



## Research Article

# Inclusive Integrativeness: A New Approach to ESL Learning in Multilingual Contexts

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### Abstract

This paper introduces 'Inclusive Integrativeness' as a novel approach to address ESL classroom challenges, focusing on learners' diverse linguistic backgrounds. Unlike traditional integrativeness, which aims for assimilation into the target language and culture, this approach embraces multilingual identities. In multilingual regions like Assam, India, it emphasizes the importance of learners reflecting on their linguistic repertoire to develop an inclusive multilingual identity. The study advocates for classroom practices such as translanguaging and culturally relevant materials. A survey of 105 secondary school students in Assam revealed positive perceptions towards inclusive multilingual identity and the use of these practices. The findings support 'Inclusive Integrativeness' as a comprehensive pedagogical approach for integrating multilingualism and English proficiency in ESL education.

**Keywords:** ESL classroom, culturally relevant materials, Inclusive Integrativeness, Integrativeness, Multilingual identity, Multilingualism, Translanguaging.

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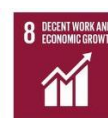
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## 1. Introduction and problem statement

In second-language learning research, 'integrativeness' has been extensively studied. Gardner and Lambert first conceptualized it in their 1972 research book *Attitudes and Motivation in Second-Language Learning*, where they discussed the two popular constructs of motivation- 'instrumental' and 'integrative' motivation. Although they worked together on motivation in L2 learning, the social and affective aspects piqued Gardner's curiosity, which he referred to as 'integrativeness'. According to him:

Integrativeness reflects a genuine interest in learning the second language in order to come closer to the other language community. At one level, this implies an openness to, and respect for other cultural groups and ways of life. In the extreme, this might involve complete identification with the community (and possibly even withdrawal from one's original group), but more commonly it might well involve integration within both communities. (Gardner, 2001, p. 5)

In his stance, integrativeness is one of the two variables related to an individual's motivation to learn a second language. Also, people with high integrativeness are those interested in other cultural groups whose ethnic background plays a minor role in their sense of self. In contrast, people with low integrativeness are those whose ethnic heritage plays a major role in their sense of self. The level of integrativeness will, therefore, affect motivation to learn a second language. (Gardner, 2005)

However, much research began raising questions about the skewed nature of Gardner's approach. To understand the concept of integrativeness, Rooy (2006), who considers 'integrativeness' to be untenable for world Englishes learners, explains three SLA approaches related to integrativeness- a) Lambert's social psychological model (Gardner, 1985); b) Giles' intergroup model (Gardner, 1985; Ellis, 1994)); and c) Schumann's acculturation model (Gardner, 1985; Ellis, 1994). "In the context of the [Lambert's] social psychological model, a learner with an integrative orientation would display the following characteristics: she would reflect a desire to learn more about the target language community and might possibly have a desire to become part of that group" (p. 439). Giles' intergroup model considers a native-like second language acquisition where "people will see themselves in ethnolinguistic terms and strive for positive psycholinguistic differentiation with outgroups" (p. 440). In Schumann's acculturation model, "integrativeness refers to an active striving of the second language learner to become like member of the target language community" (Gardner, 1985, as cited in Rooy, 2006). According to this approach, "integrativeness" is defined more strongly as referring to "assimilation, acculturation, or preservation" (Schumann, 1978, as cited in Rooy, 2006), rather than an "interest" in (or "openness" towards) the target language community and its culture (p. 441). Commenting upon these SLA approaches, Rooy (2006), argues that "none of the SLA approaches that utilize the construct of integrativeness includes a 'positive' measure of in-group identity. Integrativeness is measured by assessing the second language learner's attitude towards the out-group or target language group" (p. 439). Thus, 'integrativeness' appears to be a one-sided or biased concept concentrating only on the target language group.

Discussions about integration through integrativeness are inapt for many language learning environments outside Montreal, Canada, where Gardner developed his theory. In many foreign language learning contexts, learners acquire the English language without first-hand direct contact with the target language speakers and no such integrative motivation for learning the language to identify with the linguistic and cultural community.

Following such an outlook and finding an alternative, adaptable in foreign language learning contexts, Dornyei (2005) developed the concept of the 'Ideal L2 self', one of the components of his new motivation construct- the 'L2 Motivational Self System.' Ideal L2 Self "is the L2-specific facet of one's 'ideal self'. If the person we want to become speaks an L2, the 'ideal L2 self' is a powerful motivator to learn the L2" (Dornyei, 2010, p. 79). He contends that people are motivated to acquire a second language when they can see themselves as successful, fluent speakers of that language in the future. This idealized 'self' is a potent motivator, inspiring students to make decisions and participate in activities that would help them realize their ideal L2 self. Moreover, Dornyei (2010) conducted large-scale survey research in Japan and China, where he found that integrativeness and the ideal L2 operate within the same conceptual framework, but when it comes to understanding motivated behaviour, the ideal L2 self is better.

