assamese, Odia, Nepali

For the purpose of this study, home languages were categorised based on students' self-reported linguistic communities, distinguishing between indigenous/regional minority languages and widely spoken dominant languages in the Indian context (Table 1).

4. **Research Instrument:** A questionnaire was developed to reflect regional linguistic and educational realities that are often overlooked in national level studies. The questionnaire was designed after a review of literature on multilingual education, language attitudes, and teacher education. It consisted of 20 items divided into four sections as: language of Instruction, feedback & assessment, peer interaction, communication & rapport and one open-ended question. Items were structured according to 5 point Likert Scale: 1= Strongly Disagree(SD) ,2= Disagree(D), 3= Neutral (N), 4= Agree (A) , 5 = Strongly Agree (SA).

5. **Data Collection Procedure:** The questionnaire was administered in-person during a scheduled session approved by the institute's faculty. The researcher introduced the purpose of the study to ensure participants that their responses would remain confidential and would be used solely for academic purposes. Participants took approximately 15 to 20 minutes to complete the form. Most filled out the English version, though interpretations were provided in local languages when needed to clarify meanings without influencing responses.

6. **Statistical Techniques Used for Data Analysis:** Descriptive statistics such as mean, standard deviation, frequency, and percentage were used to analyse students' attitudes toward home language use. An independent samples t-test was employed to examine gender differences in attitudes at a 0.05 level of significance. Qualitative responses were analysed thematically.

7. **Validity and Reliability:** To establish the reliability of the questionnaire, content validity and internal consistency (Cronbach's Alpha) were assessed. Content validity was evaluated through a preliminary expert review to ensure that the items were appropriate and aligned with the intended construct namely, attitudes towards home language use in classrooms. As it can be observed from Table 2, the obtained Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.781 indicates good internal consistency of the instrument.

Table 2: Cronbach's Alpha Test

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
0.781	0.794	20

Data Analysis: The results of the study are presented and interpreted below through quantitative and qualitative data in relation to the research objectives and hypotheses. The responses to the open-ended questions are presented verbatim, with minor grammatical corrections indicated in brackets where necessary for clarity.

Table 3: Attitude Towards Using Home Language Across Various Dimensions (n=50)

Dimension	No. of Items	Score Range	Mean	SD	Positive	Neutral	Negative
Language of Instruction	5	5–25	17.96	4.33	15(30%)	31(62%)	4 (8%)
Feedback & Assessment	5	5–25	16.40	3.20	11(22%)	37(74%)	2 (4%)
Peer Interaction	7	7–35	23.88	4.35	12(24%)	28(56%)	10(20%)
Communication & Rapport	4	4–20	14.54	3.26	9 (18%)	34(68%)	7 (14%)

In Table 3, considering the scoring ranges indicated for each dimension, 31 students (62%) demonstrated a neutral attitude toward the use of home language in the *Language of Instruction dimension*, followed by 15 students (30%) with a positive attitude and 4 students (8%) with a negative attitude. The mean score for this dimension was 17.96 with a standard deviation of 4.33.Similarly, in the *Feedback & Assessment dimension*, 37 students (74%) reported a neutral attitude, followed by 11 students (22%) with a positive attitude and 2 students (4%) with a negative attitude. The mean score for this dimension was 16.40 and the standard deviation was 3.20. In the *Peer*

Interaction dimension, 28 students (56%) exhibited a neutral attitude, followed by 12 students (24%) with a positive attitude and 10 students (20%) with a negative attitude. The mean score and standard deviation for this dimension were 23.88 and 4.35, respectively. Further, in the *Communication & Rapport dimension,* 34 students (68%) demonstrated a neutral stance, while 9 students (18%) showed a positive attitude and 7 students (14%) displayed a negative attitude. The mean score for this dimension was 14.54, with a standard deviation of 3.26. Overall, the findings indicate that neutral attitudes towards the use of home language predominated across all dimensions. As the majority of students did not demonstrate an overall positive attitude, Hypothesis H_1 was rejected.

Table 4: Difference in Attitude Towards Using Home Language Based on Gender (n=50)

Groups	Total	Mean	SD	MD	t-value	df	Sig (2-tailed)	Remarks
Male	22	71.32	9.43	-2.503	-0.881	48	0.383	Non-Significant
Female	28	73.82	10.37					

Table 4 shows the comparison of attitudes toward using home language based on gender. The results indicated no statistically significant difference between male (M = 71.32, SD = 9.43) and female students (M = 73.82, SD = 10.37), t(48) = −0.881, p = 0.383. As the p-value exceeded the 0.05 significance level, hypothesis H_2 is rejected.

