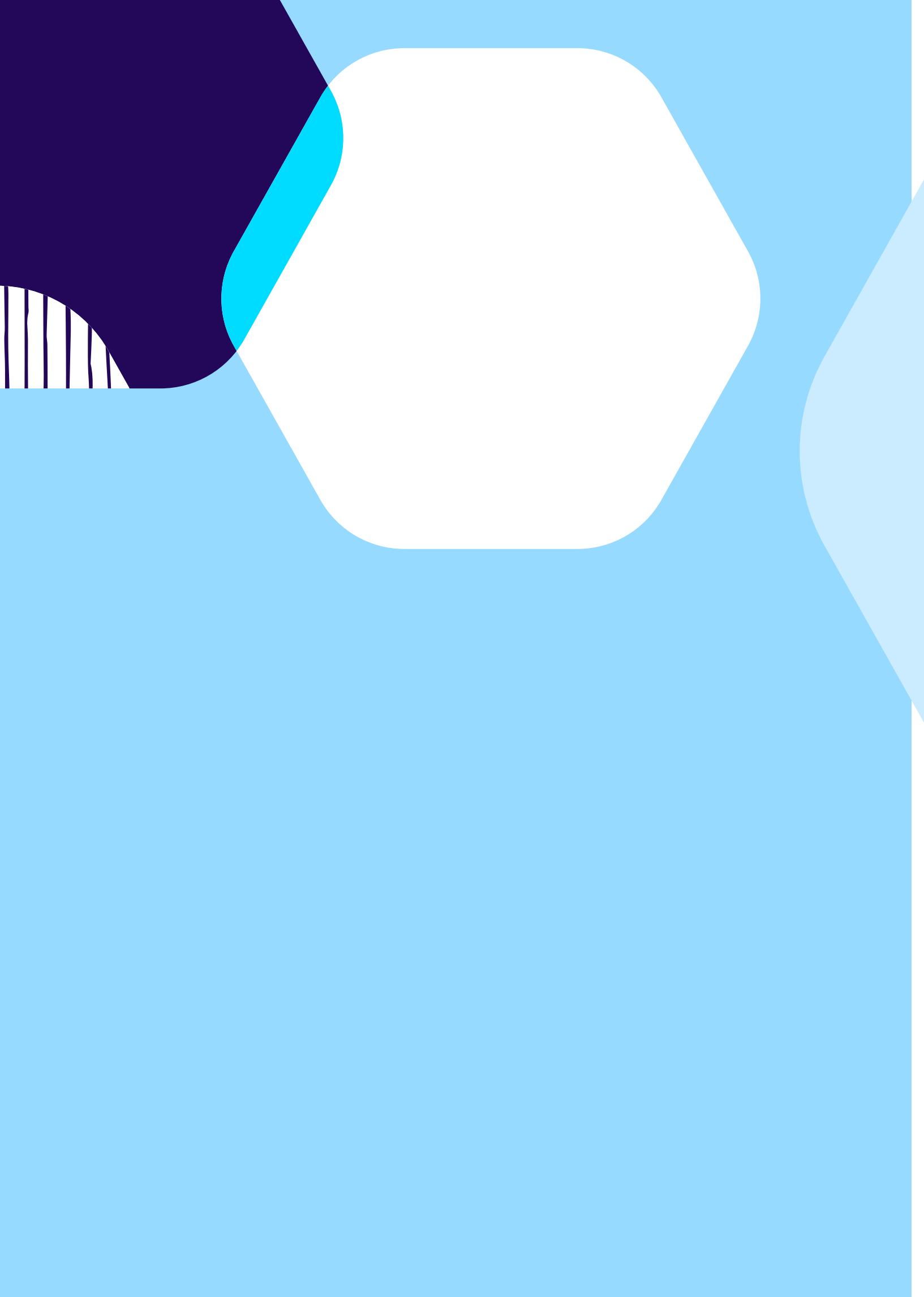


# English-medium education in low- and middle-income contexts: Enabler or barrier to gender equality?

Open Educational Resources for school leaders,  
teachers and informal learning facilitators

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# Introduction

These Open Educational Resources (OER) are based on evidence from British Council/Open University research in Nigeria and Nepal: *English-medium education in low- and middle-income contexts: Enabler or barrier to gender equality?*

The research into English-medium education and gender (EMEGen) explored the opportunities and challenges of English for girls and boys in secondary schools. The EMEGen research evidence includes:

- classroom observations
- interviews with secondary school leaders and teachers
- interviews with secondary school students and their parents
- student journals.

Open Educational Resources (OER) are activities for professional learning and development. The EMEGen OER are designed to be used within your normal practices and routines. You can do the activities on your own or with peers.

EMEGen OER are for direct use by secondary school leaders, classroom teachers and informal learning facilitators. You can:

- repeat the activities with variations or adaptations

- extend the activities
- share the activities with other school leaders, teachers and facilitators
- use the activities for meetings, training or action research.

The OER can be used in multilingual contexts and adapted for majority and minority languages in the classroom, and for single-sex and co-educational/mixed-sex contexts.

The OER activities can be used for action research, workshops, CPD (Continued Professional Development) or PDSA (Plan, Do, Study, Act) continuous improvement cycles. When you do the activities, you might have questions that you would like to find out about. The activities might give you ideas to discuss further with other teachers, school leaders or informal learning facilitators.

The EMEGen OER focus on improving opportunities for girls and all students to participate and learn. The activities are based on global evidence that one of the most effective ways to raise girls' learning is by improving the pedagogy of teachers.<sup>1</sup>

1. According to a review of evidence from 267 educational interventions in 54 low- and middle-income countries, effective programmes to improve girls' learning do not necessarily need to be specifically girl-targeted. The most impactful educational intervention is the teacher. Evans, D. K., & Yuan, F. (2022). What We Learn about Girls' Education from Interventions That Do Not Focus on Girls, *The World Bank Economic Review*, 36(1), 244–267. [doi.org/10.1093/wber/lhab007](https://doi.org/10.1093/wber/lhab007)

# OER 1: Attitudes to languages and gender

## 1. Languages, gender, status and marginalisation

When a language is seen to have high status and importance, access to it can be limited for learners who are marginalised, and learners who have restricted opportunities or roles in society.

These learners may be:

- girls and women
- learners from minority ethnic communities
- learners from language minority groups
- learners living in poverty
- learners who have experienced forced migration.

Social and cultural contexts affect how we experience languages and language learning.

Social and cultural expectations influence what we do with our languages.

The value of a language will vary for individuals and groups, depending on how and why they use the language, and how they are expected to use the language by others.

Attitudes to languages are influenced by what teachers, families, girls and boys see as the status and purposes of the languages.

Interactions of language, gender, status and marginalisation can be noticeable where English is the medium of school instruction.

Think of examples from your own experience:

- Are some languages in your context more important than others?
- Are there languages considered to be more important for men, and languages that are considered more important for women?
- In your context, why do some students learn English, but not others?
- Are there different expectations for girls and boys, or for certain groups of students, when it comes to learning and using English?
- What do learners in your context hope to do with their languages?

With these ideas in mind, now read from the EMENGen research.

## 2. EMENGen research

English is considered to be more prestigious and demanding than local language education. Sometimes, English is more expensive than local language education.

English is associated with higher studies, travel abroad for study or work, and professional employment, as this parent and student from



different parts of the world explain:

*Whatever one wants to be, engineer or doctor, they need English.*

**(Parent of male student, Nepal)**

*English will help me in my university education because that is the language used for teaching and communication in the university.*

**(Male student, Nigeria)**

National and local languages are considered to be more appropriate for learners who are expected to work in or near the home, not continue to further education or not travel out of the community.

National and local languages are seen as more valuable for learners who are expected to take government or community jobs or to become homemakers, as this district official and parent note:

*Many girls want to do well in public service commission examinations, and they will need [our national language] for that purpose.*

**(Policymaker in Nepal)**

*The role of education for my son's and daughter's future can be different; because for my daughter, her education is going to be useful to her after her marriage [...] She can take care of her children and husband properly.*

**(Parent in Nigeria)**

Home languages are also significant in feelings of identity, connection and belonging, cultural knowledge and participation in family and communal life – areas which can be seen as the responsibility of girls and women:

*In the Hausa-medium school the child will learn about her culture and give importance to it. She will also learn a lot about her language, unlike in an English-medium school.*

**(Parent of female student in Hausa-medium school, Nigeria)<sup>2</sup>**

*[My] mother tongue helps to express feeling with my mother and other relatives.*

**(Female student, English-medium school, Nepal)**

English can perpetuate inequalities in strongly gendered societies, where girls are not encouraged to continue in education, achieve well or pursue higher education and careers. Where English-medium schools are fee-paying and better resourced, boys are over-represented.

Where girls study local languages and boys study English, some employment sectors become gender- and language-segregated.

English can be a barrier to learning for linguistic minority students, who must use a national or local language plus English as second and third languages for learning.

2. All quotes are taken from interview data generated in the EMEGen research in Nigeria, where Hausa is the language of instruction in Hausa-medium schools, and in Nepal, where Nepali is the language of instruction in Nepali-medium schools.

English can exclude girls and boys from marginalised communities, who are not allowed to take certain roles or to be seen or heard in certain places.

With the EMEGen research in mind, now go to your activities.

### 3. Activities for school leaders



In these activities, you will audit and celebrate the languages of your school, and consider how prepared students are to learn in the language of instruction. You will also informally observe how teachers and students work within the language rules or policy of the school.

#### Activity 1: Audit and celebrate languages in your school

Make an informal audit of languages in your school.

- What languages do teachers have?
- What languages do students have?

You can sketch this out as a diagram or a chart, noting:

- majority languages
- minority languages
- dialects
- 'foreign' languages that teachers and students use such as French, Arabic or English.

Do teachers and students have languages in common?

Based on your information, create a simple display of all the languages of the school. You can ask students to help.

Such displays celebrate all the language resources of your teachers and students.

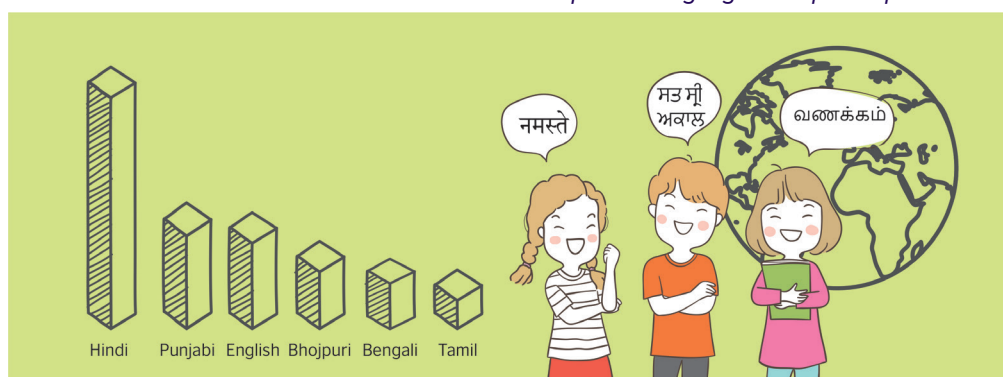
You can value and celebrate all languages, even if teachers and students are required to use one language in the classroom.