Yashima (2000) proposed another alternative of integrativeness ideal for the Japanese English learning context- 'International Posture' which meant "interest in foreign or international affairs, willingness to go overseas to stay or work, readiness to interact with intercultural partners, and ... openness or a non-ethnocentric attitude toward different cultures" (Yashima, 2002, p. 57). Although Gardner (2005) views it as a similar construct to his integrativeness notion for different contexts, in fact, it integrates the concepts of instrumentality and integrativeness, which is practically observed as relevant for Japanese English language learners.

Moreover, in foreign language learning contexts, there exists a blurry distinction between integrative and instrumental motivation (Zhe, 2018), where the learners' motivation for language learning is dependent on their blended needs of exposure and future opportunities. (See Gao et al., 2004; Kimura, Nikata & Okumara, 2001; Lamb, 2004; Smith, 1983); Shaw, 1983)

Now if we consider the context of learning English as a second language in India, which this present study specifically focuses on, then it is necessary to understand that the learners almost rarely have any direct first-hand contact with native English speakers. Also, the English in India, i.e., Indian English, which most teachers use to communicate with their students, does not possess the features of native English; rather, it has been seasoned in the flavours of Indian culture and language. Returning to the main question of integrativeness, it is unreasonable and damaging for an Indian learner, who is an inhabitant of a multilingual society, to learn the language through integration into foreign English culture and community or to identify the 'self' in one category, that is the 'L2 self.'

Learning another language does not necessitate neglecting one's own identity. Whether it is Gardner's idea of integrativeness or Dornyei's modified concept of 'Ideal L2 Self' or Yashima's 'International Posture', the focus always centres around moulding the learner's identity towards the target language and community. Such approaches can downplay the significance of the learner's own linguistic and cultural identity. Language learning can acknowledge and value the

learner's existing language identity and build a new L2 identity, which will encourage an inclusive integration of the two.

So here we can surely relate to what Agnihotri and Khanna (1997) contended: "It is surprising that perspectives on second/foreign language learning have generally ignored the reality of multilingual and pluricultural societies where learning more than one language and accommodating multiple identities is a way of life" (p. 328).

## **2. Conceptual Framework: Inclusive Integrativeness**

Considering the above critiques, an alternative yet stimulated approach can be proposed to learning English in a multicultural and multilingual country like India, with positive 'in-group identification'- 'inclusive integrativeness'. Inclusive integrativeness can be referred to as integrating one's linguistic identities rather than categorizing and developing an inclusive multilingual identity by renegotiating the 'self'. The proposed idea has a positive possibility of learners' 'investment' in English language learning, which has been theorized and implied through preliminary study.

In India, multilingual students are the norm; "in a single classroom – particularly in urban areas – there may be more than 20 different home languages represented by the students, and the teacher is also often likely to use a home language that is different to the official medium of instruction" (Tsimpli & Lightfoot, 2020). So, to learn a second language like English, these learners who possess multiple linguistic identities do not need to integrate into native English culture and language, which will eventually make them feel disconnected and alienated; instead, they need to be aware of their linguistic repertoire, renegotiate their linguistic identities, and develop an inclusive multilingual identity that will eventually enhance learners' investment in language learning. In this regard, the distinction made by Fisher et al. (2018) between linguistic identity and multilingual identity provides clarity- "linguistic identity refers to the way one identifies (or is identified by others) in each of the languages in one's linguistic repertoire, whereas a multilingual identity is an 'umbrella' identity, where one explicitly identifies as multilingual precisely because of an awareness of the linguistic repertoire one has" (pp.1-2).

Such an approach can establish its relevance in the Indian context because, even though language and education policies in India have consistently and overtly emphasized the promotion of mother tongues (see NCF, 2005; NEP, 1968, 1986, 2020; NKC, 2005), it has always been difficult to incorporate "the traditionally natural fluidity of Indian multilingual repertoires into pedagogy", and has therefore allowed a detrimental "neoliberal construction of English" particularly through English medium education (EME) (Boruah & Mohanty, 2022, pp. 51, 57).

