

# Language development in multilingual children and challenges as well as opportunities for educational systems

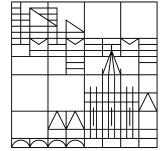
Theo Marinis



Conference *Shared language: integration through the prism of multilingualism*, Tallinn, 14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> November 2019

# Some preliminaries:

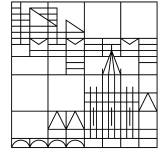
## Multilingualism



- **Multilingualism is a natural phenomenon and has always existed, it's not something new, e.g.**
  - 3<sup>rd</sup> millenium BC Mesopotamia;
  - Roman empire;
  - England: English: common people, French: ruling class, Latin: church;
  - Ottoman empire;
  - ...

# Some preliminaries:

## Multiliteracy

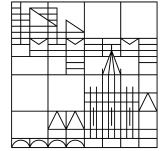


- **Multiliteracy is the ability to read/write in several languages;**
  - A soldier in the Roman army didn't have to be literate in multiple languages;
  - An administrator did;
- **(Multi)literacy depends on education;**
  - Does the education system offer opportunities for children to become multiliterate?



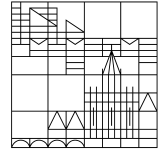
Mesopotamia (Sumerian-Akkadian -> Babylonian glossary, Louvre)

# Why are multilingualism & multiliteracy important in the 21<sup>st</sup> century



- **Increase in the number of multilingual citizens:**
  - **Urbanisation** → migration within countries;
  - **Globalisation** → migration across countries;
  - **EU policies** on language learning in schools;
  - Recognition that **language rights** are an integral part of **Human Rights (UNESCO) & support of minority languages**, example Welsh:
    - Language rights of minorities are an integral part of well established, basic human rights widely recognised in international law, just as are the rights of women and children.

# Why is **multiliteracy** important in the 21<sup>st</sup> century



- In the past literacy was for the elite, not anymore;
- Literacy skills are necessary to function in the 21<sup>st</sup> century:
  - navigating through a city;
  - reading a rent contract;
  - reading an employment contract;
  - reading terms and conditions for privacy;
  - **reading** → window to **culture**;
  - **reading** → tool for **learning** and developing skills → **employment**

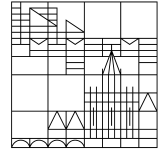


Singapore



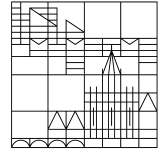
London

# Present talk



- **Two studies addressing language and literacy development in multilingual children in two countries with a large number of multilingual families:**
  1. **the UK** (multilingualism resulting from migration)
  2. **India** (multilingualism as an integral part of the Indian society)
- **General Implications & take home messages**

# Take home messages

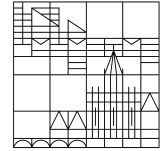


1. **Supporting the languages of migrant communities** (heritage languages) can bring **benefits** to the **language of the society** (majority language).
2. **English medium schools** are **not a ticket for success**. **Mothertongue education** brings **advantages** in educational outcomes.

# Study 1:



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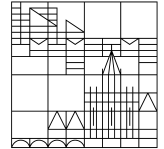
Work with PhD student Theodora Papastefanou

## Background:

- **Perception** that **supporting the languages of the migrant communities** (heritage languages) **may negatively affect English** (the majority language).
- Some schools & teachers recommending families to use English in the home.

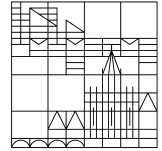
**There is limited research in the UK on how children develop the two languages side by side and if the perception above is true.**





# Aims

1. Compare how bilingual primary school children perform in the **heritage (Greek)** vs. the **majority language (English)** in **language** and **reading** tasks;
2. Compare their performance in **English** with **monolingual English children**
3. Address if there is a **relationship** between their **language and reading skills** and **language use within/outside the home**.



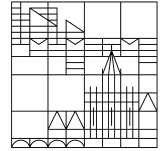
# Participants

40 Greek-English bilingual children (Year 1=20; Year 3=20) and  
40 monolingual English speaking children (Year 1=20; Year  
3=20)

Attending **mainstream English schools** and a **Greek  
Saturday school**.