#### Reflection: How prepared are students and teachers?

In many countries around the world, the language policy allows or directs teachers to use a local language in the early years of schooling. This transitions to English or one of the national languages in upper primary school. In secondary school, it is usually one language only – English or a national language.

- In your context, when does this transition happen for your students? Is it gradual or sudden?
- What resources or training are available to support the transition, for teachers and for students?
- How prepared are your students to learn in the language of instruction?
- How prepared are your teachers to support students at different stages of language learning?
- In your context, what additional language support would be helpful to students and teachers?

*Example of a language audit poster presentation*





## Activity 2: Observe language and participation

First, briefly review the language policy or rules for your school.

- What do the rules say about the language or languages that are to be used for teaching and learning? How strict or flexible is this?
- Are the rules the same for teachers and for students?
- Are there any allowances, such as for students from other language groups?
- Is there an official government language-in-education policy that is relevant to your context?
- How is the language policy or rule made known to students and to parents?

Make time to walk around your school to make informal observations of languages in the classrooms. You can do this just by standing or sitting outside classes. Do this over a few days.

Let teachers know that you are not making a formal observation or assessment of them.

Informal observations can give realistic and useful information, and do not put the teacher under pressure.

The aim here is not to check or enforce the language rules. The goal is to support teachers and students to work as well as possible within the rules.

- Listen to how teachers and students use languages. Do they use one language only, or do they use more than one language? Who does most of the speaking?
- Do teachers use certain languages for classroom management or for certain subjects?
- If teachers switch between different languages, do students seem to find this helpful?
- If teachers use one language only, do you think this is helpful to all students? Do you think there are differences for girls and boys or for specific groups of girls and boys together?
- Are students allowed to use local languages outside the classroom, for instance, during break times?
- Are students punished for using certain languages?

Make notes on what you find.

- In your observation, do you think any students are left out because of language differences or language abilities?
- Could you describe these students as a group, if they have things in common such as their language, ethnicity, religion or caste?
- What could have made a difference to their learning?

*Female students (EMEGen project, Nigeria)*



## Discussion

If teachers and students are not always able to follow the language rules, there are usually very good reasons for this. Some reasons in your context might be:

- The language of instruction is not the first language of students.
- The language of instruction is not the first language of teachers.
- When teachers are deployed, their languages are not taken into account in terms of where they are sent to teach.
- There are no teaching and learning resources in other languages.
- Assessments are in a different language to the language of instruction.
- Teachers depart from the language policy in order to help students.
- Teachers must teach students from different language groups.
- Students are not all at the same level of the language of instruction.

If teachers are using only one language, there might be different valid reasons for this:

- Teachers are adhering to a single language of instruction policy.
- The language policy is flexible but teachers misunderstand it.
- Teachers feel they are required to use one language only, even if they can see that students are struggling.
- Teachers might believe that using one language only is the best way to help students learn it, and that using a local language will prevent them learning the language of instruction.
- Teachers might feel comfortable using the local language for discipline and classroom management, but less confident to use local languages purposefully in lessons.
- Teachers might not feel confident to allow students to use their local language if teachers do not understand it.

Write a summary that describes your observations and your thoughts.

In a staff meeting, without naming any staff or students, share your observations and thoughts with teachers.

Acknowledge to teachers the challenges that they face.

Depending on what is permitted in your context, see OER2 for ideas on how to improve student participation and support teachers to try out these activities.

### Did you know?

There is research evidence around the world that students' other languages can help them to learn the language of instruction, not hinder it. See the Resources section for reading on this.

## 4. Activities for teachers



In these classroom activities, you will ask students to explain the languages they use: when, where and why. You will also organise students to discuss and debate the purposes of different languages.

These activities aim to:

- develop students' appreciation of their languages
- encourage students to identify and consider the purposes of different languages in their lives
- enable students to practise language learning.

These activities are also opportunities for you to observe students' language learning.

You can build on these activities, repeat them with variations for different subjects, adapt them and share them with other teachers.



*Female students (EMEGen project, Nigeria)*

The **Activities for informal learning facilitators** can also be adapted for your classroom.

### **Activity 1: Class discussion about languages**

Begin a class discussion about when, where and why we use different languages. Ask students to give examples of the languages they read, write, hear and speak in different places with different people or groups, and why. Do we use only one language in these places, or do we mix languages?

- at home
- in school
- in the community
- in the church, mosque or temple
- on the radio/television
- on the internet
- on social media
- on a mobile phone
- in different classes in school, such as science or history class.

Ask students to give examples of the languages they use when they interact:

- with a grandparent
- with an elder
- with a tourist
- with the school principal

- with a police officer
- with a shopkeeper
- with a friend
- on social media
- in an email
- in a messaging app.

Where do we use more or less formal language? Where do we use only one language, and where do we mix languages?

Do we use only words, or do we use images (such as emoticons 😊) or gestures in some situations?

Allow students to develop their ideas in the languages they are most confident with – if this is permitted in your school. They can do this with a partner or in a small group. Then get them to practise their ideas in English. They can make notes in English to help them respond. Pictures can prompt discussions about which languages are used for which purposes. Try to find pictures of different settings outside your school to use as prompts, for example the market, the temple or mosque or a street scene.

### **You can do this activity in a language lesson**

Ask students to talk, write and draw about their languages to create a 'language portrait' of themselves.

You can model pronunciation, vocabulary, phrases and structures, such as:

‘When I am at home I use [language] with my grandmother because...’

‘I use [language] on the train when it is necessary to...’

**You can do this activity in a subject lesson**

Focus the discussion on a relevant topic and the languages students use for it in different contexts. For example: Where, how, why and with whom do we talk about numbers, history, science or technology? Do we use different languages for certain ideas or vocabulary?

Get students to discuss with a partner or in a small group, or make notes before they present their ideas.

This discussion can help students learn subject content and subject language at the same time.

**Activity 2: Languages and purposes**

Begin a discussion about the usefulness of different languages: national language, local language, English, other ‘foreign’ languages such as French or Arabic. Why learn a language?

Are some more useful or important than others – why or why not?

Is ‘English’ the same as ‘being educated’ – why or why not? What do your parents think? What do you think?

You can get students to discuss in pairs and then write their ideas on the board. You can create categories of reasons to learn a language, for example:

**WHY LEARN A LANGUAGE?**

**Learning/thinking reasons**

- improve mental quickness
- improve vocabulary
- be smarter

**Social/personal reasons**

- increase confidence
- make friends
- better listening and understanding
- interact with international visitors/tourists

**Career reasons**

- increase job prospects
- earn more money
- get work in another country
- serve my country
- have interesting work

**Learn about the world**

- discover new customs and cultures
- travel

**You can do this activity in a language lesson**

Model questions, vocabulary, sentences and phrases orally and on the board such as:

‘I enjoy/dislike [language] because...’

‘[Language] is important to learn because...’

‘As an adult, I will need to know [language]

in order to...’

‘I will/will not continue to learn [language] because...’

‘For me [language] is very useful because...’

‘English is not/is the same as being educated because...’

‘My parents want me to learn [language] because...’

## You can do this activity in a subject lesson

Are certain languages important to certain school subjects?

Are certain languages important to certain careers?

Get students to discuss the value of different languages to careers linked to the subject. For example, which languages are important to a career in science, engineering, technology, medicine or journalism?

Get students to say why, for example: 'I will need [language] in my career as a [scientist, journalist, accountant...] because...'

## Pair work

Organise pair talk, single-sex pairs or girl-boy pairs, depending on your context. Ask pairs to ask and answer the questions generated from the class discussion. Write vocabulary, sentences and phrases on the board to support students.

If it is permitted in your context, allow students to develop their ideas in the language they are most confident with, before getting them to interact or report back in English. For instance, they can make notes in a familiar language and then practise orally in English.

Ask each pair to describe their partner's ideas.

You can circulate and listen, encourage and offer suggestions, make corrections and informally assess students' participation, vocabulary, pronunciation and their understanding of the topic.

## Class debate

Building on the class discussion and pair work, you can organise a class debate about languages for different purposes, careers, academic ambitions or community life.

Use girls versus boys or mixed groups, depending on your context.

Allow students to use drawings, photos or pictures to support their points.

Allow time for students to prepare, practise and be ready.

During the debate, notice the participation of different groups of students.

## 5. Activities for informal learning facilitators



These activities aim to help learners develop confidence to value and use all their languages for learning.

In these activities, you will support learners to create personal language portraits. You will also support learners to discuss their goals and the languages they need to achieve these goals.

The activities are opportunities for learners to interact, speak and listen to each other.

**The Activities for teachers** can be adapted for informal learning contexts.

### Activity 1: My language picture

You will need to prepare:

- materials for drawing
- space for drawing (table or floor)
- a template or a few examples for the language pictures
- maybe an example of your own personal language picture.

Ask learners to describe the languages they speak, understand, listen to, read and write.

Ask learners when, where and why they use these different languages. This can include family, school, social media, books, advertising, etc.



*Language portrait drawn by girl in Birgunj secondary school (EMEGen project, Nepal)*

Ask them which languages they are more and less confident in, and why.

Show learners your own language picture and describe it to them.

Give learners drawing materials. Invite them to make a picture of themselves and their languages. They can do this in any way they like, such as shown in the image above, or if these materials aren't available, you could use the chalk board or ask learners to use locally available materials to make a sculpture or to devise a three-minute drama for their language picture.

Ask everyone to share and appreciate their pictures, sculptures or dramas.

Compare the similarities and differences amongst learners.

## Activity 2: My goals and languages I need to achieve them

You will need to prepare:

- examples of people who use different languages in their work (such as newspaper articles, pictures of famous people or examples of local people)
- 'case studies' of language learners – some examples can be found in the Resources section

- maybe photographs from magazines or newspapers of different career people to discuss the different languages they use.

Discuss with learners how many people around the world use more than one language in their work.

- More and more employers look for people who can use more than one language.
- Having more than one language is an extra skill to put on a job application.

Read out some examples or get learners to read out the examples to the group.