This neoliberal construct of English could be seen as a postcolonial blended form of 'integrativeness' and 'instrumentality' where English language learning is considered a tool for economic success, international mobility, and social inclusion, emphasizing English communication skills and use of Western-inspired curricula and material. Parents, mostly belonging to the middle-class strata of society and sometimes to marginalized classes, had to choose a linguistically and pedagogically unfamiliar learning environment for their children and thus lose out in the unseen struggle between maintaining their identity and gaining financial

advantage. It, therefore, creates a disconnect between the language policy-endorsed pedagogy such as the use of mother tongues and promotion of multilingualism, and actual teaching practices in the classroom (Boruah, 2017; Boruah & Mohanty, 2022) (Also see, Mohanty, 2019; Mohanty & Panda, 2016; Skutnabb-Kangas et al., 2009).

'Inclusive Integrativeness' here comes as an alternative that advocates developing an inclusive multilingual identity that will rightly serve the multilingual pedagogical proposals of Indian educational policies. In this regard, we can review the works of Fisher et al. (2018), Forbes et al. (2021), and Rutgers et al. (2021) who talk about a conscious and participative approach to building a multilingual identity that would eventually develop investment in language learning and benefit in academic achievement. Fisher et al. (2018) suggest that although identity formation is considered a process of influence of different external factors, such as psychological, social, or historical, multilingual identity can be constructed by participating in the process consciously- by being "reflexive about the self" (p.9). Rather than categorizing the languages of one's language repertoire, one needs to acknowledge and integrate to build a multilingual identity. This is possible through four stages of language classroom practices- firstly, through developing sociolinguistic knowledge and awareness of linguistic identities, that is, the learner's understanding of the semiotic practices according to different contexts and understanding the full extent of their and other's linguistic repertoire; secondly, through reflexivity, that is, to reflect on learner's and other's linguistic identities and engage personally and emotionally with the development of one's multilingual identity; thirdly, through reconceptualizing and positioning one's multilingual identity by accepting/rejecting elements of their linguistic repertoire; and lastly through investment in language learning, that is the final efforts to put in for a change in future outcomes. Whatsoever, we need to develop such multilingual identity for two reasons, rightly pointed out by Fisher et al. (2018), that connect with the same construct, although as a part of inclusive integrativeness-

- a) if learners adopt an identity as a multilingual they may be more likely to invest effort in the learning and maintenance of their languages b) with increasing mobility and greater diversity in communities and classrooms a multilingual mindset might lead to enhanced social cohesion in the school and beyond (p. 2)

In brief, rather than a parochial outlook on language learning through integration toward the target language and its exposure, we can adopt a holistic and inclusive approach where, in Boruah and Mohanty's (2022) words, we can choose both 'English and multilingualism.'

The idea of "involving all" is another aspect of 'inclusive integrativeness,' which reflects acceptance of individual differences based on their capabilities, interests, or any social, economic, or linguistic differences. The approach advocates a holistic development of the classroom environment where each learner is valued and recognized regardless of his/her differences. This would create a healthy learning atmosphere where a learner can learn effectively. This is in line with Gardner's thought of 'openness' towards other languages besides English.

In addition to the theoretical foundation, we also need to get some practical understanding of the approach through classroom activities and practices. Several studies (MultiLila, 2020; TESS-India) have put forward classroom activities and suggestions that direct that such an inclusive approach is ultimately what they are asking for in a multilingual classroom. Along with introducing

classroom activities like language surveys through chart; creating a multilingual word wall, reading corner with multilingual reading materials and multilingual dictionaries, TESS-India suggests introducing translanguaging into classroom teaching practice so that students become confident that it is acceptable to use their native tongue in their academic work consistently and also campaigns the idea of "involving all", that is, learning together through challenging prejudices and biases and accepting learners' different, social, cultural, and economic diversities (TESS-India, pp. 8-9).

In the classroom, translanguaging may involve:

- translating between languages
- comparing and being playful with different languages
- mixing words and expressions from different languages in the same spoken or written utterance
- using the home language in one part of an activity and the school language in another part" (p. 6).

Translanguaging can, therefore, become a part of the 'inclusive integrativeness' approach where learners can inclusively engage in their linguistic competence to the greatest effect. It naturally validates multilingualism in the classroom. In ESL language classrooms, specifically, translanguaging would initially develop their content knowledge as learners could associate with the concepts explained in their language/languages, consequently building confidence in learning the English language. Learners would then read or receive knowledge in their language/languages and describe the summary of it in English. Therefore, it appears to be an effective method of learning the English language in a multilingual classroom.