**Parents filled in a survey about language use.**

# Language & reading tasks



## Language

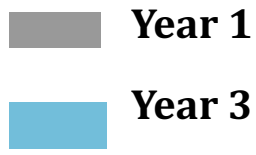
**Blending:** Children listened to the sounds of a word separately and had to put them together to create the word, e.g. a-r-i-th-m-o-ς (arithmos) (= number).

**Elision:** Participant had to say a word without saying one syllable (e.g. /lemoni/ (= lemon) without /le/ → /moni/).

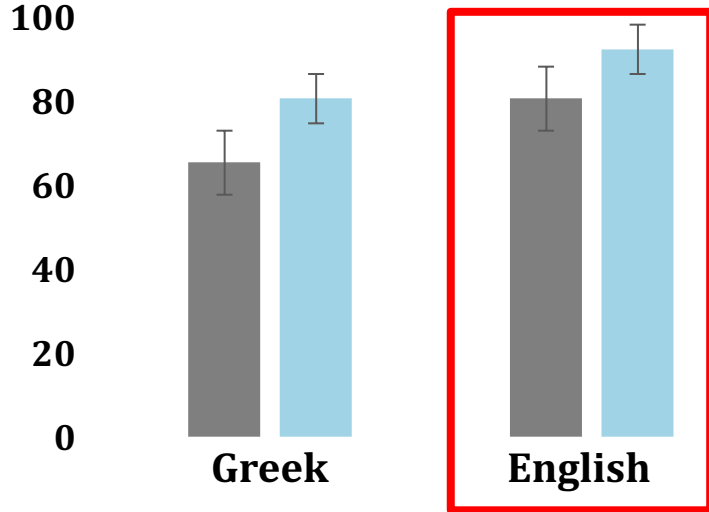
## Reading

**Real-word Reading:** Children had to read real words.

**Pseudo-word Reading Decoding:** Children had to read pseudo-words.

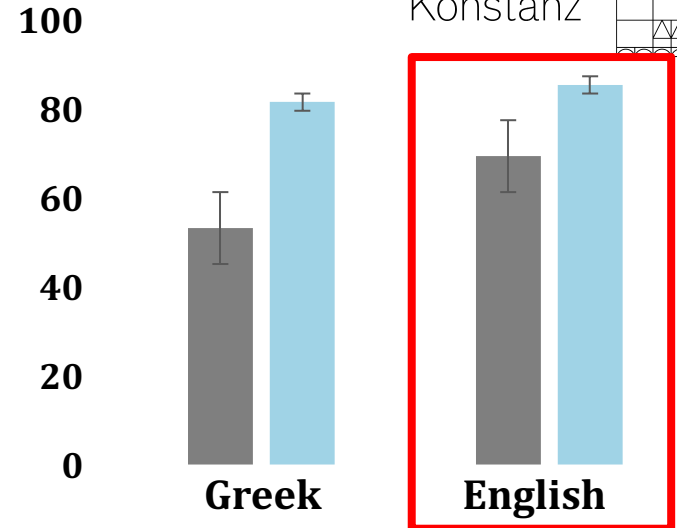
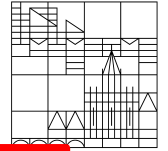