Talk together and make a list of people who use different languages in their careers, such as:

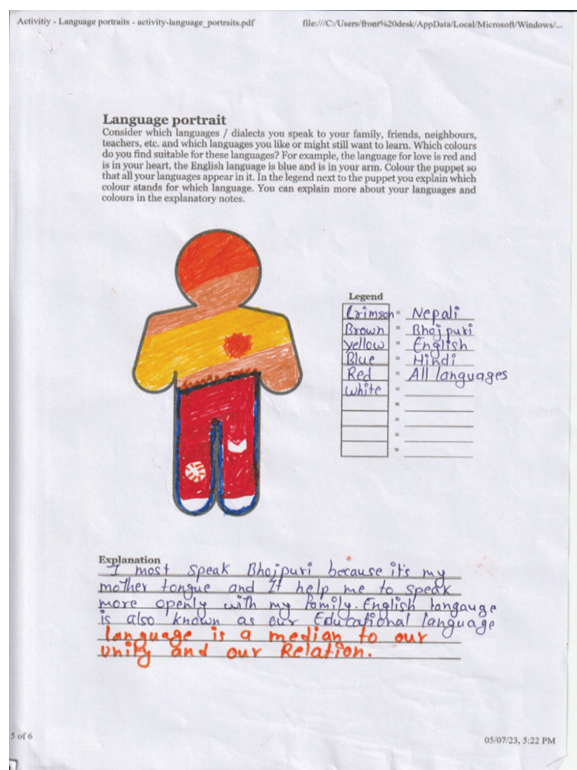
- tour guide
- lawyer
- customer service representative
- airline flight attendant
- customs officer
- journalist
- humanitarian aid worker
- accountant
- IT and programming
- translator
- hotel manager
- language teacher
- doctor.

Can learners name a famous person who uses more than one language?

Do learners know local people who use more than one language in their work?

Ask learners to talk about their goals and ambitions for study, work or travel.

Ask them what languages they might need to achieve their goals.



Language portrait drawn by boy in Birgunj secondary school (EMEGen project, Nepal)

## 6. Resources

To find the OER online and access more digital resources including videos, scan here.



See also:

Case studies from Africa of language careers:

[translatorswithoutborders.org/blog/meet-jeff-and-ursuline-supporting-the-african-language-community/](https://translatorswithoutborders.org/blog/meet-jeff-and-ursuline-supporting-the-african-language-community/)

Eleven jobs and careers in languages:

[uk.indeed.com/career-advice/finding-a-job/jobs-in-language](https://uk.indeed.com/career-advice/finding-a-job/jobs-in-language)

# OER 2: Using all languages for learning

## 1. Languages, communication and learning

Around the world, it is normal to switch between different languages and dialects. Many of us do this, spontaneously and without thinking, in our homes and communities.

Alternating between languages or dialects is commonplace in conversations, texting and informal emailing. Here are some examples:

*Hum kya kar rahe haim is none of your business. (Hindi + English)*  
(What we are doing is none of your business.)

*Mendapatkan burger dengan saya?*  
(Indonesian Bahasa + English + Indonesian Bahasa)  
(Get a burger with me?)

*Bugün cuma, isn't it? (Turkish + English)*  
(It's Friday, isn't it?)

*Lakini honestly, mtu yeyote anatoka Kenya, as in tuko tu ile like, tuko spontaneous...tuna...we take it as it come. (Kiswahili + English + Kiswahili + English)*  
(But honestly, any person who comes from Kenya, we just like, we are spontaneous, we... we take it as it comes.)

This kind of language mixing includes alternating between a standard form of a language and a dialect, or between formal language and informal or 'slang' expressions.

Can you think of examples yourself that you see

or hear, with friends, family members or in your community? When and why do you switch between languages?

How do you think this can improve communication between people?

### Languages and learning

In classrooms today, there are students from different language backgrounds who are at different levels of learning the language of school instruction. In some contexts, it is permitted to use a mixture of languages in the classroom, such as the official language of instruction and the local languages of students and teachers. According to global research evidence, this can support students' language learning and subject learning at the same time. This can also help the teacher to communicate effectively and clearly.

As you read the following example, notice the link between languages, communication and learning.

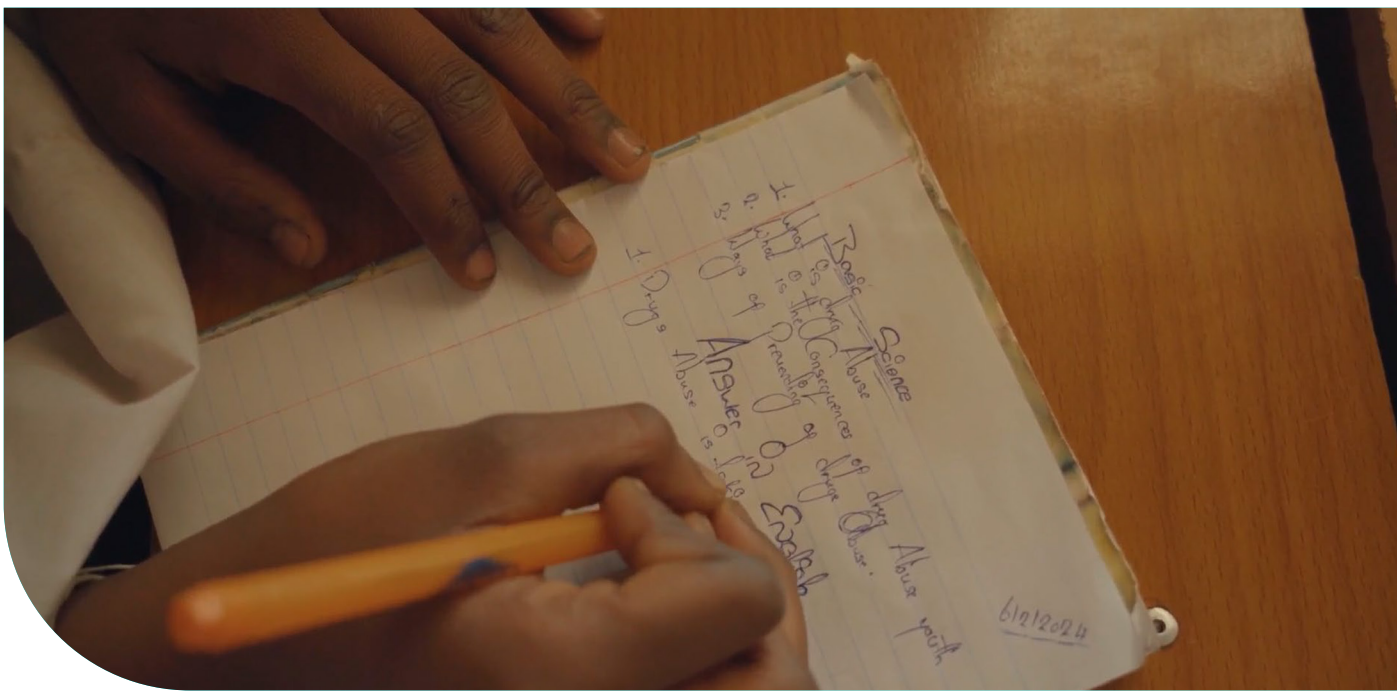
*In a maths class, there are students from six different language groups. The teacher does not speak all the languages of the students. The formal language of instruction is English.*

*The teacher was teaching a lesson on how to find the volume of three-dimensional shapes.*

*The teacher first reviewed vocabulary: volume, cone, prism and cylinder.*

*The teacher held up objects and asked students, 'What is this?' and 'What are some examples of these in real life?'*





Using all languages for learning (EMEGen project, Nigeria)

*For each object, the teacher asked students with different languages how to say the word in their language, and to write the word on the board if they knew how to do this. In some cases, students saw that the word in their language looked or sounded similar to the English word.*

*The teacher got students to make notes in their home language or in English to answer the questions: 'What is volume?' and 'How do we determine the volume of a 3-D shape?'*

*The teacher put students into same-language groups to find the volume of different shapes. The teacher told them that they could use their home language or English to solve the problems.*

*When they had finished, each group reported in English how they had solved the problem. They wrote down their solutions in English.*

Can you identify what the teacher did to make the most of the students' languages for learning?

- asking students to share vocabulary in their home languages
- pointing out similarities between languages
- placing students in same-language groups to discuss and solve problems
- allowing students to use home languages, English or both
- allowing students to make notes in home languages or English.

How do you think the methods affected student participation?

Have you done anything similar yourself?

These methods are known as 'translanguaging'.

Translanguaging draws on students' language resources.

Translanguaging is not the same as 'translating'. It is about getting students to use words and thoughts in their local language to make sense of the language of instruction.

Translanguaging helps students to learn subject matter and the language of instruction, as you saw in the example of the maths lesson on the volume of three-dimensional shapes.

Translanguaging has been proven to support and facilitate learning, not hinder it.

Translanguaging is not a replacement for learning and using the language of instruction – it is a strategy that works within formal and standard languages in education.

Around the world, teachers use translanguaging methods in planned and purposeful ways to help students learn the language of instruction and subject content at the same time. Being able to learn in the mother tongue can have a big impact on student achievement, especially for girls (GEC, 2017).

With these ideas in mind, now read from the EMEGen research.

## 2. EMEGen research

Depending on what is permitted in their context, teachers mix languages informally and spontaneously in the classroom. Teachers do this in order to help students and support their learning, as this teacher and student in different parts of the world explain:

*Whenever I don't understand [an English] lesson and I ask the teacher, he explains to me in a way I will understand in simple English, or especially in Hausa.*

**(Female student, Hausa-medium school)**

*If other things are taught in English, they can forget, but the concept is clear when taught in Nepali.*

**(Female teacher, Nepali-medium school)**

Teachers make 'in the moment' decisions about which language to use. Sometimes teachers switch languages to help individual students or groups of students.

Teachers also deliberately plan to use different languages in lessons if this is permitted in their context. For example, teachers:

- write on the board in English and in the local language
- lecture in English and repeat in the local language
- write on the board in English and lecture in the local language.

These informal and formal practices are helpful to students who experience comprehension difficulties due to the language of school instruction.

These students are many, not few. For example, 87 per cent of Nigerian students in the EMEGen research reported comprehension difficulties in the language of instruction. This difficulty was consistent for all students: boys and girls, in English-medium schools and in local language medium schools. In Nepal, over 50 per cent of girls and boys surveyed believe that all

students face challenges learning through English, and they also reported comprehension difficulties in the national medium of education.

For students who do not have English or the national language as the one they are most familiar with, there are severe learning barriers, because they do not have an educational pathway that uses their mother tongue. For instance, in Nepal, many students do not have Nepali as their first language but another language such as Bhojpuri, Bajjika, Hindi or Maitheli – as this teacher notes:

*Children won't understand if I say it in English, not even in Nepali sometimes. In that case, it has to be taught in Bhojpuri.*

**(Teacher, Nepali-medium school)**

Parents see their children struggle to learn in school, even though English is often considered to be more 'rewarding' than national language education:

*No matter what, some things will be difficult to her [student], because it [English] is not her mother tongue and most of the times, she speaks her native language.*

**(Parent of female student in English-medium education, Nigeria)**

*The nursery and primary schools she attended were EME [English Medium Education] schools and we have seen how hard she struggled to learn the language of instruction and to understand the lesson taught, as well.*

**(Parent of female student in Hausa-medium education, Nigeria)**

But students value their different languages, and plan to use all their languages in the future.

*I like Nepali-medium as I have been studying in it since my basic level. It is easy to understand in Nepali-medium.*

**(Female student, Nepali-medium education)**

*The two languages (Hausa and English) would help me in communicating with my patients after I have become a medical doctor. I can use English to speak to those that cannot understand Hausa.*

**(Male student, English-medium school, Nigeria)**

*English and Hausa have roles to play in my future ambition. English is used to teach me in school, but I use Hausa to communicate with everyone outside the school, because everyone here understands Hausa.*

**(Female student, English-medium school Nigeria)**

With the EMGen research in mind, now go to your activities.