The use of culturally relevant materials is also an important feature of the 'inclusive integrativeness' approach, which develops a positive stance about a learner's cultural place in the world and promotes learner achievement. Culturally relevant materials in a classroom can be referred to as learning materials where learners' culture, language, and ethnicities are reflected so they can associate with the contents and develop their comprehension skills. While learning a second language like English, culturally relevant texts can play a vital role where learners get acquainted with the English language through culturally related words, phrases, topics, or concepts. This way, the learner would feel at ease and connected to the English language without the lingering pressure of learning an unknown. This would positively help in developing learners' English language proficiency.

Therefore, the 'inclusive integrativeness' approach seeks inclusive learning in Indian ESL classrooms, which can take place by integrating one's linguistic identities and understanding one's linguistic repertoire. This is practically possible by implementing an inclusive approach to multilingual identity construction, understanding our linguistic needs, having an accepting and positive outlook of "involving all", and using classroom practices like translanguaging and culturally relevant materials in the classrooms.

### **3. The Study**

#### **3.1. Aim of the Study:**

- To observe English language learners' perceptions towards 'integrativeness' (to their second language, i.e. the English language)
- To observe English language learners' perception of inclusive multilingual identity.
- To provide information concerning the need for inclusive integrativeness in ESL classrooms.

#### **3.2. Context of the Study:**

The study was conducted in five schools in Assam, India. Of these, School 1, School 2, and School 3 are vernacular government schools with Assamese as the medium of instruction, and School 4 and School 5 are private schools with English and Assamese as the medium of instruction.

#### **3.3. Sample for the Study:**

A total of 105 students studying in Class 9 and 10, in the age group of 14 to 16 years, were selected as respondents- 20 students each from School 1, School 4, and School 5; and 22 students from School 2 and 23 students from School 3. Moreover, the samples were selected through simple random sampling method.

#### **3.4. The Methodology**

For the survey, a semi-structured questionnaire was prepared with 25 questions. The questionnaire is developed using a 5-point Likert scale along with open-ended and dichotomous questions for different categories of questions.

Structure of the questionnaire:

1. Learner's Language Background- 7 questions
2. Learner's Interest – 6 questions
3. Learner's Motivation – 6 questions
4. Classroom Practices – 6 questions

#### **3.5. The Analysis**

Frequency analysis and qualitative summarization of the data have been carried out based on the different types of questions. It is to be noted that all the questions under these categories are not analyzed; a few of the important ones are analyzed and discussed as follows:

1. Learner's Language Background: This category examines English language learners' home and school language backgrounds through questions related to their language use in these two contexts and with different people they encounter. The data is shown below in Figures 1 & 2.

Use of English at School and Home					
School	Total Students	Use of English at School		Use of English at Home	
		Inside Classroom	Outside Classroom	With Family	With Friends
School 1	20	12	2	2	2
School 2	22	22	16	6	11
School 3	23	16	10	5	8
School 4	20	9	3	1	2
School 5	20	11	3	2	5
Total	105	70	34	16	28
Percentage	100%	66.66%	32.38%	15.23%	26.66%
Avg. Percentage		49.52%		20.94%	

Figure 1

Use of Home Language at School and Home					
School	Total Students	Use of Home Language at School		Use of Home Language at Home	
		Inside Classroom	Outside Classroom	With Family	With Friends
School 1	20	16	20	20	20
School 2	22	15	17	22	22
School 3	23	13	19	23	23
School 4	20	19	20	20	20
School 5	20	18	20	20	20
Total	105	81	96	105	105
Percentage	100%	77.14%	91.42%	100%	100%



Avg. Percentage		84.28%	100%
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**Figure 2**

From the data tabulated in Figures 1 and 2, we observe that-

Use of English at School and Home:

Inside Classroom: 66.66% of students use English inside the classroom.

- Outside Classroom: 32.38% use English outside the classroom.
- With Family: 15.23% use English with family.
- With Friends: 26.66% use English with friends.

Use of Home Language at School and Home:

- Inside Classroom: 77.14% use their home language inside the classroom.
- Outside Classroom: 91.42% use their home language outside the classroom.
- With Family & Friends: 100% use their home language with family and friends.

The data from Figures 1 and 2 shows a higher tendency to use the home language over English, especially in family and friend contexts. At the same time, English is more prominently used in academic settings, particularly inside a classroom.

2. Learners' Interests: This category tries to explore English language learners' interests in the English language and their home languages. It quantitatively explores their interests in different mass media which reflects the degree of exposure to English and their home/local languages through scaling and the reason behind their interests through open-ended questions. The quantitative data is shown below in Figures 3 & 4.