### Blending

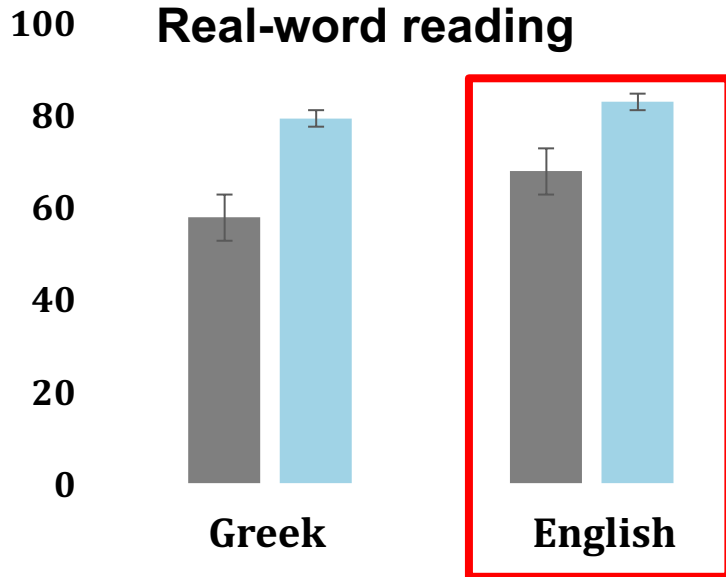


### Elision

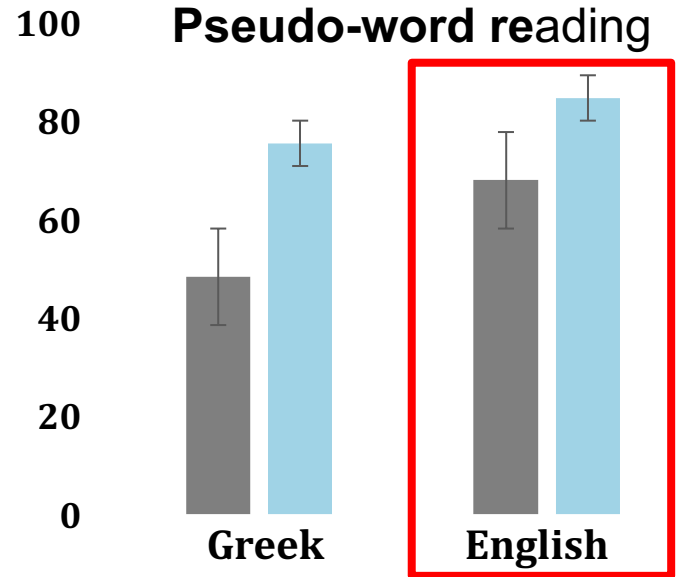
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Konstanz