### 3. Activities for school leaders



In these activities, you will consider how your teachers use languages to help students of different language backgrounds and at different levels of the language of instruction.

Depending on what is permitted in your context, you will encourage teachers to try out a translanguaging method.

#### Activity 1: Listening to languages in the classroom

This activity should be informal and open-minded, about how teachers use languages in the classroom for student support and learning. This is NOT an activity to check adherence to the official language rules or policy.

As you walk around your school, make informal listening observations of languages in the classroom.

Do teachers switch between different languages? If so, what are the reasons for this?

Tick these examples, and notice any other examples:

- management and organisation, such as directing students to sit or stand, to call for quiet or to get students to take out their books or turn to a specific page
- discipline and punishment
- praise and rewards
- learning vocabulary
- explaining concepts
- rephrasing in the local language to ensure students understand
- rephrasing in a simplified version of the language of instruction
- direct translating of words or phrases

*Head teacher (EMGen project, Nigeria)*



- to have better communication with students
- to help students participate
- to encourage students to pay attention
- to help students feel more confident.

After your listening observation, think about how such methods helped students and teachers. What did you hear that you think was positive and effective? Did using different languages help to improve the lesson, student participation or the classroom atmosphere?

Did anything surprise you?

Write a short summary of your thoughts and what you have learned.

## Activity 2: Practical steps to support inclusion

Organise a staff meeting to discuss languages in the classroom. Talk about your listening observations, what you heard that was positive and how it helped student learning and participation.

Choose questions or a focus for the discussion, based on what is permitted in your context.

You can read together the information and

examples in the Introduction. You can also read together the information and examples in another Open Educational Resource, in the Resources section.

Invite teachers to identify how and why they use different languages in their classrooms, and how it helps students.

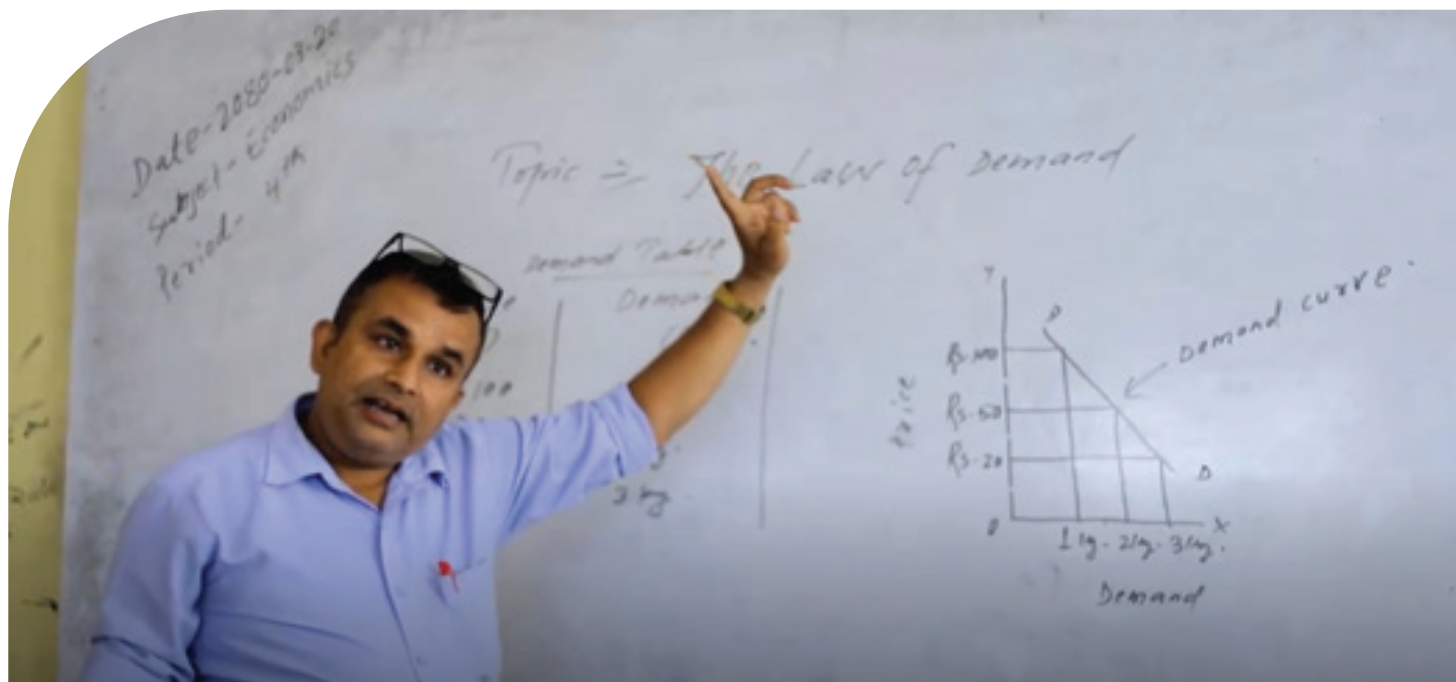
Ask teachers to think about whether they could ask students themselves to use their languages in lessons.

If it is permitted in your context, you can emphasise to teachers that it is good practice for students to use all their available languages to learn.

Depending on what is permitted in your context, you can encourage teachers to:

- repeat and rephrase in different languages
- write on the board in different languages
- ask students to rephrase in their language and then in the language of instruction
- allow students to discuss or make notes in the language they know best
- allow students who share the same language to work together
- allow students to use their languages to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding.

*An economics teacher explaining the 'Law of Demand' in Nepali while writing on the board in English (EMEGen project, Nepal)*



This does require teachers to feel confident about students using local languages. Teachers may fear that students will misbehave and not engage in the learning task.

But the more opportunities students have to use language, whether this is the language of instruction or a local language, the more language they will learn. And the more language students learn, the more learning they will do.

Also, students are motivated to learn and use all their languages to help them succeed in a globalised society.

## 4. Activities for teachers



In these activities, you will reflect on how you and your students use languages in your classroom. You will also try out a translanguaging method, if this is permitted in your

context.

### Activity 1: Languages in the classroom

Think back to your most recent lesson. Did you use only one language or did you use other languages?

Tick any that apply to you, and note any other reasons:

- management and organisation, such as directing students to sit or stand, to call for quiet or to get students take out their books or turn to a specific page
- discipline and punishment
- praise and rewards
- learning vocabulary
- explaining concepts
- rephrasing to ensure students understand
- rephrasing in a simplified version of the language of instruction
- direct translating of words or phrases into the local language

- to have better communication with students
- to help students participate
- to encourage students to feel more confident
- to check student understanding.

In general, could you describe your methods for languages in your lessons?

Are your methods mostly spontaneous or are they sometimes planned?

What do you observe about students switching between languages? When and why do they do it?

Do you ever ask students to use different languages in lessons? Why or why not?

If possible, talk with your colleague teachers and compare your ideas.

### Activity 2: Try out translanguaging

If it is permitted in your context, plan a lesson where you use translanguaging. You can re-read the example in the Introduction for ideas. You can also see examples in another Open Educational Resource, in the Resources section.

Plan and try out one or two of these ideas in a lesson to encourage students to pay attention, participate, and for you to check their understanding:

*'In [language of instruction] we say xxx, in [local language], we say yyy.'*

*'How do you say this in [local language]?'*

*'What [local language] words do you know for this topic?'*

*'Work in pairs. One pupil says the word in [language of instruction], the other in [the local language]. Then change over.'*

*'I'm going to ask the questions in [the language of instruction]. You can tell me the answer in [the local language].'*

*'You can start in [local language], then move to [language of instruction].'*

*'You can use [local language] to discuss this topic in your pairs, and then give your report back to the class in [language of instruction].'*

*'Now we have some time for questions in [local language].'*

*'Make a list of new words in your notebook. Write the [language of instruction] word on the left and the [home language] equivalent on the right.'*

**(Adapted from TESS-India OER  
'Translanguaging in the Classroom')**

After the lesson, think about student participation and if the language strategies were helpful.

## 5. Activities for informal learning facilitators



In these activities, learners will see and hear examples from life that use more than one language, and think about the purposes of these examples. Learners will then make

and perform their own multilingual song, advertisement or informal lecture.

### Activity 1: Looking and listening in many languages

You will need to find and prepare some examples of print or audio that use more than one language. Here is one example.

Start the session with examples of language mixing. You can:

- show ads or posters that use more than one language
- listen to songs that use more than one language

- give an informal lecture yourself using more than one language

or

- ask learners to prepare and give their own examples for the session.

Talk together about why the examples use more than one language. Some purposes can include:

- to be fun, popular and current
- to be 'eye catching' and interesting
- to communicate with different groups of people
- to show skills in languages
- to reach out and include different groups of people
- to be 'international' and sophisticated.

Do learners enjoy seeing or hearing things in more than one language? Why or why not?

Point out to learners that being able to read, write, speak and hear in more than one language is a desirable skill that they should be proud to have!

### Activity 2: Make a multilingual presentation

You will need to prepare drawing and writing materials.

If you have access to a small microphone and speaker, this can be used.

Ask learners to prepare and perform a multilingual song, advertisement or informal lecture on a fun topic.

They can do this in pairs or groups.

Get learners to explain their reasons for choosing different languages in their presentation.

See who can make something in as many different languages as possible!



EMEGen project, Nepal

## 6. Resources

**British Council online open access training course:**

[www.teachingenglish.org.uk/training/english-multilingual-classroom](http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/training/english-multilingual-classroom)

**British Council Resource book:**

[www.teachingenglish.org.uk/publications/resource-books/using-multilingual-approaches-moving-theory-practice](http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/publications/resource-books/using-multilingual-approaches-moving-theory-practice)

Erling, E. J., Adinolfi, L., Hultgren, A. K., Safford, K., Tugli, F. M., Shah, S., Mukherjee, S. J., Ashour, S., Mukorera, M., & Buckler, A. (2017).

[Multilingual classrooms: opportunities and challenges for English medium instruction in low and middle income contexts. British Council/EDT/Open University.](#)

Erling, E. J., Mukherjee, S. J., Safford, K., & Tugli, F. M. (2023). Ideologies of English and economic development: The influence on medium of instruction policies in Ghana. In C. Reilly, E. J. Erling, F. Chimbutane, J. Clegg & C. Rubagumya (Eds.), *Multilingual Learning: Assessment, Ideologies and Policies in Sub-Saharan Africa*. Routledge.

Erling, E. J., Safford, K., & Tugli, F. M. (2021). [Classroom Talk in Ghanaian Upper Primary Schools: Understanding English-Only, Teacher-Dominant Practices](#). In E. J. Erling, J. Clegg, C. Rubagumya, M. Casmir, & C. Reilly (Eds.),

*Multilingual Learning and Language Supportive Pedagogies in Sub-Saharan Africa*. (pp. 79–98). Routledge.

