



Individual Submission Summary

Poster #61 - Language Capital and Grade Repetition: Evidence from Nationally Representative Survey Data in India

In Event: *Saturday Poster Luncheon*

Saturday, November 15, 12:00 to 1:30pm, Property: Hyatt Regency Seattle, Floor: 7th Floor, Room: 710 - Regency Ballroom

Abstract

Language is a critical, yet often overlooked, form of cultural capital in education systems where the language of instruction differs from students' home language. This paper uses nationally representative data from India to examine how a mismatch between a child's home language and the official medium of instruction affects grade repetition—a key indicator of educational disadvantage. Drawing on data from the India Human Development Survey, we use multivariate regression models to test the association between language mismatch and the likelihood of repeating a grade, accounting for socioeconomic status, school type, and geographic location.

We find that children who do not speak the medium of instruction at home are significantly more likely to repeat a grade, particularly in rural and government school settings. This relationship is even more pronounced among girls, pointing to the gendered consequences of language-based exclusion. Our results suggest that language mismatch acts as a structural barrier to educational progression, compounding existing inequalities.

These findings have timely relevance for the rollout of India's National Education Policy (NEP), which mandates mother-tongue instruction through early primary school. We argue that without strong implementation and monitoring mechanisms, the policy risks becoming symbolic rather than transformative. More broadly, the study highlights the need for public education systems to account for language capital when designing equitable learning environments.

Author

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