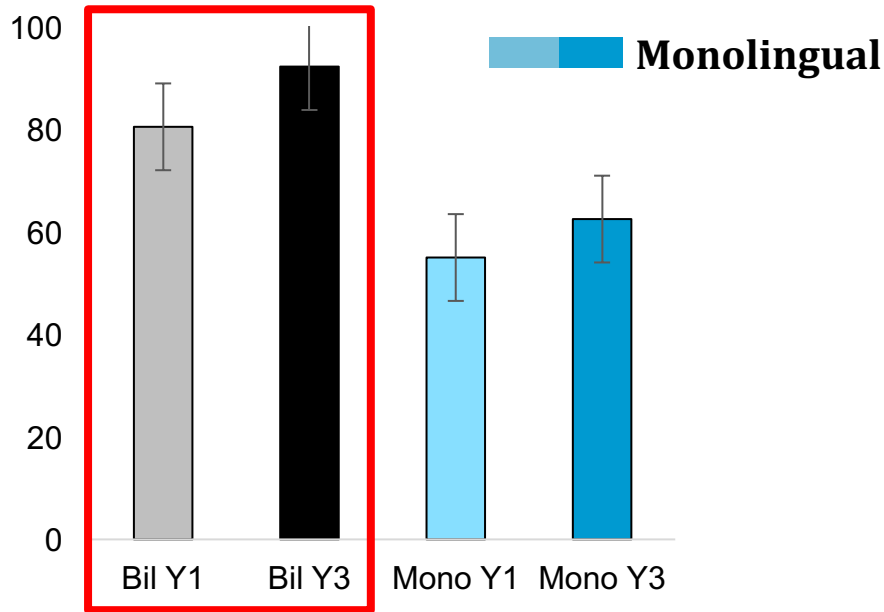
### Real-word reading



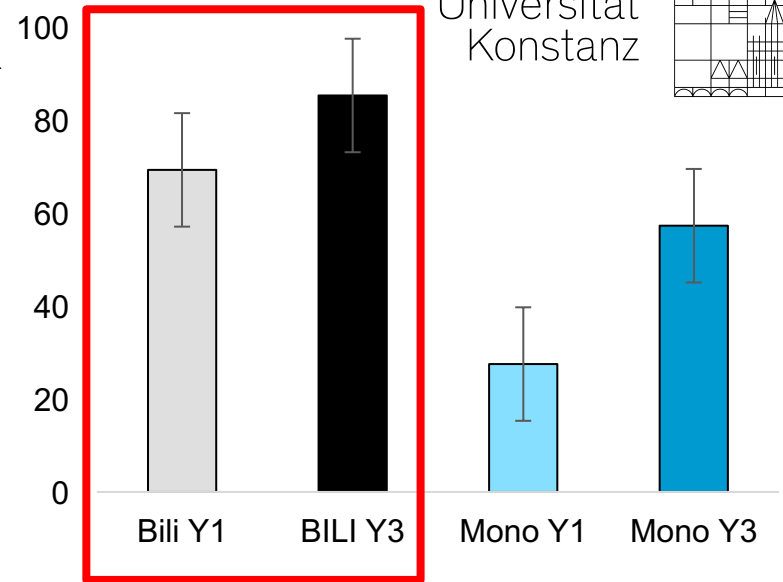
### Pseudo-word reading



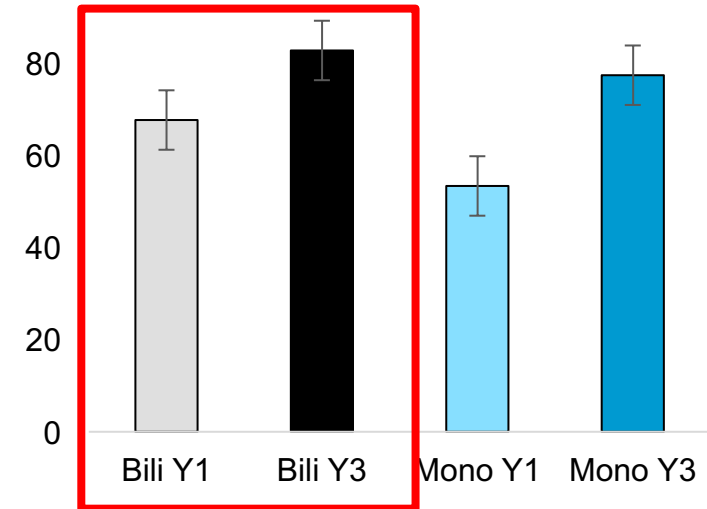
## Blending



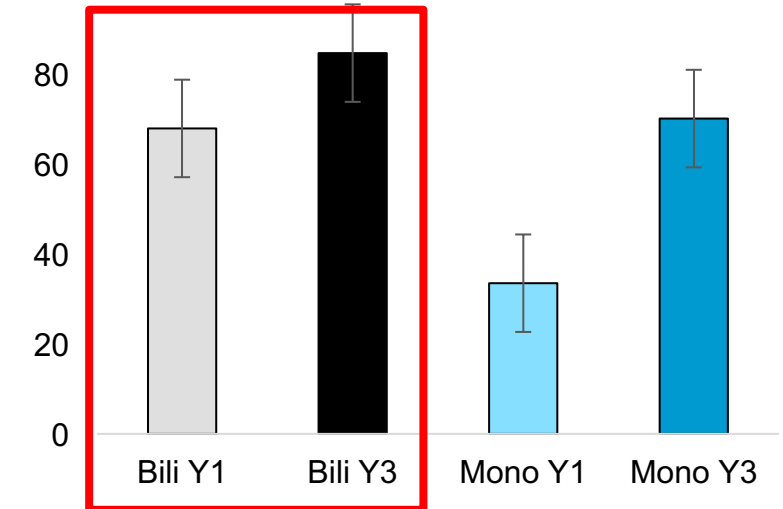
## Elision



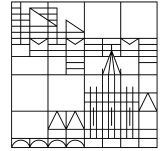
## Real-word reading



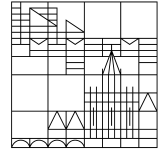
## Pseudo-word reading



# Relationship between language, reading skills and language use within/outside the home

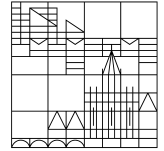


1. **English** (majority language): **NO**
2. **Greek** (heritage language): **YES** for both language and reading and language outside the home



# Conclusion from Study 1: UK

- Children have **better language and reading skills in English** (majority language) **vs. Greek** (heritage language);
- **Schooling in English is enough** for children to develop English skills;
- **Supporting the Greek language** (heritage language) **DOES NOT** negatively affect **English** (the majority language) → bilingual children have better skills than monolingual children;
- **Parental effort should be directed towards the heritage language.**



## Study 2: India



Research jointly supported by the ESRC and DFID

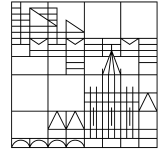
### Background:

- A large proportion of children attending state schools in India have **low educational achievement in literacy and mathematical skills;**
- Expansion schools with **English as a Medium of Instruction** (families believe → ticket to success).

