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THIRD LANGUAGE EDUCATION IN A MULTILINGUAL CONTEXT: CLASSROOM PRACTICES AND LANGUAGE ACHIEVEMENT IN CLASS VI IN ARUNACHAL PRADESH

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Abstract

The present study examines the implementation and effectiveness of third-language education in Class VI in Arunachal Pradesh, focusing on classroom practices and language achievement across ten tribal languages. In the context of India's multilingual education policy, the study investigates instructional methods, teaching-learning resources, teacher practices, student engagement, assessment procedures, and learners' competencies in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. A mixed-method approach was adopted, drawing on data collected from 41 schools and 680 students across nine districts, supplemented by classroom observations and discussions with teachers, students, and community representatives. Student achievement was assessed in four areas: vocabulary, language usage, reading comprehension, and textbook-based questions. The findings reveal that classroom instruction predominantly relies on reading and explanation, with limited use of interactive strategies such as storytelling and dramatization. Listening and writing activities were relatively common, whereas speaking opportunities and communicative practice were limited. Assessment practices also varied across languages, indicating a lack of uniformity in evaluating language competencies. The overall average achievement score was 40.58%, suggesting considerable scope for improvement. Mean performance was highest in Tangsa (53.93%) and lowest in Wancho (23.80%). Language usage recorded the lowest average score (32.36%), while textbook-based questions showed comparatively better performance (48.20%). These differences should be interpreted in relation to instructional practices, learning resources, language exposure, and assessment conditions rather than as inherent differences in learners' abilities. The study highlights the need for systematic teacher training, culturally relevant learning materials, interactive and communicative pedagogy, and consistent competency-based assessment. Strengthening these areas can improve learning outcomes while promoting inclusive education and preserving the linguistic and cultural heritage of indigenous communities in Arunachal Pradesh.

Keywords: Third-language education; Multilingual education; Tribal languages; Language achievement; Arunachal Pradesh.

INTRODUCTION

India's linguistic diversity presents both opportunities and challenges for an education system committed to equitable and inclusive learning. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 promotes mother-tongue-based multilingual education and recommends the use of the home, mother, or regional language as the medium of instruction, preferably until Grade VIII and beyond wherever feasible. UNESCO (2016) emphasises that children learn more effectively in languages they understand, while the NCERT Position Paper on the Teaching of Indian Languages (2006) recognises multilingualism as an educational resource. However, implementing these principles remains challenging in communities where indigenous languages have limited standardised orthographies, teaching materials, and trained teachers. Arunachal Pradesh, with its numerous tribal languages and dialectal varieties, provides an important context for examining these challenges. Although English and Hindi occupy prominent positions in the school curriculum, several indigenous languages have been introduced as third-language subjects at the middle-school level. Textbook development by the State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT) and community-based literary organisations represents a significant initiative towards preserving linguistic and cultural heritage. Nevertheless, dialectal differences,