**GEC, Language of instruction in the Girls' Education Challenge:**

[girlseducationchallenge.org/media/et1lvdiv/lftf-language-of-instruction-in-the-gec-sep-2017.pdf](http://girlseducationchallenge.org/media/et1lvdiv/lftf-language-of-instruction-in-the-gec-sep-2017.pdf)

Goodman, B., & Tastanbek, S. (2021). Making the Shift From a Codeswitching to a Translanguaging Lens in English Language Teacher Education. *TESOL Quarterly*, 55(1), 29–53. [Hyperlink](#)

**TESSA, Code-switching to promote thinking skills:**

[www.open.edu/openlearncreate/mod/oucontent/view.php?id=160003&section=4.3](http://www.open.edu/openlearncreate/mod/oucontent/view.php?id=160003&section=4.3)

**TESS-India, Translanguaging in the Classroom:**

[www.open.edu/openlearncreate/mod/oucontent/view.php?id=64814&section=6](http://www.open.edu/openlearncreate/mod/oucontent/view.php?id=64814&section=6)

# OER 3: Language and gender: learning and equality in participation

## 1. Language and gender: learning and understanding

In countries around the world, there is a common situation in many secondary schools:

- Students are learning in a language that is not their first or home language

and

- teachers are teaching in a language that is not their first or home language.

So, students must learn complex subjects such as mathematics, science, history and geography through an unfamiliar language, and teachers must use a second language (or, for many teachers, a third or fourth language) to explain academic content and manage lessons. This is a challenge for students and teachers alike.

What happens when students do not understand, or only partly understand, the language of instruction?

Poor comprehension is a barrier to learning. Students must understand the teacher in order to learn. Students should also be able to practise and demonstrate their understanding

through speaking and writing, so teachers can check student progress.

Student comprehension impacts on behaviour for learning. When students do not understand, they can become disengaged and disruptive. Disruption and poor behaviour are additional barriers to learning.

In classrooms where there is poor comprehension and disengaged or disruptive behaviour, girls are additionally disadvantaged:

- Girls may already struggle to attend school.
- They may not be able to study at home, because of chores and family commitments.
- Girls may have less exposure to the language of instruction outside school, and fewer opportunities to practise it.
- Girls may have less exposure to language about certain subjects if these subjects are considered inappropriate for them.
- They may lack confidence to ask questions and participate.

In such classrooms, girls may be silenced or bullied. They can also feel unsafe.

Teachers may address girls and boys differently, verbally and non-verbally. Some



teachers may even use different languages with girls and boys.

*Gender biases are expressed through language that reveals the belief that girls cannot perform as well as boys, or that boys should not allow themselves to be outperformed academically by girls – or in any other way. Teachers often discourage girls from taking science by telling them that such subjects are for boys or are too difficult for girls. When a girl is assertive, she is told to stop acting like a boy, and when a boy cries, he is cautioned to stop behaving like a woman.*

*But spoken language is only part of the communication ... An indifferent shrug of the shoulders or rolling of the eyes suggests that the student is too foolish or bothersome to warrant attention.<sup>3</sup> (Mlama et al., 2005, p. 14)*

With this food for thought, now read from the EMEGen research findings.

## 2. EMEGen research

Students, both girls and boys, struggle to understand the teacher.

This is a problem in English-medium education (EME), but students in local language education also report not understanding the teacher.

Here are comments from students in different parts of the world about language, comprehension and learning:

*Some teachers speak very fast sometimes [and] it is difficult for me.*

*[I don't understand] the way they speak English.*

*I don't understand some teachers' writing.*

*Some teachers don't explain the lesson to us in a way we will understand.*

*...whenever a teacher teaches in English, I don't understand the lesson.*

*Honestly, I don't understand English.*

*I want teachers to use different methods to teach us so that we will understand.*

Students report a range of barriers to comprehension, such as:

- the speed of the teacher speaking
- the teacher's pronunciation
- the teacher's writing on the board
- not understanding the academic content
- not understanding the teacher's explanations
- not understanding the language of instruction
- the teacher's methods.

In interviews, students say they must work extra-hard at home to catch up and learn.

*Teachers teach us in English, and we hardly understand it. When we go home then we read it twice. After that we get a clear picture of it*  
**(Female student, Nepali EME school)**

Teachers know these problems. They see connections between comprehension, behaviour and learning – and the impact on girls.

*When I ask why don't speak, they say 'Sir, I feel afraid... My friends also laugh'. So, they don't have confidence.*  
**(Male teacher, Nepali-medium school)**

*Because of the language, they feel shy. They can't say the things they want to say.*  
**(Female teacher, English-medium school, Nepal)**

*...girls don't like talking or participating in class activities together with boys unless the teacher insists, and this affects their learning.*  
**(Female teacher, Hausa-medium school, Nigeria)**

3. Mlama, P., Dioum, M., Makoye, H., Murage, L., Wagah, M., & Washika, R. (2005). *Gender Responsive Pedagogy: A Teacher's Handbook*. Nairobi: Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE). [www.wikigender.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/GRP-Booklet.pdf](http://www.wikigender.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/GRP-Booklet.pdf)

*...boys are more outspoken and feel free to ask questions or participate in classroom activities.*

**(Male teacher, English-medium school, Nigeria)**

Think about these research findings in relation to your context:

In your experience, which students are less confident to speak up and ask questions? They might be girls, students from certain social or ethnic groups or students with disabilities.

In your experience, how much do learners understand? Is comprehension different for different groups of learners? What factors affect student comprehension and participation?

In your context, do male and female teachers have different experiences of English or languages about certain subjects? Do these differences affect communication with students and their learning?

With the EMEGen research in mind, now go to your activities.

### 3. Activities for school leaders



In these activities, you will observe teaching with a focus on comprehension and participation. And, with teachers, you will work through a short practical unit on gender responsive language in the classroom.

You can guide and support teachers to try out or adapt other activities that aim to improve the learning environment in the **Activities for teachers** and the **Activities for informal learning facilitators**.

#### Activity 1: Observe participation

Let teachers know that you would like to listen in on their lessons, for your own professional learning.

Please make clear that you are not making any assessment or evaluation of them.

Informal observation can give you useful and realistic information, and it should not put the teacher under pressure.

Make informal observations of lessons in different subjects around your school. Do this over a few days, walking around the school and standing or sitting outside classrooms.

Your teachers may be required to teach in a certain language, such as English. Or, teachers may be permitted to use local languages to help students understand. So, whatever your context is, the focus here is on:

- what teachers do to help students understand
- how teachers check student understanding
- how students show they do or do not understand
- how girls and boys are addressed
- how girls and boys participate.

As you listen to lessons, make mental or written notes:

- How do students show or tell the teacher that they understand? How reliable is this, do you feel?
- How do students show or tell the teacher they do not understand – and what does the teacher do in this case?
- How do teachers check on students' understanding? Does the class repeat words or phrases? Do students stand and recite?
- Does the teacher check on individual students or certain groups of students?
- How do students practise their understanding? Do they answer questions, make notes, repeat what the teacher says word for word or use their own words?
- How many students ask questions?



*Observing comprehension and participation (EMEGen project, Nepal)*

Make notes on participation of girls and boys. It is not necessary to record the names of individual students:

- Which students speak more and less?
- Are there students who never participate – who are they?
- If students are disengaged or disruptive, why does this happen?
- Does the teacher seem to be addressing all students or only some students?
- Do teachers address girls and boys differently, verbally or non-verbally, or in different languages?

What did you notice about teachers, girls and boys?

### **Discussion**

There are many reasons why students might not understand the teacher. Any of these could apply to your context:

- Overcrowding – students cannot hear or see the teacher.
- Language differences – students do not understand the medium of instruction.
- Teacher's language skills, e.g. pronunciation.

- Teacher's methods, e.g. going too fast, not checking student comprehension.
- Lack of resources, e.g. textbooks, audio books.
- Students do not have opportunities to practise their understanding.
- Students fear being shamed or punished for not understanding.
- Teachers address some students but not others.
- Teachers do not give students time to form responses.
- Boys dominate and disrupt.
- Girls are less confident in the language of instruction.
- The subject is unfamiliar or embarrassing for girls or some groups of students.

Write down what you think teachers do well for student participation, and what they could develop further. For example:

- Teachers give time for girls to answer
- but
- teachers could check on comprehension of girls and students from the language minority group.

Ask teachers to share what they do to help student participation, such as:

- Slow down, repeat and rephrase in different words.
- Allow students to discuss briefly with a partner before answering.
- Reward students who demonstrate understanding, not punish students who get it wrong.
- Reward partial understanding as well as correct mistakes.
- Ask questions first of girls, then boys.
- Give girls time to form answers.
- Arrange seating to break up students who dominate.
- Arrange pairs or groups so girls can work together.

## Activity 2: Gender responsive language

The words we use can transmit positive messages that support learning or negative messages that inhibit learning. For example:

- A teacher tells a group of misbehaving boys, 'You are useless and empty-headed'.
- A teacher in frustration says to a girl who is not performing well, 'Why are you here? Your family is wasting money'.

Such messages can have an impact on academic performance and willingness to participate.

Gender responsive language treats boys and girls as equal partners and provides a supportive learning environment for everyone.

Gender-responsive language practices	Examples of gender-biased language	Examples of gender-responsive language
Use both pronouns (he or she; her or his).	When everyone contributes his own ideas, the discussion will be a success.	When everyone contributes her or his own ideas, the discussion will be a success.
Use the plural instead of the singular.	If a student studies hard, he will succeed.	Students will succeed if they study hard.
Recast a sentence in the passive voice.	Each student should hand in his paper promptly.	Papers should be handed in promptly.
Recast the sentence to avoid using the indefinite pronoun.	Does everybody have his book?	Do all of you have your books?
Create gender balance or neutrality in labels or titles.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mankind</li> <li>• Man's achievements</li> <li>• All men are created equal</li> <li>• The best man for the job</li> <li>• Chairman</li> <li>• Businessman</li> <li>• Congressman</li> <li>• Policeman</li> <li>• Head master</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Humanity, human beings, people</li> <li>• Human achievements</li> <li>• All people are created equal</li> <li>• The best person for the job</li> <li>• Chair, head, chairperson</li> <li>• Business executive, manager, businessperson</li> <li>• Congressional representative</li> <li>• Police officer</li> <li>• Head teacher</li> </ul>

Try out these activities with teachers:

1. Analyse the language of the teaching and learning resources being used this week. From a gender perspective, is any of it negative? If so, how can we change it?
2. Read the chart (page 28) on classroom language and gender responsive practices.

Then arrange informal listening observations of classrooms.

You can:

- informally listen in to teachers' lessons and give feedback
  - get teachers to pair up and give feedback to each other
  - ask two students to listen and informally report back to the teacher.
3. Now read the brief research summary below about professional feedback to women and men.