**There is limited research on the role of medium of instruction in India.**



# RESEARCH AIM



**What factors lead to high/low learning outcomes at school**

**Learning outcomes  
(in literacy, numeracy  
and cognitive skills)**

**Educational  
variables**

**External  
variables**

**Mother-tongue  
education  
and the role  
of English**

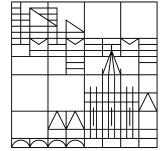
**Linguistic  
Diversity &  
Multilingualism  
in the  
classroom**

**Teacher  
qualification  
and school  
pedagogies**

**Gender  
inequalities,  
low socio-  
economic  
status,  
geographical  
disparity**

# Multilingualism and Multiliteracy: Raising Learning Outcomes in challenging contexts in primary schools across India

Universität  
Konstanz



Ianthi Tsimpli, PI  
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Theo Marinis, Co-I  
University of Konstanz  
University of Reading



Jeanine Treffers-Daller, Co-I  
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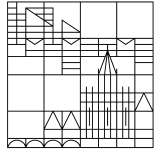
Suvarna Alladi, Co-I  
NIMHANS



Minati Panda, Co-I  
JNU



Lina Mukhopadhyay, Co-I  
EFL-U

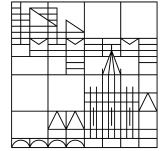


# INDIA

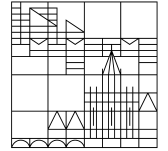
## States and Union Territories



# Languages in India and medium of instruction



- **Education in India:** three-language formula (from 1957):  
medium of instruction:
  1. a regional language or mother tongue,
  2. an additional modern Indian language (e.g. Hindi) and
  3. English.
- **Hindi and English** function as **link languages**: the central government recognises Hindi as the official language and English as the provisional sub-language (Devy, 2018)



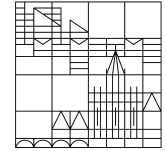
# Participants

**1200 children across the three states**

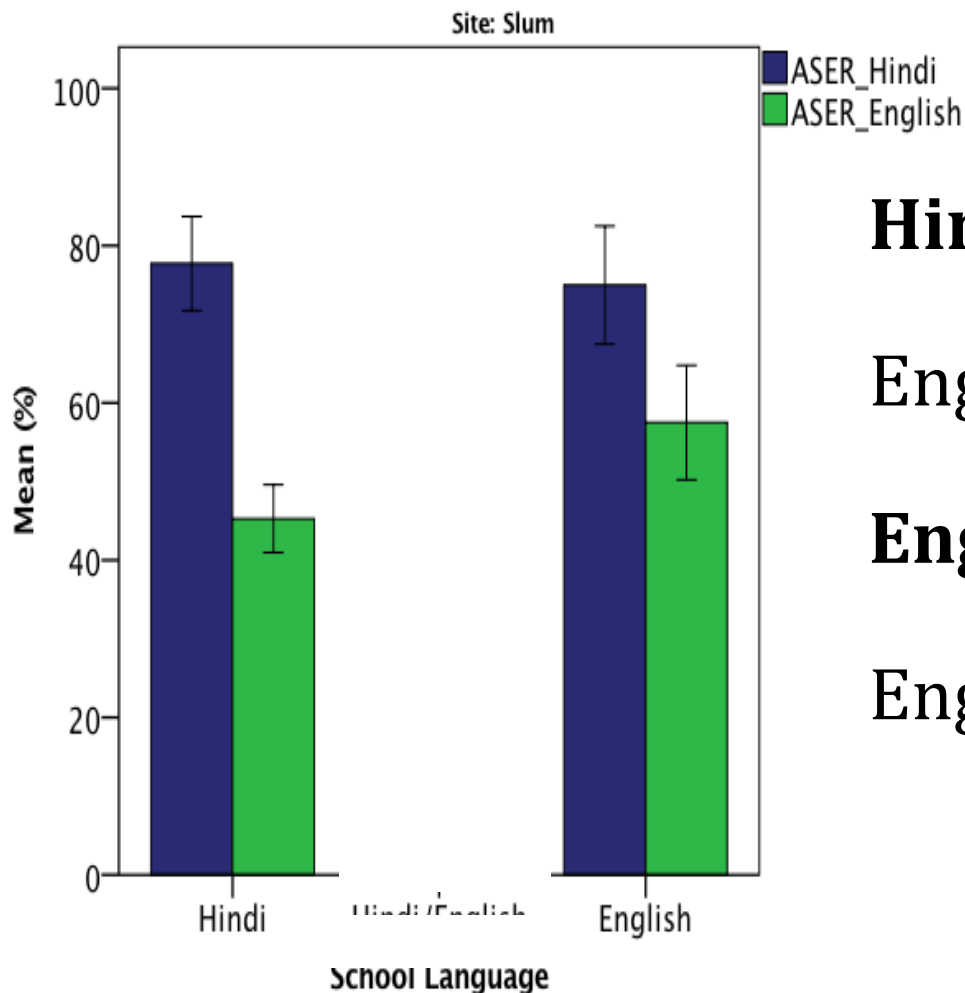
**Delhi cohort: 397 children** (Age: 8-12, Mean: 8.77, SD: 0.63)