shortages of instructional resources, inadequate teacher preparation, and inconsistent classroom practices may affect the quality of language education. Against this background, the present study, entitled Third Language Education in a Multilingual Context: Classroom Practices and Language Achievement in Class VI in Arunachal Pradesh, examines the teaching-learning environment and language competencies of students studying ten tribal languages. Using mixed-method data collected from 41 schools and 680 students across nine districts, supplemented by classroom observations and discussions with teachers, students, and community representatives, the study investigates instructional methods, learning resources, student engagement, assessment practices, and achievement in vocabulary, language usage, reading comprehension, and textbook-based questions. By examining classroom practices alongside learning outcomes, the study seeks to identify existing strengths and gaps and provide empirical evidence for improving teacher preparation, developing culturally relevant learning materials, and promoting competency-oriented, communicative, and inclusive multilingual education while safeguarding Arunachal Pradesh's indigenous linguistic diversity.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The theoretical foundations of multilingual education highlight the interrelationship between language development, cognition, social interaction, and educational achievement. Vygotsky (1962) emphasised the role of language and social interaction in cognitive development, suggesting that meaningful communication supports the development of higher mental processes. Chomsky (1965), through the distinction between linguistic competence and performance, provided a conceptual basis for understanding the difference between learners' underlying language knowledge and their actual use of language. Building on this perspective, Hymes (1972) introduced the concept of communicative competence, highlighting the importance of using language appropriately in different social contexts rather than merely mastering grammatical structures. Brown (2007) similarly viewed language learning as a multidimensional process shaped by linguistic knowledge, practice, and contextual influences. Krashen (1982) stressed the importance of comprehensible input in second-language acquisition, while Cummins (2000) examined the relationship between language development, bilingualism, and educational opportunities. Collectively, these perspectives suggest that effective third-language education should move beyond memorisation and mechanical repetition towards meaningful interaction and contextualised learning that develops listening, speaking, reading, and writing. These principles are particularly relevant in Arunachal Pradesh, where learners may differ in their home languages, familiarity with the language variety prescribed in textbooks, and opportunities for exposure beyond the classroom.

Indian scholarship and educational policy have further emphasised the need to recognise linguistic diversity and address the educational disadvantages experienced by speakers of minority languages. Mohanty (2010) argued that inadequate recognition of children's home languages can reinforce language-based inequalities in education, while Mohanty, Panda, and Pal (2019) examined the complex relationship between language policy, educational practice, and India's multilingual realities. The NCERT Position Paper on the Teaching of Indian Languages (2006) advocates building on learners' existing linguistic resources, and UNESCO (2016) underscores the difficulties in comprehension and participation that arise when instruction is delivered in unfamiliar languages. At the regional level, Sarajubala (2011) examined issues concerning tribal-language teaching in Manipur, while Sarajubala (2019) explored community aspirations and responses to mother-tongue education. These contributions provide a foundation for understanding the challenges of incorporating indigenous languages into formal schooling. However, effective implementation also requires trained teachers, appropriate textbooks, suitable orthographies, culturally relevant teaching materials, and consistent assessment practices. Addressing this concern, the present study examines classroom instruction and student achievement in ten tribal languages taught in Class VI in Arunachal Pradesh. By assessing vocabulary, language usage, reading comprehension, and textbook-based knowledge alongside observed teaching practices, it provides empirical evidence on learners' competencies and the challenges of implementing multilingual education. The study thus contributes to discussions on communicative pedagogy, competency-based assessment, and inclusive language education that supports both educational achievement and indigenous linguistic preservation.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The present study aims to examine the implementation and effectiveness of third-language education in Class VI in Arunachal Pradesh, with particular reference to ten tribal languages. The specific objectives are to investigate the existing language-learning environment in schools, including classroom practices, instructional methods, teaching-learning materials, teacher preparedness, and student engagement in listening, speaking, reading, and writing activities. The study also seeks to assess students' language competencies in vocabulary, language usage, reading comprehension, and textbook-based knowledge. Furthermore, it aims to identify variations in learning achievement across the selected languages and explore the pedagogical, linguistic, and resource-related factors that may influence students' performance. Based on these findings, the study intends to suggest

appropriate measures for strengthening mother-tongue-based multilingual education through improved teaching strategies, competency-oriented assessment, adequate learning resources, and greater community participation.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study adopted a mixed-method research design combining quantitative assessment of students' language competencies with qualitative investigation of classroom teaching-learning practices. Data were collected from 41 schools across nine districts of Arunachal Pradesh, covering 680 Class VI students learning ten tribal languages: Adi, Galo, Idu-Mishmi, Kaman-Mishmi, Nyishi, Tai-Khampti, Tagin, Tangsa, Singpho, and Wancho. The study employed classroom observation schedules, semi-structured interview schedules, focus group discussions, and language competency tests as the principal instruments of data collection. Classroom observations were conducted in 34 classrooms to examine the medium of instruction, teaching strategies, student participation, use of locally relevant examples, availability of learning resources, and assessment practices relating to listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Discussions and interviews with students, teachers, parents, and representatives of community-based organisations provided additional information on the challenges associated with third-language education. The competency test assessed four components: vocabulary, language usage, reading comprehension, and textbook-based questions. The first three components were aligned with NCERT learning outcomes, while the National Achievement Survey provided a reference for developing reading-comprehension items. Quantitative data were analysed using frequencies, percentages, and average scores to examine classroom practices and achievement patterns across languages. Qualitative information was analysed descriptively to identify recurring pedagogical, linguistic, and resource-related challenges affecting third-language teaching and learning.