Learners' Interests in English Language Mass Media						
School	School1 (20)	School2 (22)	School3 (23)	School4 (20)	School5 (20)	Total (105)
English Books	6	15	12	7	6	46
English Newspapers	5	7	5	3	5	25
English Movies/Shows	10	14	11	9	7	51
Text Messaging using English texts	6	10	11	6	3	36
Subtotal						158
Percentage						37.61%

**Figure 3**

From the data tabulated in Figures 3 and 4, we observe that 37.61% of students have an interest in English language mass media, whereas 52.61% of students have an interest in home/Local language mass media. So, students show a greater interest in home/local language mass media compared to English language mass media, indicating a stronger cultural attachment and preference for their native languages in daily media consumption.

Moreover, when the responses gathered through the open-ended question about the reason for learners' interest in English mass media were analyzed a recurrent theme occurred where learners' discomfort or disconnection could be observed towards it. Some of the examples are as follows-

"I do not understand tough English while reading"

"English dialogues are fast"

"I feel comfortable messaging in my language"

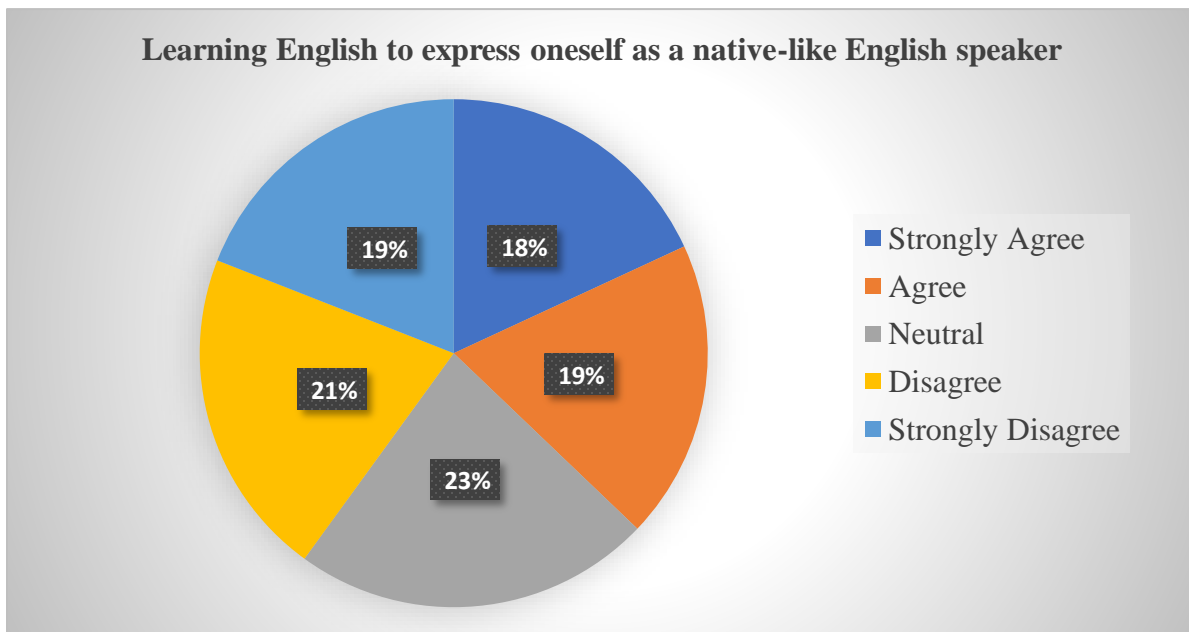
3. Motivation for English language learning: This category tries to explore English language learners' purpose in learning English which shows their distinct choice of integration towards the English language and their integration as a multilingual identity. It quantitatively explores their motivation firstly through scaling and then its reason through open-ended questions. The quantitative data are shown below in Figures 5, 6, 7 & 8.