Table 5: Themes and Sub-themes Derived from the Findings

Themes	Sub-themes
Advantages of Home Language	a. Comfort and ease in expression b. Connection to culture and identity.
Challenges with English	a. Difficulty in understanding, pronunciation and comprehension b. Cognitive strain
Role of Teacher and Language Use	a. Language barriers in teaching b. Excessive use of English or Local language

Based on the analysis of their responses three major themes were identified (Table 5). These themes include: *1) Advantages of Home Language 2) Challenges with English 3) Role of Teacher and Language Use.* The analysis of each theme is provided below:

Theme 1: Advantages of home language: Majority of the students accepted that when home language is used during teaching, they feel easy to grasp the lessons and explanation given. English as the universal language promotes inclusivity. Inspite of that, when it comes to thorough learning the students find learning in their home language is better to comprehend entirely the lessons taught and transcribe meanings.

> **S1:** "*English being used in classroom is a great way for students to improve their English as it is an universal language. However, when it comes to explaining certain topic a student may not grab [grasp] the information given in english [English] fully and explaining in the home language can help the student understood [understand] a lot better*"

> **S2:** "*I understand better when they explained [explain] in my Home-Language (home-language). I find it difficult to fully understand when only English is used in class because* sometimes *I miss the meaning of certain words*"

S3: "*I feel like using English[,] for[,]teaching is inclusive and useful for better understanding. However, when my home language is used, I understand it better and feel more comfortable*"

Theme2: Challenges with English: The students also express their opinion regarding the challenges in adjusting with English instruction. They are of the opinion that using English only as the medium of instruction compiles challenges including difficulty in comprehension, understanding the meaning of the words, accent and pronunciation.

S4: "*Even though my mother tongue is Kokborok which is spoken by native people of Tripura, I can understand Bengali, Hindi and English. When teacher teach us in English I can understand, but sometimes due to different accent its hard to understand some words*"

S5: "*I am comfortable with English. But sometimes, the pronounciation conformed [Confuse] me which have been used by my lectures (teachers). Sometimes I can't understand sudden speed English [when teacher speak English spontaneously]. But I try to understand better their language*"

S6: "*When teachers use only English language in classroom that's good but I face sometimes many problems because all are [of]my learning medium is odia*"

Theme3: Role of Teacher and Language use: The findings further indicated that teachers play an important role in the medium of instruction and the language they use when imparting teaching and learning process. Some of the students are of the opinion that the teachers should be well equipped with the language demand. This implies that teacher should be well efficient to cope up with the language differences. Moreover, students are also of the opinion that , even the use of mother tongue medium of instruction gives ease to learning, nevertheless learning multiple languages is necessary with the evolution in communication and learning skill.

S7: " *I want teacher to use multiple language [languages]because sometimes we do not know some words in English and so that the teacher can approach us or tell us to say the word or understand [interpret] in our own language*"

S8: "*According to my learning experiences it feels comfortable while (when) it may be taken in hindi [Hindi] & English. According to my suggestion a lecturer [teacher]or an ITEPtian must know all types of languages to be more comfortable with others, and if it comes to our writing then it will be more fine according to there [their]preference*"

S9: "*Generally the use of mother tongue gives more understanding and ease in learning, however with the advancement of knowledge, it is good to learn other languages as well, so as to improve our speaking skills. (A tlangpui chuan kan mother tongue an hman hi chuan mitin tan hriatthiam a awlsam mai bakah zir pawh a awlsam phah a. Amaherawhchu khawvel achangkang zel angin kan tawng te pawh improve a lo ngai ve zel la chuvangin tawng dang te hi hman a tha ka ti kan inzirna zel a hi)*"