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The findings from the present analysis provide an overview of the implementation of third-language education in Class VI across ten tribal languages in Arunachal Pradesh. It highlights the distribution of languages across districts, classroom instructional practices, student engagement in listening, speaking, reading and writing (LSRW), the use of locally relevant learning resources, assessment methods, and differences in students' learning achievements.

Table 1: Languages taught as third-language subjects in Arunachal Pradesh by District and Class

S. No.	Language	Districts of Instruction	Class VI	Class VII	Class VIII
1	Adi	East Siang, Siang, Upper Siang, Shi-Yomi, Lower Dibang Valley, Namsai	Yes	Yes	Yes
2	Apatani	Lower Subansiri	Yes	No	No
3	Galo	Upper Subansiri, West Siang, Leparada, Lower Siang	Yes	Yes	Yes
4	Idu-Mishmi	Dibang Valley, Lower Dibang Valley	Yes	No	No
5	Kaman-Mishmi	Anjaw, Lohit	Yes	No	No
6	Taraon-Mishmi	Anjaw	Yes	No	No
7	Tagin	Upper Subansiri	Yes	No	No
8	Tangsa	Changlang	Yes	No	No
9	Wancho	Tirap, Longding	Yes	Yes	Yes
10	Singpho	Namsai, Changlang	Yes	No	No
11	Tai-Khampti	Namsai	Yes	Yes	Yes
12	Tutsa	Tirap	Yes	No	No
13	Nyishi	Itanagar Capital Complex (ICC), Papum Pare, Keyi Panyor, East Kameng, Kurung Kumey, Kra Daadi, Kamle	Yes	Yes	Yes

Yes indicates that the language is taught in the respective class; No indicates that it is not indicated as being taught

Table 1 presents the distribution of third-language instruction across districts and classes. It shows that thirteen languages, including Adi, Apatani, Galo, Idu-Mishmi, Kaman-Mishmi, Taraon-Mishmi, Tagin, Tangsa, Wancho, Singpho, Tai-Khampti, Tutsa and Nyishi, are taught in different districts of Arunachal Pradesh. However, their availability across educational stages is uneven. Adi, Galo, Wancho, Tai-Khampti and Nyishi are indicated as being taught in Classes VI, VII and VIII, whereas the remaining eight languages are listed only for Class VI. This variation suggests that opportunities for sustained mother-tongue-based learning may differ

across linguistic communities. The discontinuation of certain languages beyond Class VI could affect the continuity of language development and limit opportunities for students to strengthen their literacy skills. Table 2 further reveals that bilingual instruction using Hindi is the dominant classroom practice across all ten observed languages. All observed classes in Galo, Idu-Mishmi, Kaman-Mishmi, Nyishi, Tai-Khampti, Singpho and Wancho used bilingual instruction, while Adi and Tagin had one class each, or 25%, where teaching was conducted solely in the mother tongue. Tangsa also showed a predominantly bilingual pattern, although its reported figures require clarification because four of five classes are recorded as bilingual, equivalent to 80%, while the remaining class appears to use the mother tongue. The findings indicate that Hindi serves as an important medium for facilitating classroom communication, but greater use of the tribal languages may be necessary to support comprehension and develop confidence in learning through the mother tongue.

