

# Supporting the development of Indian primary school children's reading comprehension skills: A multilingually scaffolded intervention

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## The problem

- Previous findings have shown poor learning outcomes in Indian primary school children, especially in **literacy skills**<sup>[1,2,3]</sup>
  - particularly in **English**<sup>[4]</sup>, which is not one of the children's home languages
- Reading for comprehension requires both decoding and oral comprehension skills<sup>[5]</sup>

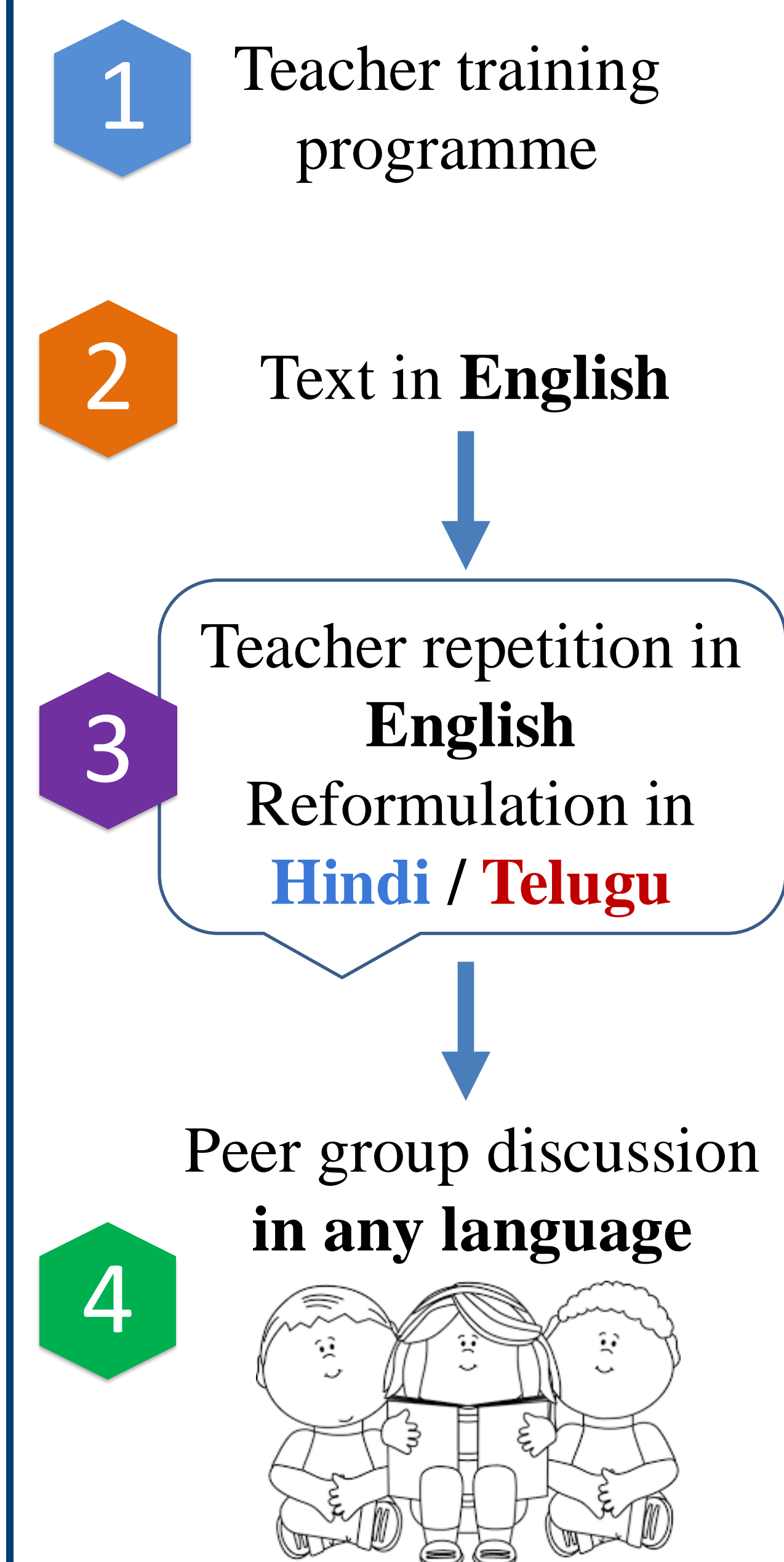
## The cause?

- Language mixing is everyday reality in India, also in primary schools<sup>[6]</sup>
- Nevertheless, unilingual teaching (one subject one language) is still the norm in India and many other countries around the world
- Oral comprehension skills often not called on in reading/decoding tasks

*How can we support the development of Indian primary school children's reading comprehension skills?*

→ Teacher training & multilingual and multimodal classroom intervention

## The intervention



honey bee (**thenicha**)  
(**teenetiga**)



hive (**thenicha koodu**)  
(**teenetattu**)



There is a huge tree in Ramu's backyard. There is a beehive on its branch. Did you observe a beehive? How does the beehive with many rooms look like? How do they make honey? Each bee lives in one compartment (**bhaganam**). Thousands of bees live together in the hive. That is why they are called social insects. Honey is produced by bees from the sugary secretions (**visarjyam**) (**sravam**). They collect it from flowers (nectar).