### **Actionable feedback: different for men and women?**

*Research in 2021 based on computerised analysis of more than one thousand pieces of written feedback to political leaders in the UK identified that feedback given to women tends to be less actionable and less effective than feedback given to men. Women were encouraged to 'cope' and 'get along' and be tolerant. Men were encouraged to be assertive, 'claim their space' and display their confidence. Women's lack of confidence was seen as an inherent flaw, without actionable advice on how to change this.*

Source: [hbr.org/2021/02/research-men-get-more-actionable-feedback-than-women](https://hbr.org/2021/02/research-men-get-more-actionable-feedback-than-women)

Analyse your own professional feedback to teachers.

Do you give some of these messages, unintentionally?

Do you think teachers' feedback to students might give these messages to girls and boys?

Constructive actionable feedback focuses on what can be improved, not what is wrong. Such feedback is based on observed and specific knowledge, skills or behaviour.

## 4. Activities for teachers



How do you know that your students understand what you have taught them?

How do you check?

When students do not understand, what do you do?

In an inclusive learning environment, it is important to check regularly on student comprehension and allow students to let you know when they don't understand.

You can create a more inclusive learning environment when you support and encourage students who may have less exposure to the language of instruction, because they work or because of norms about where they can go, and when and to whom they can speak.

These activities focus on student comprehension and ways of checking their learning. The activities encourage students to participate, so you can assess what they know.

The activities are designed to be done within your normal routines and practices. The **Activities for informal learning facilitators** may also be appropriate to your classroom.



*A student writing in her own words (EMEGen project, Nepal)*

## Activity 1: Ways of checking student understanding

Checking students' understanding is a part of every lesson, and you can do it by stimulating ways that get their attention and keep them involved.

Try out these activities. Observe student responses and participation.

When you plan the activities, think about how you will arrange the classroom to ensure equal participation of girls and boys.

### a. Questions for the lesson

Tell your students about the topic of tomorrow's lesson. Ask them each to prepare two questions about the lesson. On the day of the lesson, get students to look for the answers to their questions. Ask them if their questions were answered in the lesson. Was the lesson what they expected? What questions do they still have?

For a large class, ask pairs or groups of students to prepare two or three questions each

or

you can prepare a list of questions about the lesson. Write the questions on the board and get students to answer the questions at the end of the lesson.

### b. 'What I Know'

Tell students about the lesson's content and objectives. Draw a chart on the board and

ask students to tell you: what they know, what they think they know, and what they need to know. This helps you to find out about their prior knowledge and their learning needs.

### c. 'Spot the mistakes'

After your lesson, give a written task or explain the topic again, but include some errors or wrong information. See if your students understood the lesson and are paying attention!

### d. What we learned

After a lesson, get students to work in pairs or groups of three to tell each other what they learned. Ask them to write together what they learned – this can be in the form of a story or a dialogue. You can ask girls and boys to work separately or together. You can ask students from the same language group to work together.

## Activity 2: Get students to say or write it in their own words

We can lecture students and get them to repeat what we say or repeat the textbook, but it is only when they speak or write in their own words that we can find out what they know.

A good way to check student understanding is to get them to tell it or write it in their own words.

Ask students to rephrase a topic that you have taught them, using their own words. Give them

time to talk or make notes before rephrasing. Get students to find words that have the same meaning. This is a useful method in any subject lesson, helping students to learn the subject content and subject language at the same time. For example:

***A cell is the smallest unit of living matter.***

Ask students, 'Can you think of different ways to say this?' Students can work on their own or with a partner to come up with different ways of expressing the same fact. They can use a textbook, a dictionary or an online search. For example:

A cell is...

- the smallest unit of every living thing.
- a fundamental unit of life.
- a basic building block of humans, animals and plants.

You can vary this by getting students to give their own examples. For example, to describe a fraction in different ways:

- *Cut the bread into thirds to share it with three people.*
- *My exam result is expressed as a fraction. I got 18/20.*

You can vary these activities by getting students to translate or rephrase textbook

passages from one language to another (for example, from English to the local language or vice versa).

As students work, you can circulate, ask them questions, check their understanding and make corrections as necessary.

You are likely to see that some students understand partially. When many students misunderstand one idea in particular, this is an opportunity for whole class teaching to correct the misunderstanding.

It is good practice to listen to students. Of course, you may not be able to listen to every student in every lesson, but you can plan to listen to groups or pairs, over the course of a week.

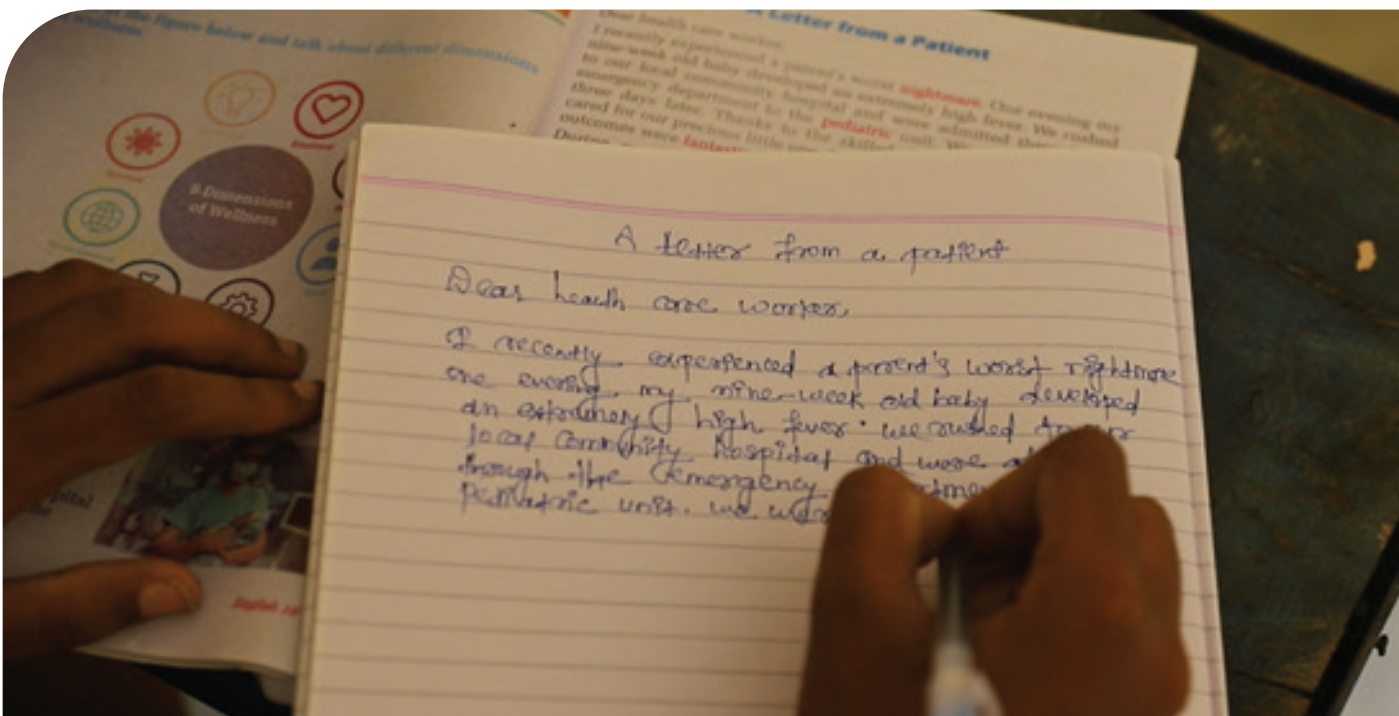
## 5. Activities for informal learning facilitators



These two activities focus on comprehension, speaking, listening and asking questions. The activities encourage learners to develop skills to:

- use their own words
- speak confidently

*Writing in English (EMEGen project, Nepal)*



- listen closely
- ask for clarification when they do not understand.

Learners, especially girls, may not feel confident to admit that they do not understand something. They might fear being shamed or bullied by others for not understanding. In the informal learning environment, you can help learners to develop the confidence to ask questions, so that they understand. When we express a need for clarification, this is a sign of dedication to learning.

You will need to find some appropriate readings for the level of your group. These can be from newspapers, magazines, advertising or different books from the library. We have provided one reading for you.

### Activity 1: Comprehension and speaking practice

Listen together to a short news bulletin or a radio programme. After listening, review and practise any unfamiliar vocabulary or phrases. Then ask learners in pairs to rephrase it in their own words.

Or read out a short piece (news, public announcement, advertisement, short fiction or poem). Then ask learners to read it silently on their own. Here is an example that you could use:

#### **Digital Divide Leaves Girls Behind**

*A new report suggests many girls across the world are not using the internet because of online abuse, discrimination or other issues.*

*The report was produced by a non-profit group called Girl Effect. The organization carries out research and programs aimed at linking young girls to education, useful products and technology. The effort was also supported by the Malala Fund, the*

*United Nations Children's agency UNICEF and the Vodafone Americas Foundation.*

*The report says many girls face numerous barriers to using the internet, especially on mobile devices. Girl Effect describes a situation on the internet that it says can favor boys over girls. It calls the situation a "digital divide."*

*"The digital gender divide is real and is creating public spaces where women, especially girls, are being left behind," said Girl Effect chief executive Jessica Posner Odede in a statement. She added that girls are often told they are "vulnerable, less competent, and unable to protect themselves online."*

*The group's report said these kinds of statements can reshape girls' beliefs and opinions and prevent them from fully taking part in numerous online activities. This can severely limit the information they see and can block educational and job progress.*

Source: [learningenglish.voanews.com/a/report-online-digital-divide-leaves-girls-behind/7289277.html](http://learningenglish.voanews.com/a/report-online-digital-divide-leaves-girls-behind/7289277.html)

Discuss the topic and any words or sentences that are confusing. Then, model different words and phrases that have the same meanings, for example:

A new report suggests...

A recently published report says...

A non-profit group is reporting that...

Then, get learners to retell it using their own words. Encourage confident speaking!

You can vary this activity by asking learners to bring in something that they read out to the group.



## Activity 2: Speaking and asking for clarification

Ask learners to work in pairs.

Prepare a set of short readings, one for each pair. Choose readings that are sufficiently challenging for the level of your group: a short piece of news, information or non-fiction, a short story or a poem.

In their pairs, one learner reads out the piece to their partner. Then the pairs discuss these questions:

- What parts did you understand?
- What did you not understand?
- What prevented your understanding?

Emphasise to learners that there are many acceptable and polite ways to say that we do not understand. It can be useful to say why we do not understand – this can help the speaker to slow down or explain in different words. Model different phrases to learners and invite them to practise, for example:

‘I am sorry, but I did not understand because you speak very fast for me. Please could you say it again more slowly?’

‘I only understood the first part; please can you explain the second part?’

‘I do not know much about engineering, and I did not follow your explanation. Could you use less technical language or more simple words?’

‘Could you explain that word?’

‘I understood up until the part where...’

You can vary the activity by reading aloud to the group. You can decide to read quickly or slowly, loudly or quietly or with different voices. Then get them to discuss what they understood, what they did not understand, and why.