- **English Medium of Instruction: 251 children**
- **Hindi Medium of Instruction: 146 children**

# Literacy: Hindi, English



Letter naming, reading single words, sentences, passages



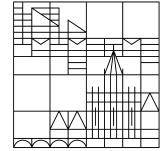
**Hindi literacy:**

English schools = Hindi schools

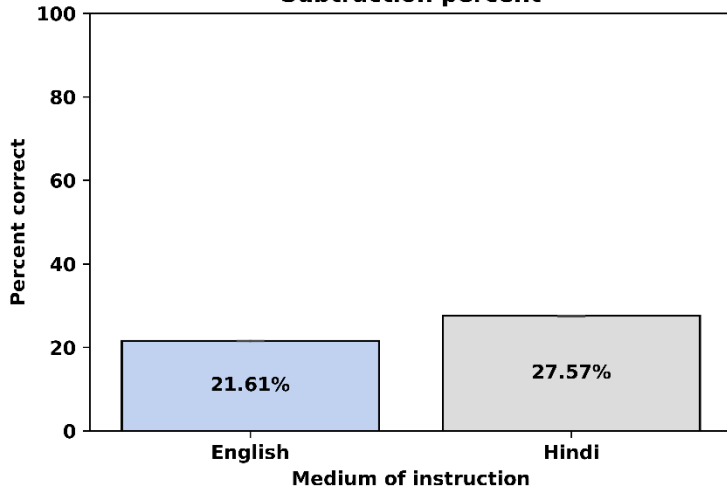
**English literacy :**

English schools > Hindi schools

# Basic Numeracy



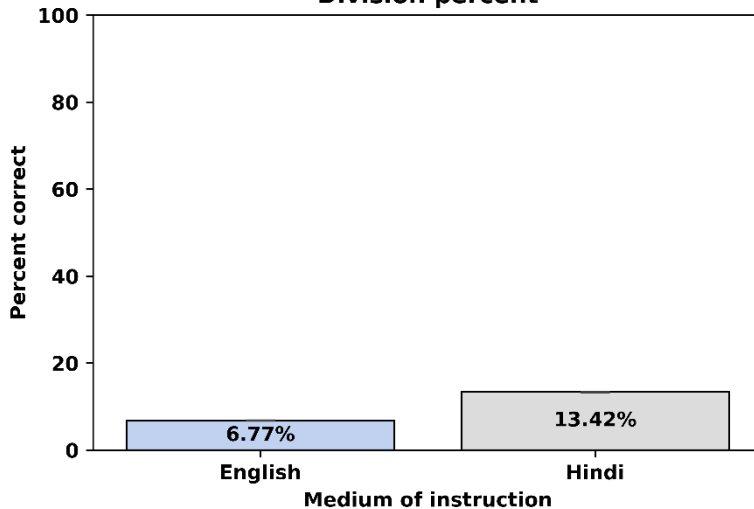
Subtraction percent



**Subtraction:**

Hindi schools > English schools

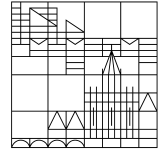
Division percent



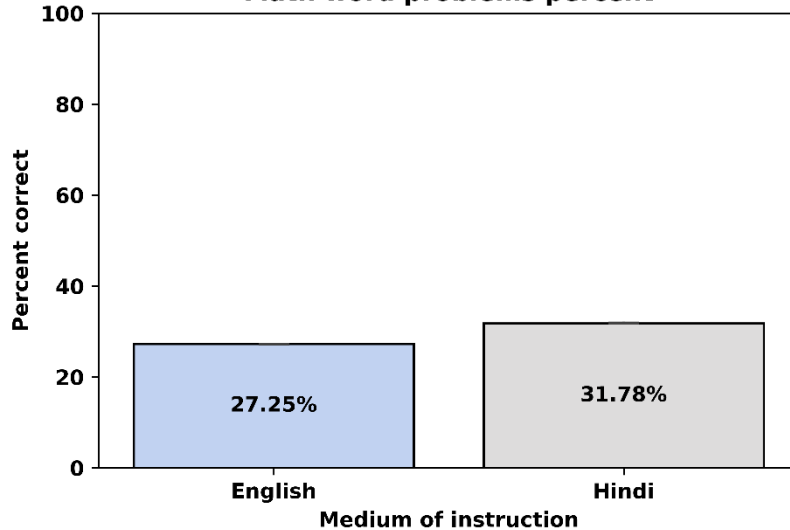
**Division:**

Hindi schools > English schools

# Mathematical reasoning



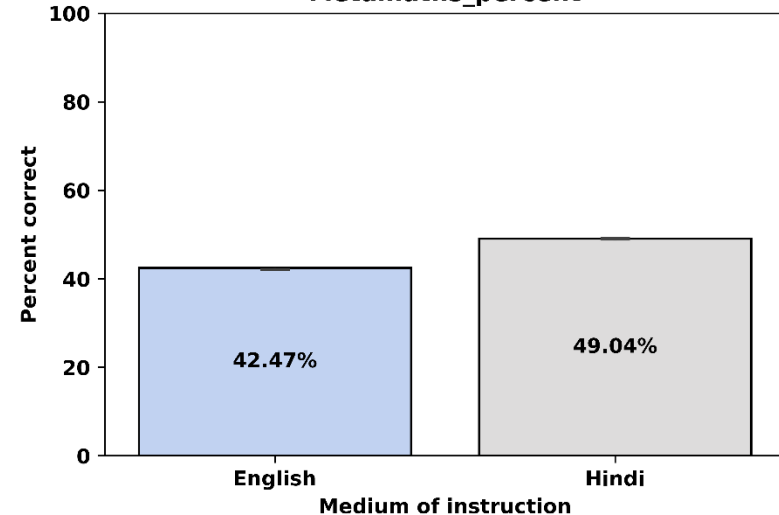
Math word problems percent



**Word problems:**

Hindi schools > English schools

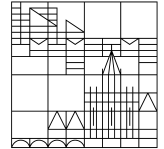
Metamaths\_percent



**Meta-maths:**

Hindi schools > English schools



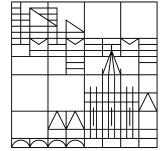


## Conclusion from Study 2: India

- **Literacy:** English medium schools **boost English literacy skills;**
- **Maths:** Better development of numeracy skills and mathematical reasoning **when the medium of instruction is a language spoken in the home (and a language children are good at);**

**Implication → English medium of instruction is not the ticket for success; it can lead to lower educational outcomes for children!**

# Take home messages

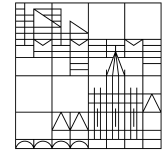