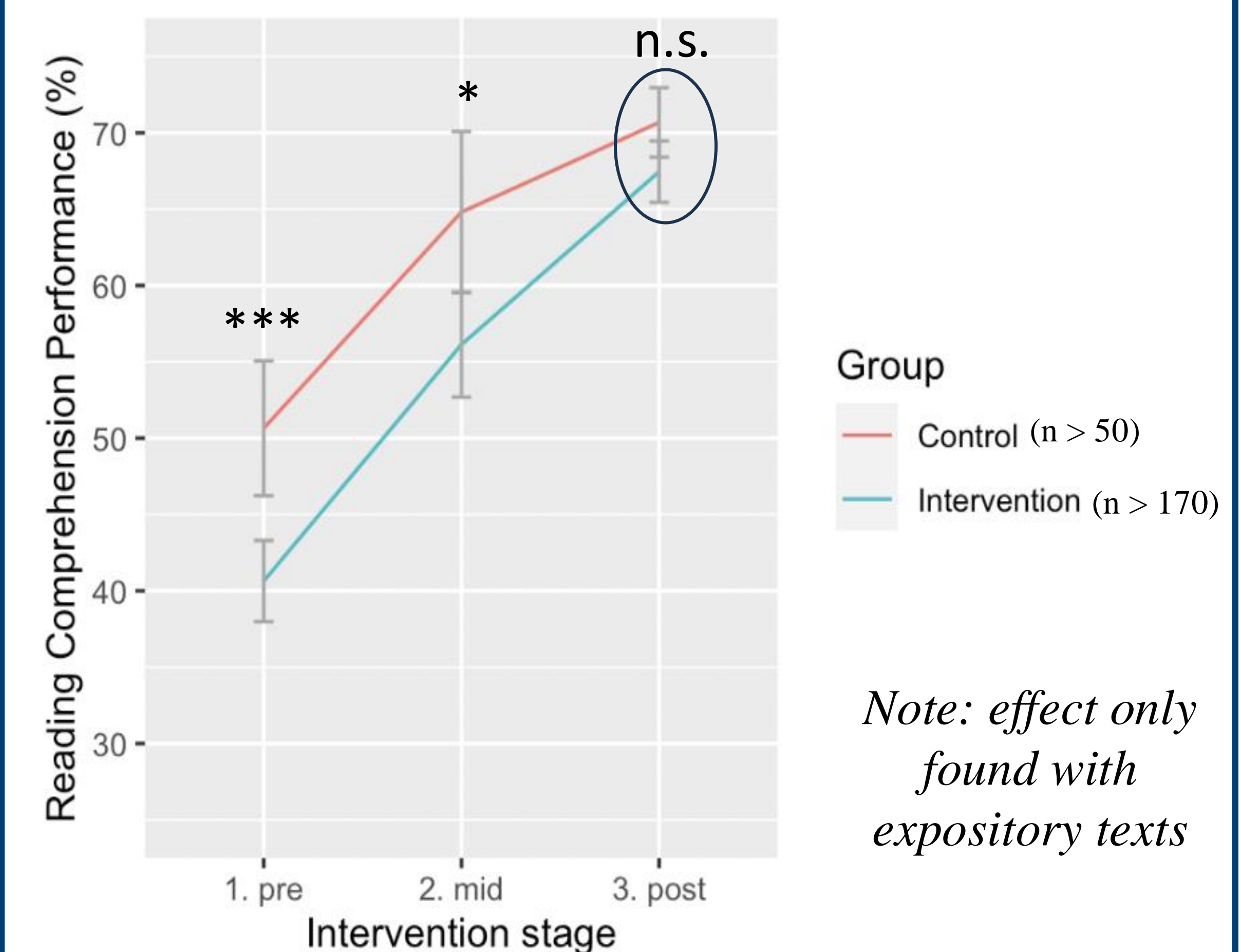
When we disturb (**shalyapeduthuka**) (**bhangam**) beehives, bees attack us. They sting (**kombu**) (**taadu**) and inject a poisonous fluid into our body. Sometimes this may lead to death. So, we should not go close to beehives.

1. Where do honey bees live?
2. How many honey bees live together?

## Outcomes

317 Children from Hyderabad ( $M_{age} = 10.4$ ) received either intervention or not (control group)

Expository text reading comprehension performance:



Within 7 months:

- Intervention group improved nearly **30%**
- Intervention (government school) group caught up with peers from private schools

## Where do we go from here?

- Gather more evidence: expand to New Delhi and Assam for further testing of the pedagogy
- Examine effect of text type and question type (open vs. MCQ) in more detail in follow-up study

Added bonus:

- Children in intervention classes actively engaged with the lesson, were smiling more
- Teachers in intervention classes reported higher attendance rates
- Teachers in intervention classes were more relaxed, confident and engaged with teaching in a multilingual mode