Acknowledge that it can be challenging to ask for clarification, and sometimes it can feel embarrassing. But when we cover up our lack of understanding, we do not learn. When we ask questions, it shows we are willing to learn!

## 6. Resources

[\*UNGEI Case Study: Documentation of Gender Responsive Pedagogy as a Best Practice by the Forum for African Women Educationalists \(FAWE\)\*](#)

[\*Gender Responsive Pedagogy \(GRP\): A Teacher's Handbook \(FAWE\)\*](#)

# OER 4: Digital and tech for language and learning

## 1. The role of digital in girls' lives

The British Council carried out a global research exercise on the role of digital and technology in the lives of adolescent girls in:

- Brazil, Mexico and Colombia
- Bangladesh, Pakistan, India and Nepal
- Myanmar, Indonesia and Vietnam
- Syria
- Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Sudan and Ethiopia.

One of the questions was: What is girls' level of digital literacy and what access do they have to digital technology and platforms?

Read these two excerpts from the 2022 British Council EDGE report: *Girls' education and empowerment: Exploring the potential of English language and digital skills*. As you read, notice the uses of digital and tech for language and communication, and for learning in general. Do you notice similarities or differences to your own context?

You can find reference to the whole report and a video in the Resources section.

### Nigeria

Access to digital technology, particularly mobile phones, is widespread across all the surveyed states in both urban and rural communities. Mobile phones are often internet enabled and used to access social media platforms like WhatsApp, YouTube and Facebook. Adolescents mainly rely on mobile phones to connect with friends and peers, meet new people, do school assignments and find information. However, very few adolescents own or have access to personal computers. There is unequal access and use of digital skills between the poor and rich, rural and urban communities, as well as communities in the North and South (Ifijeh et al., 2016; Girl Effect, 2016).

Across the states, the girls expressed enthusiasm to learn, believing that it is important to develop their English and computing skills (including the use of computer applications like Microsoft Excel and Word) in order to interact effectively, boost their productivity and generate additional income. Parents believe their children will benefit and become better people if they can develop digital literacy and digital skills. Another motivation is to be able to complete digital forms themselves, without having to travel far to get help to do so.

(British Council, 2022, p. 22)

## Myanmar

Women in Myanmar are 14 per cent less likely to own a mobile phone than men despite improvements in access and affordability (GSMA, 2020). This gender gap is likely a result of a combination of low household income and traditional gender roles that prioritise men for mobile ownership (Scott, 2017). Rural and ethnic-minority women lack accessible and relevant online content due to higher rates of female illiteracy and the language of the content.

Women's digital skills are limited, they have less time to explore digital technologies, and they often rely on men to learn 'how' to do things on mobiles (GSMA & LIRNE Asia, 2016). Reasons suggested for women and girls' lack of digital skills include:

- Most girls in rural areas do not know how to use the phone to access the internet or send text messages.
- Women work longer hours of unpaid household work and have less time to explore digital technologies than men.
- Women's opportunities for skills training and employment are hampered by restricted mobility, especially in rural and conflict-affected areas.
- The threat of online violence and the dangers of online dating can lead to parents censoring adolescent girls' access to digital technologies.

Adolescent girls tend to use a family member's phone, with their access often restricted by fathers who believe that they are protecting them from drugs, being trafficked or being distracted from their studies (Bartholomew & Calder, 2018). For girls who do own a phone, they use them mainly to access Facebook.

(British Council, 2022, pp. 59–60)

Notice the opportunities for language, communication and learning in mobile technology:

Phone uses	Girls who own a phone (n=351)	Girls who only borrow (n=418)	Girls who own and borrow (n=181)
Calls	90%	69%	31%
SMS	65%	33%	81%
Games	35%	31%	27%
Entertainment	43%	27%	34%
Radio	40%	29%	26%
Facebook	44%	21%	18%
Internet	42%	15%	42%
Calculator	39%	17%	17%
WhatsApp	31%	27%	17%
Banking	28%	12%	41%
Homework/ school work	31%	15%	23%
Email	24%	9%	34%
Dictionary	22%	12%	33%

Overview of girls' phone usage, by ownership status. Respondents able to select multiple uses (TEGA data, n=880)



*Teacher explaining to head teacher how he uses IT in his teaching (EMEGen project, Nigeria)*

In 2018, the Vodafone Foundation and the Malala Fund carried out global research on girls' access to and uses of mobile phones. This research found that girls are aware of the positive impact that mobile technology can have on their lives, and girls are creative in getting access to it.

Look at this data from the Girl Effect/Vodafone Foundation report, [Real Girls, Real Lives, Connected](#), (p. 26).

Since 2018, these numbers will have increased.

In your context, what access do learners have to digital technologies and ICTs? Is this different for girls and boys?

What are the opportunities and challenges of digital and tech in your context, for girls and for boys?

In your professional role, how do you use digital and tech?

Now read from the EMEGen research.

*I was teaching a lesson on driverless cars in America. I downloaded a video about it on my phone and we watched it together. Students were very interested to see this video – the car is moving without a driver! **(English teacher)***



*Teacher watching a video on a mobile phone (EMEGen project, Nepal)*

*In my school, internet and a projector are available. I connect the projector, and I show students the different industries, small ones and large ones, and the locations on the map. This is good, because I can't transport students to see these in real life. **(Economics teacher)***

*I recommend students to learn English by using YouTube videos. I tell them to research a topic further on the internet. **(English teacher)***

*We live in the 21st century and we are surrounded by technologies. But here we have no equipment or laboratory. So, to demonstrate practical physics and chemistry, I could show videos or pictures that I find on the internet. **(Science teacher)***

## 2. EMEGen research

Teachers are creative in using available ICTs for lesson planning and resources.

Teachers use digital technologies to find lesson ideas, resources and videos or pictures that will inspire students.

Teachers use social media platforms to share information and resources.

Teachers often use their personal phones and laptops to supplement what is available in the school. For instance, if the school has a projector, teachers can connect their phone to it and show a video or image that they have downloaded.

Access to digital technologies is growing rapidly. ICTs offer many opportunities for school leaders, teachers and students.

With this in mind, go to your activities.

## 3. Activities for school leaders



In these activities, you will audit the digital resources that are available to you and to your teachers. You will survey teachers, and see if one or two would become 'digital champions' for the school.

### Activity 1: ICT audit

Make an ICT audit, as a chart or a table.

ICTs in school

ICTs that we use personally

You can do this as a staff meeting activity, with teachers contributing their ideas. Or, you can do this by having informal one-to-one conversations with teachers.

ICTs could include:

- laptop
- projector
- mobile phone
- Bluetooth speaker
- radio
- television
- slide projector
- CD player.

Add resources, software and platforms such as:

- internet
- translation tools
- text to voice software
- mapping and directions systems
- multimedia tools for editing or creating images
- communications systems such as email, WhatsApp or Telegram
- resources such as YouTube or government websites.

Do teachers have opportunities for professional learning on digital platforms, such as government websites, WhatsApp or Facebook?

### Artificial Intelligence (AI)

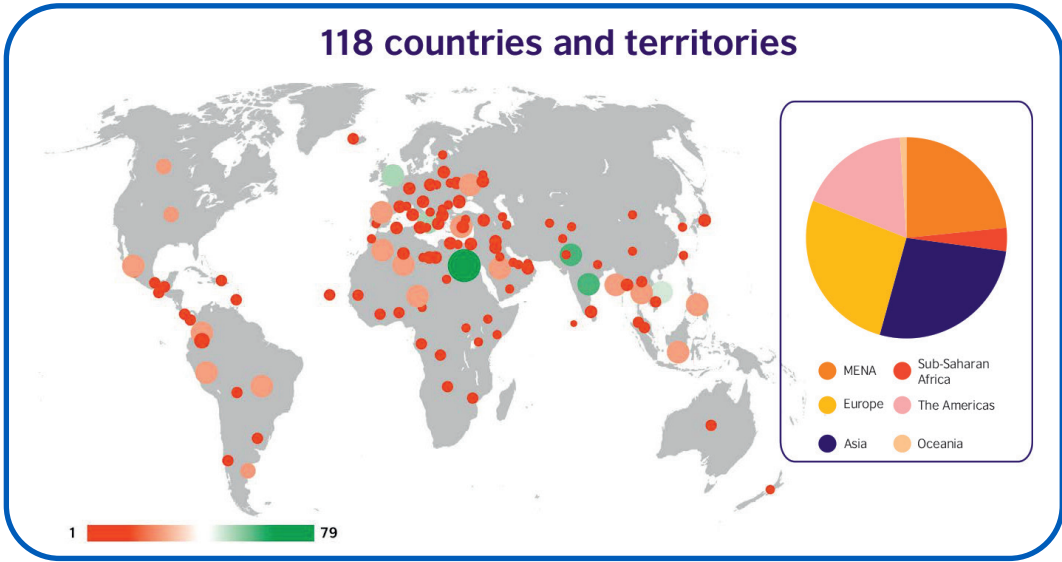
Artificial Intelligence (AI) can be defined simply as: technologies that mimic human behaviour to conduct tasks normally done by people.

In 2023, the British Council surveyed 1,348 secondary school and university English language teachers from 118 countries and regions about their uses of Artificial Intelligence (AI).<sup>4</sup>

33 per cent were teaching in state schools, 23 per cent in private/fee-paying schools and 22 per cent at a university.

The teachers were from Asia (27 per cent), Europe (27 per cent), the Middle East and North Africa (23 per cent), the Americas (18 per cent) and Sub-Saharan Africa (4 per cent).