Learners' Interest in Home/Local Language Mass Media						
School	School1 (20)	School2 (22)	School3 (23)	School4 (20)	School5 (20)	Total (105)
Home/Local Language Books	14	9	11	12	11	57
Local Newspapers	9	7	8	10	5	39
Local Movies/Shows	16	15	14	15	13	73
Text Messaging in Home/Local Language using English texts	10	13	12	9	8	52
Subtotal						221
Percentage						52.61%

**Figure 4**

Learning English to express oneself as a native-like English speaker.						
School	Total Students	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
School 1	20	5	3	5	4	3
School 2	22	3	4	6	5	4
School 3	23	4	4	4	5	6
School 4	20	2	5	6	3	4
School 5	20	5	4	3	5	3
Total	105	19	20	24	22	20
Percentage	100%	18.09%	19.04%	22.85%	20.95%	19.04%

**Figure 5**



**Figure 6**

Learning English to express oneself as a multilingual speaker						
School	Total Students	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
School 1	20	8	4	3	2	3
School 2	22	5	8	3	3	3
School 3	23	7	7	4	2	3
School 4	20	4	5	6	3	2
School 5	20	7	6	3	1	3
Total	105	31	30	19	11	14
Percentage	100%	29.52%	28.57%	18.09%	10.47%	13.33%

Figure 7

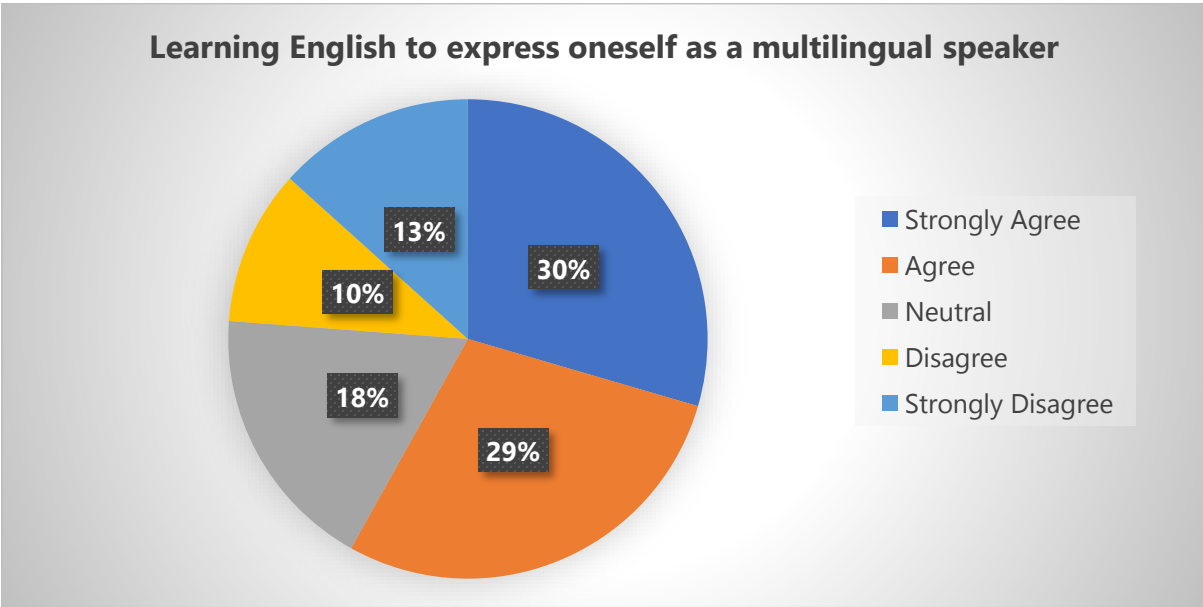


Figure 8

From the data shown in Figures 5, 6, 7, and 8, we observe the reasons students are motivated to learn English. More students, almost 30% altogether, agree or strongly agree with learning English to express themselves as multilingual speakers rather than aiming for native-like proficiency with almost 19% of students agreeing altogether, highlighting a desire to integrate English into their multilingual identity. Although a majority of students view learning English as a way to enhance

Learner's Preference to Translanguaging in Classroom						
School	Total Students	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
School 1	20	5	7	3	2	3
School 2	22	6	7	4	5	0
School 3	23	4	4	7	6	2
School 4	20	4	6	5	3	2
School 5	20	6	6	4	3	1
Total	105	25	30	23	19	8
Percentage	100%	23.80%	28.57%	21.90%	18.09%	7.61%

**Figure 9**

their multilingual capabilities, students are divided in their aspiration to express themselves as native-like speakers.