Table 2: Medium of instruction

Sl. No.	Language	No. of classes observed	Solely in mother tongue (n, %)	Bilingual with Hindi (n, %)
1	Adi	4	1 (25)	3 (75)
2	Galo	3	-	3 (100)
3	Idu-Mishmi	2	-	2 (100)
4	Kaman Mishmi	3	-	3 (100)
5	Nyshi	3	-	3 (100)
6	Tai-khampti	4	-	4 (100)
7	Tagin	4	1 (25)	3 (75)
8	Tangsa	5	1 (25)	4 (80)
9	Singpho	3	-	3 (100)
10	Wancho	3	-	3 (100)

Table 3 examines the transactional strategies employed in third-language classrooms. Reading and explanation were observed in all ten languages, indicating that teaching predominantly follows a teacher-directed, text-oriented approach. Storytelling was observed in six languages namely Galo, Tai-Khampti, Tagin, Tangsa, Singpho and Wancho, while dramatization was reported in only three languages say Galo, Tangsa and Singpho. Roles play and other alternative strategies were not observed in any of the classrooms. These findings suggest that although some teachers incorporate oral narratives and dramatic activities, interactive and experiential teaching methods remain limited. Storytelling and dramatization can connect language learning with local traditions, folklore and cultural experiences, thereby improving comprehension and student participation. Table 4 presents a similar pattern in teachers' activities related to LSRW skills. Reading the text was used to develop listening, students were asked to speak words written on the blackboard, reading activities were largely restricted to individual words, and writing involved alphabet practice. All four activities were observed across the ten languages. While these practices provide a foundation for developing basic literacy, they do not sufficiently demonstrate the integration of listening comprehension, spontaneous speaking, fluent reading and meaningful written expression. The findings therefore point to the need for a more balanced, communicative and competency-oriented pedagogical approach.

Table 3: Classroom Transactional Strategies Used in Third-Language Teaching

S. No.	Transactional Strategy	AD	GL	IM	KM	NY	TK	TN	TS	SP	WC	Total
1	Reading and Explanation	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	10
2	Role Play	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	0
3	Storytelling	No	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	6
4	Dramatization	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	3
5	Any Other	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	0
Yes = observed; No = not observed. AD = Adi; GL = Galo; IM = Idu-Mishmi; KM = Kaman-Mishmi; NY = Nyishi; TK = Tai-Khampti; TN = Tagin; TS = Tangsa; SP = Singpho; WC = Wancho												

The variations in students' engagement across the four language skills are highlighted in Table 5. Listening engagement was adequate in seven languages (70%), whereas three languages namely Idu-Mishmi, Kaman-Mishmi and Nyishi—showed inadequate engagement. Speaking was the weakest area, with adequate engagement reported in only Adi and Tagin, representing 20% of the languages, while the remaining eight languages (80%) showed inadequate engagement. This indicates that students may have limited opportunities to

express themselves orally, participate in discussions or construct sentences independently. Reading engagement was adequate in six languages (60%) but inadequate in four (40%), suggesting differences in students' ability to participate in reading activities across linguistic groups. Writing showed the most favourable pattern, with adequate engagement in nine languages (90%) and inadequate engagement only in Nyishi (10%). However, this result should be interpreted alongside Table 4, which indicates that writing activities frequently consisted of alphabet practice. Thus, high writing engagement does not necessarily imply proficiency in composing meaningful sentences or paragraphs. Table 6 further indicates that teachers' reinforcement and the use of exemplars from tribal contexts were each observed in five languages (50%). Reinforcement was reported in Idu-Mishmi, Nyishi, Tagin, Singpho and Wancho, whereas locally relevant exemplars were used in Adi, Galo, Kaman-Mishmi, Tai-Khampti and Tangsa. The findings suggest scope for more consistent use of positive feedback, familiar cultural examples and community-based learning materials to improve students' interest and understanding.