Findings and Discussion

1. ***Favourable Attitude Towards Home Language Use:*** A section of the students demonstrated favourable attitudes toward the use of home language, for comprehension, clarity of explanation, and emotional comfort in classroom interactions. These students perceived home language as a pedagogical resource that helps bridge conceptual gaps, reduce cognitive strain, and enable more confident expression of ideas. This further indicate that recognition of home language fosters a sense of inclusion and respect for learners' linguistic identities, contributing to more meaningful classroom engagement. These findings align with Cummins' (1979) Linguistic Interdependence Hypothesis, which posits that cognitive and academic skills developed in the first language(L1) can transfer to additional languages when both are supported. The favourable attitudes expressed by students also resonate with Ladson-Billings' (1995) culturally responsive pedagogy, which emphasises validating learners' cultural and linguistic backgrounds as a foundation for effective teaching. In multilingual teacher education contexts, such favourable

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orientations suggest an emerging awareness of the pedagogical value of home language as a learning resource rather than a hindrance.

2. ***Neutral Attitude Towards Home Language Use:*** The prevailing stance observed in the study was a neutral attitude towards the use of home language across all measured dimensions, including language of instruction, feedback and assessment, peer interaction, and communication and rapport. Most students neither strongly endorsed nor strongly opposed the use of home language, indicating uncertainty instead of resistance. This neutrality appears to arise from competing considerations while students acknowledged the pedagogical benefits of home language use, they simultaneously recognised the institutional prominence of English and its perceived importance for academic advancement and future employment. Such neutral attitudes reflect a conditional acceptance of home language use, where students favour its strategic and situational application over regular use. This finding mirrors broader trends in higher education, where English-medium instruction is often viewed as both necessary and challenging (Gülle, 2024; Lai & Idris, 2025). Hence, this aligns with García's (2009) concept of translanguaging, which conceptualises multilingual speakers as drawing flexibly from their entire linguistic repertoire in response to contextual demands

3. ***Unfavourable Attitude Towards Home Language Use:*** A relatively small proportion of students expressed unfavourable attitudes towards the use of home language in classroom. These attitudes were primarily associated with concerns about managing linguistic diversity, potential exclusion of peers from different language backgrounds, and the belief that excessive reliance on home language might limit exposure to English. Some students also perceived English as a unifying and globally relevant academic language, reinforcing their reluctance to support extensive home-language use. These unfavourable orientations reflect the influence of language ideologies that privilege English as a marker of academic success and social mobility (Sah & Usyal, 2025). Despite their limited prevalence, such attitudes indicate the persistent tension between policy-level advocacy for multilingualism, as emphasised in NEP 2020, and the practical realities of classroom implementation.

Conclusion: The study highlights a complex ambivalence in multilingual classrooms. Students value their home languages for participation and clarity, yet feel tethered to the perceived necessity of English. These attitudes are not shaped by individual traits like gender, but by the powerful influence of dominant language ideologies and teacher-led norms. The findings make one thing clear- policy endorsement is not enough. To create truly inclusive environments, we must equip future educators with the practical, experiential tools to use languages flexibly. Moving from "cautious openness" to "deliberate practice" is essential for fostering linguistic equity in diverse settings.

Suggestions

➢ **Strengthening Teacher Training on Multilingual Pedagogy:** Teacher education institutions should integrate comprehensive training modules focused on multilingual education strategies. Practical workshops on the use of bilingual instructions, code-switching techniques and curriculum transaction will help students-teachers feel more confident and ready. Training should also include class management skills for various language settings.

➢ **Development of Multilingual Teaching Resources:** Education officers and course developers need to create accessible teaching materials in various languages spoken by students. This effort will support teachers in implementing multilingual practices and reduce their sole dependence only on English. Suitable textbooks that are experientially familiar to the learners may be developed

➢ **Policy Support and Clear Implementation Guidelines:** National and regional education policies should clearly support and encourage the use of home languages in classes. Clear guidelines will help schools and teachers balance multilingual education with course standards and examination requirements. Policies should also recognize the value of linguistic diversity as an integral part of quality education.

➢ **Ongoing Research and Continuous Feedback:** To monitor how multilingual education policies are applied and their effect on students and teachers, practicing teachers and learners can inform the response improvement and adaptation, ensuring that multilingual education is responsible for the needs of real classes. The ability to nurture multilingual classes exists and can be further nurtured. Providing future teachers with correct knowledge, resources and orientation, we can get closer to classes that actually unveil the linguistic prosperity of our society and respect every child's right to learn in the language apprehended. Such an inclusive strategy will ultimately contribute to better educational results and strong cultural relationships, enriching learning experience for all students.

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