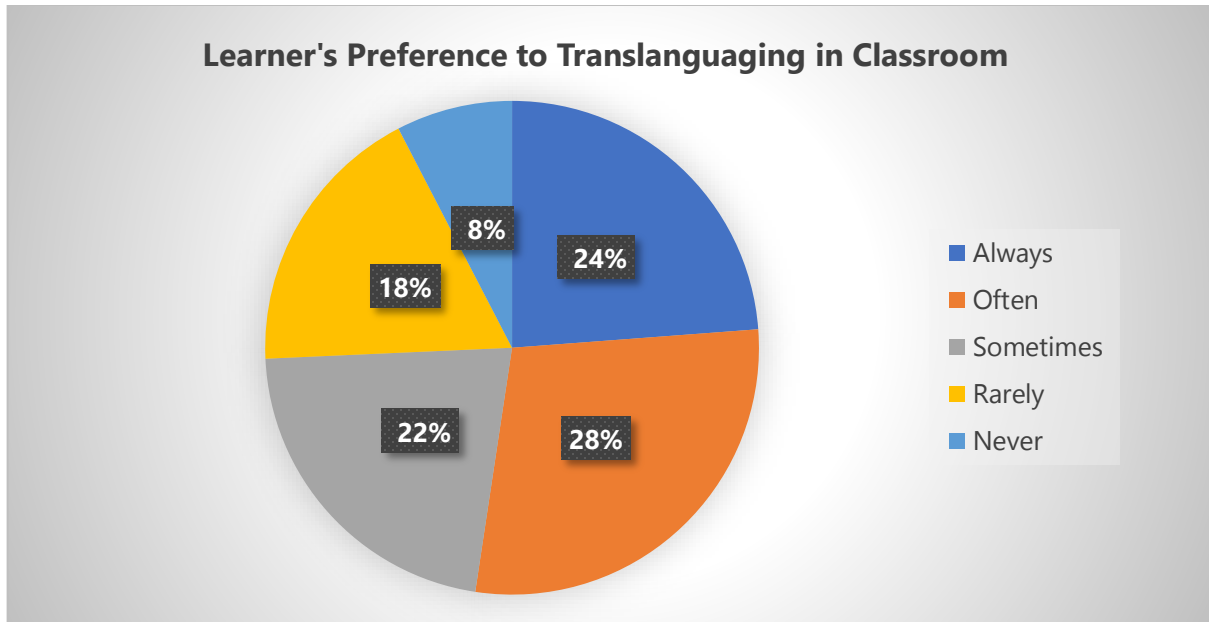
Furthermore, when the responses gathered through the open-ended question about the reason for learners' motivation for English language learning were analyzed a blended form of motivation could be observed where they consider English learning to be important for achieving better future opportunities as well as social status.

Some of the examples are as follows-

"Because people will appreciate" (in the case of Learning English to express oneself as a multilingual speaker)

"I want job abroad" (in the case of Learning English to express oneself as a native-like English speaker)

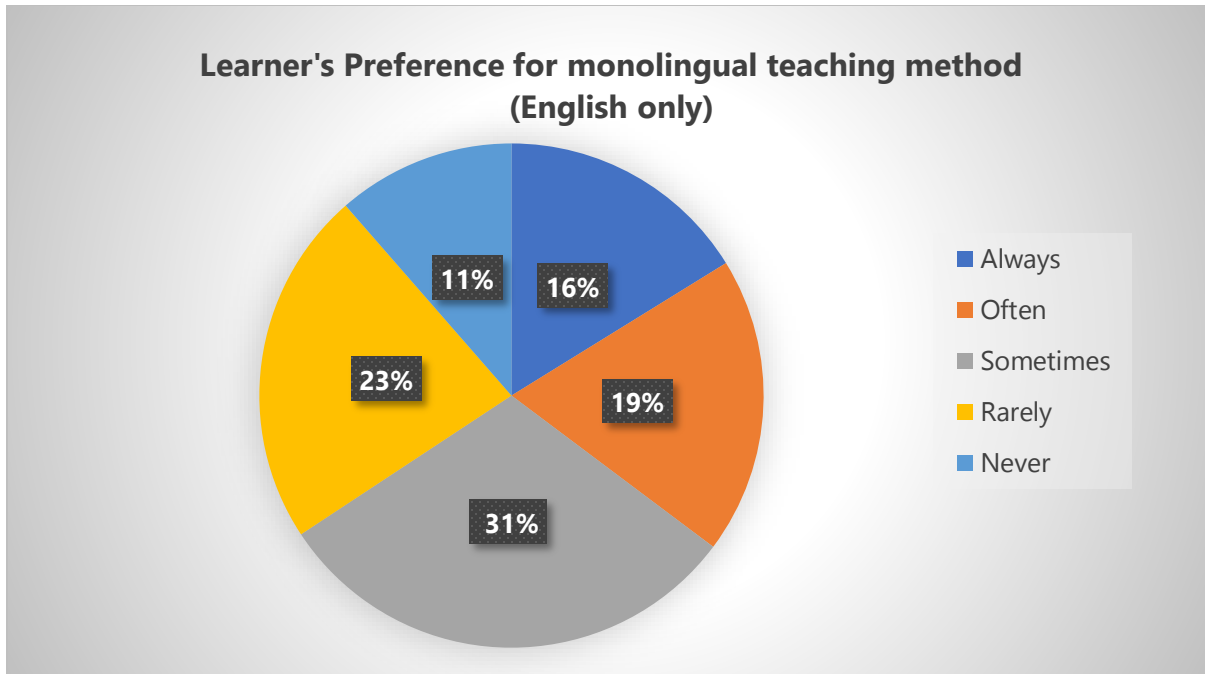
4. Classroom Practices: This last category of the questionnaire examines learners' perspectives towards the different teaching-learning practices carried out in their multilingual classrooms and also explores learners' overall view on their classroom teaching. The data is shown below from Figure 9 to 16.