Table 4. Teacher's Activities Related to Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing (LSRW)

Sl. No.	LSRW Skill	Teacher's Activity	AD	GL	IM	KM	NY	TK	TN	TS	SP	WC	Total
1	Listening (L)	Reading the text	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	10
2	Speaking (S)	Students pronounce blackboard words	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	10
3	Reading ®	Word reading only	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	10
4	Writing (W)	Alphabet writing	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	10
Yes = activity observed in class													

Table 5: Engagement of Students in Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing (LSRW)

Sl. No.	LSRW Skill	Level of Engagement	AD	GL	IM	KM	NY	TK	TN	TS	SP	WC	Total (%)
1	Listening (L)	Adequate	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	7 (70)
		Inadequate	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	3 (30)
2	Speaking (S)	Adequate	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	2 (20)
		Inadequate	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	8 (80)
3	Reading (R)	Adequate	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	6 (60)
		Inadequate	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes	4 (40)
4	Writing (W)	Adequate	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	9 (90)
		Inadequate	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	1 (10)
Yes = adequate engagement; No = inadequate engagement													

Table 7 describes the assessment techniques used to evaluate LSRW skills and reveals considerable variation across languages. Listening was assessed through dictation, repetition, sound practice and responses to questions following the teacher's reading. Speaking assessment included oral answers, pronunciation correction and responses to teacher questions; however, no speaking activity was observed for Tagin. Reading assessment generally involved textbook excerpts, individual words or rereading after the teacher's demonstration. Writing assessment ranged from copying letters and dictation to answering textbook questions, writing short essays and composing brief paragraphs. Notably, no specific writing assessment was conducted during the observed Idu-Mishmi class, while Tai-Khampti writing was limited to copying letters. These differences suggest the absence of a consistent, skill-based assessment framework across languages. Table 8 presents the students' average competency scores and shows an overall performance of 40.58%. Tangsa recorded the highest overall score (53.93%), followed by Singpho (53.43%), Adi (52.80%) and Idu-Mishmi (52.50%). Wancho recorded the lowest score (23.80%), followed by Tai-Khampti (28.20%) and Galo (32.36%). Across competency areas, book-based questions had the highest average score (48.20%), closely followed by reading comprehension (47.93%), while vocabulary averaged 40.07% and language usage recorded the lowest average (32.36%). Singpho performed best in book-based questions (71.32%), while Idu-Mishmi achieved the highest reading-comprehension score (68.60%). Tangsa recorded the highest language-usage score (50.66%), whereas Tai-Khampti had the lowest vocabulary score (18.10%) and Wancho the lowest language-usage score (12.66%).

Collectively, Tables 7 and 8 demonstrate the need to strengthen oral communication, vocabulary development and practical language usage through differentiated instruction, systematic assessment, adequate teaching-learning materials and greater community participation. The comparatively low overall achievement indicates that improving the continuity, quality and contextual relevance of third-language education should be a priority for strengthening mother-tongue-based multilingual education in Arunachal Pradesh.

Table 6: Learning Resources and Use of Exemplars from the Local Tribal Context

Sl. No.	Transactional Strategy	AD	GL	IM	KM	NY	TK	TN	TS	SP	WC	Total
1	Teacher's Reinforcement	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	**5**
2	Use of Exemplars from the Tribal Context	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	**5**

DISCUSSION

The findings of the present study demonstrate that the implementation of third-language education in Class VI across the ten tribal languages of Arunachal Pradesh has made important provisions for linguistic inclusion, although considerable challenges remain in ensuring effective learning outcomes. The availability of tribal languages across districts and educational stages is uneven, while bilingual instruction using Hindi predominates in the observed classrooms. The limited continuation of several languages beyond Class VI raises concerns regarding the continuity of language learning and the development of sustained literacy. These findings are consistent with Mohanty (2010), who argued that insufficient recognition of children's home languages can reproduce educational inequalities. Similarly, the NCERT Position Paper on the Teaching of Indian Languages (2006) emphasises the importance of recognising learners' existing linguistic resources in formal education. From the authors' perspective, the frequent use of Hindi may facilitate communication where teachers and students require a common language; however, it should complement rather than displace meaningful engagement with the tribal language being learned. In accordance with Vygotsky's (1962) perspective on the relationship between language and cognitive development, classroom interaction should enable students to connect new linguistic knowledge with familiar experiences and cultural contexts. Therefore, the effective implementation of multilingual education requires continuity across classes, appropriate instructional materials, and a supportive environment in which tribal languages are used actively as resources for learning.