- 1. Supporting the languages of migrant communities**  
(heritage languages) can bring **benefits** to the **language of the society** (majority language).
  - OPPORTUNITY
  - CHALLENGE: **how**
  
- 2. English medium schools are not a ticket for succes**
  - CHALLENGE.

**Mothertongue education** brings **advantages** in educational outcomes → OPPORTUNITY.

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Universität  
Konstanz



## Children, families, teachers, head teachers, schools



**Research assistants Delhi:** Nainy Rao, Shitika Chowdhary, Shalini Yadav, Yashika Chandna

**Partners:** British Council India, The Language and Learning Foundation

### **Consultants:**

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Vasanta Duggirala

Bapi Raju

British Council India

Delhi University

Dhirubhai Ambani Institute of ICT

The Language and Learning Foundation

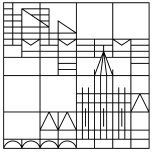
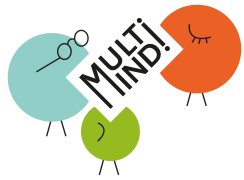
Jawaharlal Nehru University

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International Institute of Information Technology



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**Thank you**

**Danke schön**

**Ευχαριστώ**

**Grazie**

**спасибо**

**Gracias**

**Merci**

**शुक्रिया**

**Aitäh**



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