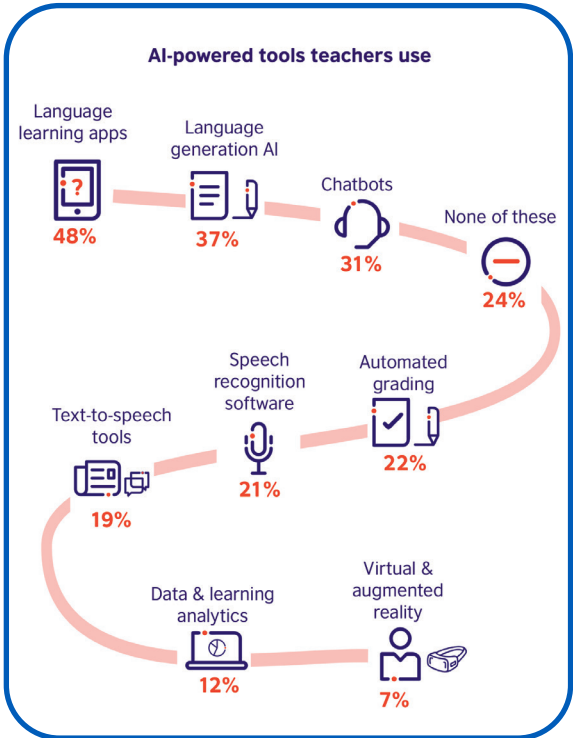
4. Edmett, A., Ichaporia, N., Crompton, H., & Crichton, R. (2023). *Artificial intelligence and English language teaching: Preparing for the future*. British Council. [doi.org/10.57884/78EA-3C69](https://doi.org/10.57884/78EA-3C69)



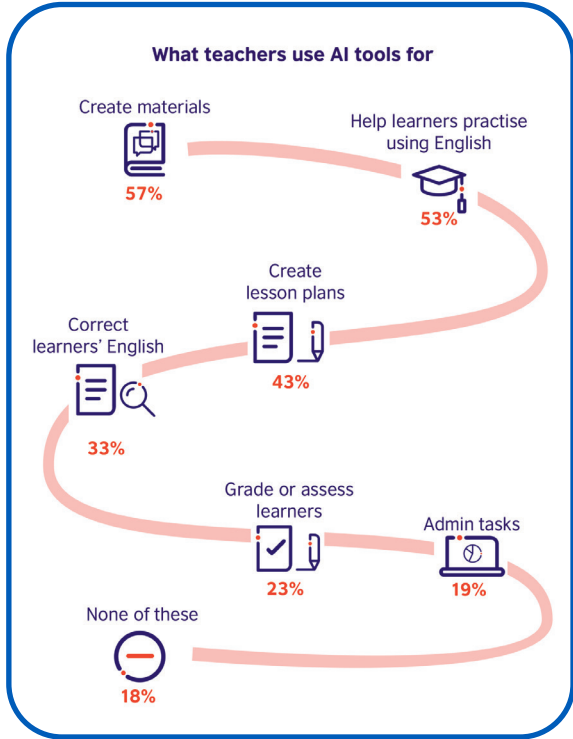
(Edmett et al., 2023, p. 23)

The teachers said what AI tools they use and how they use them.

Here is what they reported. Do you use any of these tools? Do you know if your teachers use any of these?



(Edmett et al., 2023, p. 24)



(Edmett et al., 2023, p. 25)

The majority of teachers in the survey felt unprepared to use AI in teaching, but many are educating themselves:

*I am trying to learn as much as I can by myself.*  
*I have completed online [...] courses to develop my knowledge of AI in teaching.*

AI is evolving rapidly.

It is likely that you and teachers use AI tools already, such as a spell or grammar check that automatically corrects errors, a chatbot that answers basic questions or a language app to learn or practise.

There are organisations, such as the British Council that offer digital '[badges for completing courses](#)', so teachers increase their digital skills and their professional practice at the same time.

## Activity 2: Staff survey and digital champions

Survey teachers to find out who has good digital skills.

There is a [Digital Skills Audit Template from the Digital Heritage Hub](#) in the Resources section that you can adapt and use. It covers topics such as:

- computer skills
- social media
- web-based communications and searching
- word processing
- email and chat
- basic online security.

You can include AI tools and activities such as those listed in the British Council survey of teachers.

When you have done your survey, could one or two of your teachers be 'digital champions' for the school staff?

Could you have a female teacher take this role?

Professional women who are confident in using digital technologies can inspire and motivate girl students to develop their digital skills.

Or are there professional people, women and men, in the community who could support staff development?

## 4. Activities for teachers



Look through the **Activities for teachers** and the **Activities for informal learning facilitators**.

These are not 'one-off' activities.

They can be repeated with variations for different classes and subjects.

Try out an activity, based on what is possible in your context. You can do an activity for your own personal development or you can do an activity in the classroom with your students.

You can choose an activity that is new to you or an activity that you would like to become more confident with. You can practise the activity before trying it out in your classroom.

You can do an activity on your own, but it can be more fun to try it with other teachers and talk about it together.

If you are already very confident and familiar with these activities, you could support or mentor teachers who are less confident.

### Activity 1: Visual resources for language and learning

Visual resources are stimulating and reinforcing for language learning and learning in general.

Images can:

- support learners at different levels of the language of instruction
- be current and relevant to learners
- illustrate words and ideas
- add interest to your lessons
- show places and people that are far away
- show processes that are not possible in the classroom
- reduce how much you need to talk and explain.

Use a phone or other device to download a visual resource. This could be:

- video (e.g. demonstrating a science experiment or illustrating a topic such as driverless cars)
- photographs (e.g. of famous historical figures or faraway locations)
- artwork to copy or discuss
- graph or chart
- slide show
- map.

Then make a plan to integrate the resource into a lesson.

Downloading will depend on how large the resource is, and your connectivity.

Have you tried digital tools that can 'capture' images without downloading everything? There is a 'snipping' tool that is built into most digital devices. Look for the 'scissors' icon and practise using it.

You can connect the device to a projector if you have one<sup>5</sup>, and show the resource on a sheet or wall for students to see and respond to. Students can:

- develop vocabulary by describing what they see
- ask and answer questions about it
- write about it.

Or you can let students see the resource in pairs or small groups around the device. If you organise the presentation in this way, get students to see the resource and then go off to work on an activity about it.

After the lesson, think about these questions:

- How difficult or easy did you find this?
- Did the resource make the lesson more interesting and motivating for students?
- Did the resource make teaching more enjoyable?

You can share your resource with colleagues if you have a professional chat group (on WhatsApp, Viber or Facebook, for example).

## Activity 2: Audio resources for language and learning

Audio resources are stimulating for speaking, listening and learning. You can practise your own speaking and pronunciation, and get students to practise comprehension, vocabulary, speaking and listening. Audio resources can also give you a break from lecturing!

### Try a speaker

Download spoken poetry, an audio book, a speech, interview or music and play this through a speaker.

Pause at different points to check students' understanding or pose questions for them to answer or discuss.

### Try a translation tool

This converts one language to another. There are free versions online, such as Google Translate.

You can notice similarities of words in different languages. You can compare different ways to say the same words or phrases.

If you have access to a projector, demonstrate to students how the tool works and practise vocabulary and phrases in translation.

You can try a shared writing activity with the class:

- get students to dictate the lines of a story or a poem in one language
- process and read out the translation.

### Try a text-to-voice tool

This converts written words into computer-generated speech. There are free versions

5. We have seen teachers improvise a projector using a cardboard box and a magnifying glass. In some contexts, there are mobile projectors that are shared in a district or region.



online. Many digital devices now have built-in text-to-voice tools.

Text-to-voice is 'multisensory'. It allows us to see and hear what we read. This can:

- improve word recognition
- increase the ability to pay attention and remember information
- help us correct our own writing
- improve pronunciation and listening.

## 5. Activities for informal learning facilitators



Prepare for these activities by knowing how to stay safe online, and how to decide if something online is reliable and trustworthy.

There are some suggestions in the Resources section.

### Activity 1: Find out what learners know and use

Where do learners see ICTs being used, and for what purposes?

What ICTs do learners have access to?

You can adapt and use the Digital Skills Audit from the Digital Heritage Hub – the link is in the Resources section. Or adapt the list from the table in the Introduction.

Do learners use a mobile phone for any of these?

- calls
- SMS
- games
- entertainment
- radio
- social media
- internet
- calculator
- email

- banking
- dictionary
- diary.

Or ask learners to tell or show you as a diagram:

- ICTs that I use
- ICTs that I know about but do not use
- ICTs that my family (parents or older siblings) use but I do not
- ICTs that I would like to learn about.

When you know what the learners have access to, what they would like to know about and what is permitted to them, you can plan activities for their interests.

Ask learners to choose as a group what they would like to learn about when it comes to ICTs. What you do next will depend on what the group decides.

If learners have the same or a similar homework assignment, choose an activity that will help them to work on it.

For instance, learners might know about Facebook, but are prohibited by their parents from using it. In these situations, learners should not do something that their parents do not allow. You can discuss the reasons why parents might prohibit certain platforms or social media.

Or learners might know about something like Instagram, but are not sure how it actually works. You can demonstrate how this platform works and how learners can stay safe if they use it in the future. You could start an Instagram account or a WhatsApp group with your learners, but only if their parents allow this.

Learners might be interested in AI – what it is and how it works. Learners might know about 'Siri' or 'Alexa' or 'ChatGPT'. With a tablet, a Bluetooth speaker or a projector, you can demonstrate and discuss these tools.

You could:

- search the internet using key words (see Activity 2)
- use an online calculator
- look up historical dates or a timeline
- use a speaker to listen and practise English or another language
- listen to an AI programme on a telephone automatic answering system (e.g. 'Press 1 for yes, press 2 for no', etc.)
- look at email formats and how to write an email
- try out text-to-voice software for speaking practise
- try out a translation tool for vocabulary practice
- experiment with a mapping program to show directions
- travel the world with Google Earth
- use a search engine for information about a topic, such as future careers
- complete a digital form together
- find out how to make a secure password
- update devices and software.

## Activity 2: Searching and reliability

Discuss basic online safety:

- Don't share personal information online.
- Not all downloads are safe and some may contain viruses or malware.

- Public Wi-Fi networks may not be protected by a password.
- Do not click on any 'pop-up' ads.

Demonstrate how to search the internet using key words or a question.

Ask learners to choose a topic and find out something about it, using key words or asking a question. For example:

**Question:** *Who was the first woman explorer?*

**Key words:** *woman explorer world*

Learners can do this in pairs or groups. Each pair or group can find out a different fact about a topic. See which words work better for good results!

Discuss how to decide if the information learners find is reliable. What is the source of the information? Is the source a political party, a charity, a government department, a business, a well-known author, a university or an anonymous person?

How would we decide what is more and less reliable and trustworthy?

## 6. Resources

To find the OER online and access more digital resources including videos, scan here.



### See also:

**British Council 2022 EDGE report, *Girls' education and empowerment: Exploring the potential of English language and digital skills*:**

[www.teachingenglish.org.uk/sites/teacheng/files/2022-04/Girls%27%20education%20and%20empowerment.pdf](http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/sites/teacheng/files/2022-04/Girls%27%20education%20and%20empowerment.pdf)

**British Council video about the EDGE report:**

[www.britishcouncil.org/english-assessment/english-programmes/english-language-empowerment/english-digital-girls-education](http://www.britishcouncil.org/english-assessment/english-programmes/english-language-empowerment/english-digital-girls-education)

**British Council online safety for kids:**

[learnenglishkids.britishcouncil.org/listen-watch/video-zone/five-internet-safety-tips](http://learnenglishkids.britishcouncil.org/listen-watch/video-zone/five-internet-safety-tips)

**Childline:**

[www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/bullying-abuse-safety/online-mobile-safety/staying-safe-online/](http://www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/bullying-abuse-safety/online-mobile-safety/staying-safe-online/)

**Digital Skills Audit Template:**

[culturehive/Digital Heritage Hub](http://culturehive/Digital%20Heritage%20Hub)

**Girl Effect/Vodafone Foundation report: Real Girls, Real Lives, Connected:**

[static1.squarespace.com/static/5b8d51837c9327d89d936a30/t/5bbe7bd6085229cf6860f582/1539210418583/GE\\_VO\\_Full\\_Report.pdf](http://static1.squarespace.com/static/5b8d51837c9327d89d936a30/t/5bbe7bd6085229cf6860f582/1539210418583/GE_VO_Full_Report.pdf)

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