Table 7. Assessment Techniques Used to Evaluate Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing (LSRW) Across Languages

Sl. No.	Language	Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing
1	Adi	Word reading, sound practice and dictation	Reading words from the textbook	Reading practice limited to individual words	Writing letters and answering textbook questions
2	Galo	Dictation	Reading excerpts from the textbook	Reading excerpts from the textbook	Writing answers to textbook questions
3	Idu-Mishmi	Repeating words after the teacher	Checking and correcting pronunciation	Reading excerpts from the textbook	No specific assessment conducted during the observation
4	Kaman-Mishmi	Teacher reads a few lines and asks questions in Kaman	Answering questions in short sentences	Students read textbook lessons, with corrections	Writing two or three sentences on the blackboard
5	Nyishi	Answering questions after the teacher reads the text	Answering the questions asked by the teacher	Reading individual words	Word dictation
6	Tai-Khampti	No listening assessment conducted	Reading excerpts from the textbook	Reading practice based on the lesson taught	Copying letters, with no other writing activity
7	Tagin	Dictation	No speaking activity observed	Reading excerpts from the textbook	Dictation

8	Tangsa	Teacher reads a few lines and asks questions in Tangsa	Answering the teacher's questions	Reading excerpts from the textbook	Writing a short essay based on the textbook exercise
9	Singpho	Dictation	Giving oral answers	Reading excerpts from the textbook	Dictation
10	Wancho	Answering questions after the teacher reads the text	Answering the teacher's questions	Teacher reads the text first, followed by students' rereading	Writing a short paragraph of two or three lines based on the text

The classroom practices reveal a considerable emphasis on reading and explanation, word reading, alphabet writing, and teacher-directed activities, while role play and several other interactive methods were absent. Although storytelling and dramatization were observed in some languages, their implementation was not sufficiently widespread to establish a consistently communicative learning environment. The student-engagement patterns are particularly noteworthy: listening engagement was adequate in 70% of the languages, reading in 60%, and writing in 90%, whereas speaking engagement was adequate in only 20%. These findings suggest that students may have more opportunities to receive, recognise, or reproduce language than to use it independently for meaningful communication. Hymes (1972) argued that communicative competence extends beyond grammatical knowledge to the appropriate use of language in social situations. Similarly, Krashen (1982) emphasised the importance of comprehensible input, which becomes more effective when learners understand language within meaningful contexts. The authors therefore contend that third-language teaching should incorporate conversations, storytelling, pair work, role play, picture description, songs, and locally relevant narratives to develop both receptive and productive skills. Furthermore, teacher reinforcement and the use of examples drawn from tribal contexts were observed in only half of the languages. This uneven implementation suggests scope for improving teachers' pedagogical preparedness and strengthening culturally responsive teaching. Drawing on Cummins (2000), the authors argue that students' existing linguistic and cultural knowledge should be treated as an educational resource rather than a barrier. Greater involvement of community elders, local writers, parents, and language organisations could help teachers develop authentic examples, oral narratives, vocabulary resources, and supplementary learning materials.

Table 8: Average score (in %) of the learners across languages

Sl. No.	Language	Vocabulary	Language usage	Reading Comprehension	Book based questions	Overall performance
1.	Adi	50.00	36.83	66.66	64.9	52.8
2.	Galo	36.33	24.66	46.00	31.33	32.36
3.	Idu-mishmi	54.8	37.6	68.6	53.2	52.5
4.	Kaman -mishmi	40.7	44.1	41.9	21.3	35.0
5.	Nyishi	52.66	20.46	30.93	60.68	35.76
6.	Tagin	39.5	24.66	42.26	46.00	38.10
7.	Tai-Khampti	18.1	34.00	34.66	40.66	28.2
8.	Tangsa	46.4	50.66	59.13	64.66	53.93
9.	Singpho	51.00	38.02	62.4	71.32	53.43
10.	Wancho	31.23	12.66	26.83	28.00	23.8
Average		**40.07**	**32.36**	**47.93**	**48.20**	**40.58**

The assessment practices and competency scores provide further evidence of the need to strengthen the quality and consistency of third-language education. Assessment methods varied across languages, ranging from dictation, pronunciation correction, and individual-word reading to short essays and paragraph writing. The absence of particular assessment activities in some classrooms indicates that all four language skills may not receive equal attention. The overall competency score of 40.58% is a concern, particularly because average performance was lowest in language usage (32.36%), compared with vocabulary (40.07%), reading comprehension (47.93%), and textbook-based questions (48.20%). Tangsa, Singpho, Adi, and Idu-Mishmi recorded comparatively higher overall scores, whereas Wancho and Tai-Khampti recorded lower scores. These variations should not be interpreted as inherent differences in students' linguistic abilities; instead, they may reflect differences in instructional practices, opportunities for language exposure, learning resources, assessment alignment, and familiarity with the language variety used in teaching. Chomsky's (1965) distinction between linguistic competence and performance provides a useful conceptual basis for recognising that test results may

not fully represent learners' underlying language knowledge. Brown (2007) likewise supports a multidimensional understanding of language learning. From the authors' perspective, the findings call for common learning-outcome frameworks adapted to the linguistic characteristics of each language, regular formative assessment, teacher training, and targeted remedial support. Consistent with UNESCO's (2016) emphasis on reducing language barriers in education, strengthening third-language education requires sustained institutional support, culturally appropriate teaching materials, meaningful oral interaction, and active community participation. Since the study is descriptive, the observed differences indicate areas for improvement rather than establishing causal relationships between classroom practices and achievement.

CONCLUSION

The present study concludes that third-language education in Class VI across the tribal languages of Arunachal Pradesh represents an important initiative for promoting linguistic diversity, cultural preservation, and inclusive education. However, its implementation faces challenges relating to the continuity of language instruction, classroom pedagogy, teacher preparedness, and the availability of appropriate learning resources. The predominance of bilingual instruction using Hindi, together with the extensive reliance on reading, explanation, word recognition, and alphabet writing, indicates that classroom practices require further development. Although student engagement was relatively favourable in listening and writing, speaking emerged as the weakest skill, highlighting the limited opportunities available for meaningful oral communication. The inconsistent use of storytelling, dramatization, local cultural examples, and teacher reinforcement further suggests the need for more interactive, learner-centred, and culturally responsive teaching approaches. The overall language competency score of 40.58% indicates considerable scope for improving learning achievement, particularly in language usage, which recorded the lowest average score. Differences in performance across languages underline the importance of understanding learners' linguistic backgrounds, instructional conditions, and access to learning materials rather than attributing achievement differences to language groups themselves. The study recommends strengthening teacher training, ensuring the continuity of tribal-language instruction across educational stages, developing culturally relevant textbooks and supplementary materials, and adopting systematic competency-based assessment covering listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Greater participation of parents, community elders, local writers, and tribal-language organisations should also be encouraged to enrich classroom learning and preserve indigenous linguistic knowledge. Regular monitoring and remedial support should be provided to address language-specific learning difficulties. Overall, effective third-language education requires a coordinated approach involving educational authorities, schools, teachers, and local communities. By integrating meaningful communication, contextualised instruction, and consistent assessment, Arunachal Pradesh can strengthen mother-tongue-based multilingual education and ensure that tribal languages contribute more effectively to students' educational development and cultural identity.

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