**Figure 10**

Learner's preference for monolingual teaching method (English only)						
School	Total Students	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
School 1	20	2	4	4	5	5
School 2	22	3	4	8	5	2
School 3	23	4	4	7	6	2
School 4	20	4	3	6	5	2
School 5	20	4	5	7	3	1
Total	105	17	20	32	24	12
Percentage	100%	16.19%	19.04%	30.47%	22.85%	11.42%

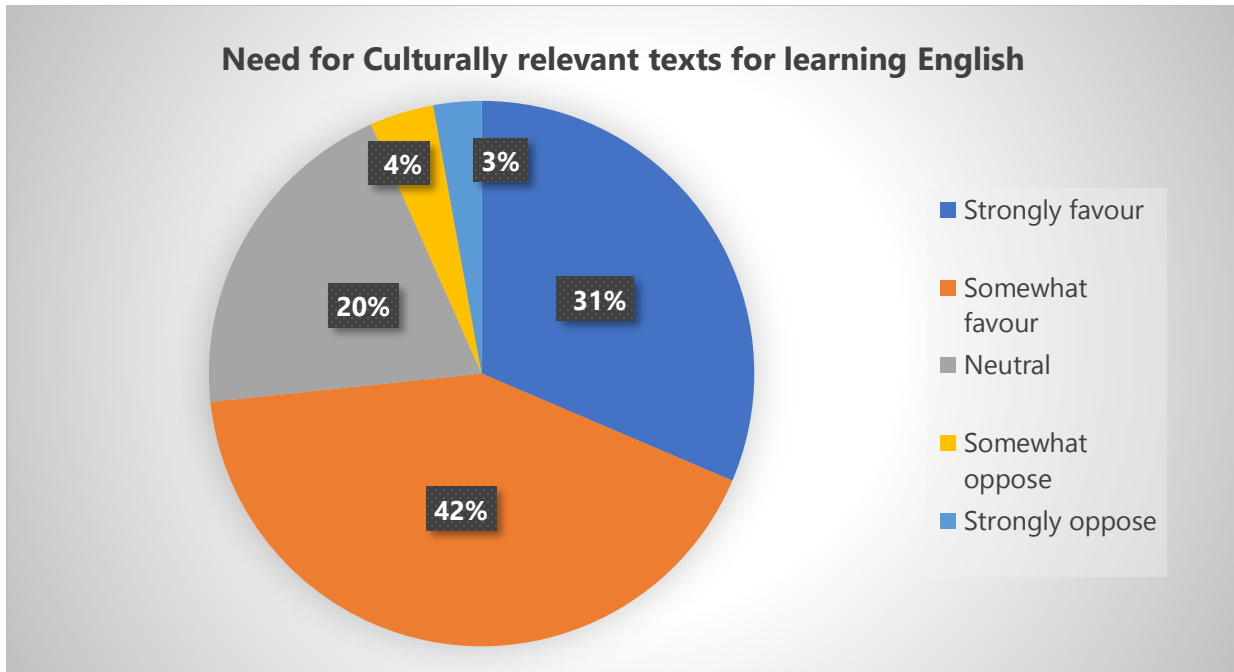
**Figure 11**



**Figure 12**

Need for Culturally relevant texts for learning English						
School	Total Students	Strongly favour	Somewhat favour	Neutral	Somewhat oppose	Strongly oppose
School 1	20	8	9	2	1	0
School 2	22	6	8	6	2	0
School 3	23	6	10	5	0	2
School 4	20	9	8	3	0	0
School 5	20	4	9	5	1	1
Total	105	33	44	21	4	3
Percentage	100%	31.42%	41.90%	20%	3.80%	2.85%

**Figure 13**

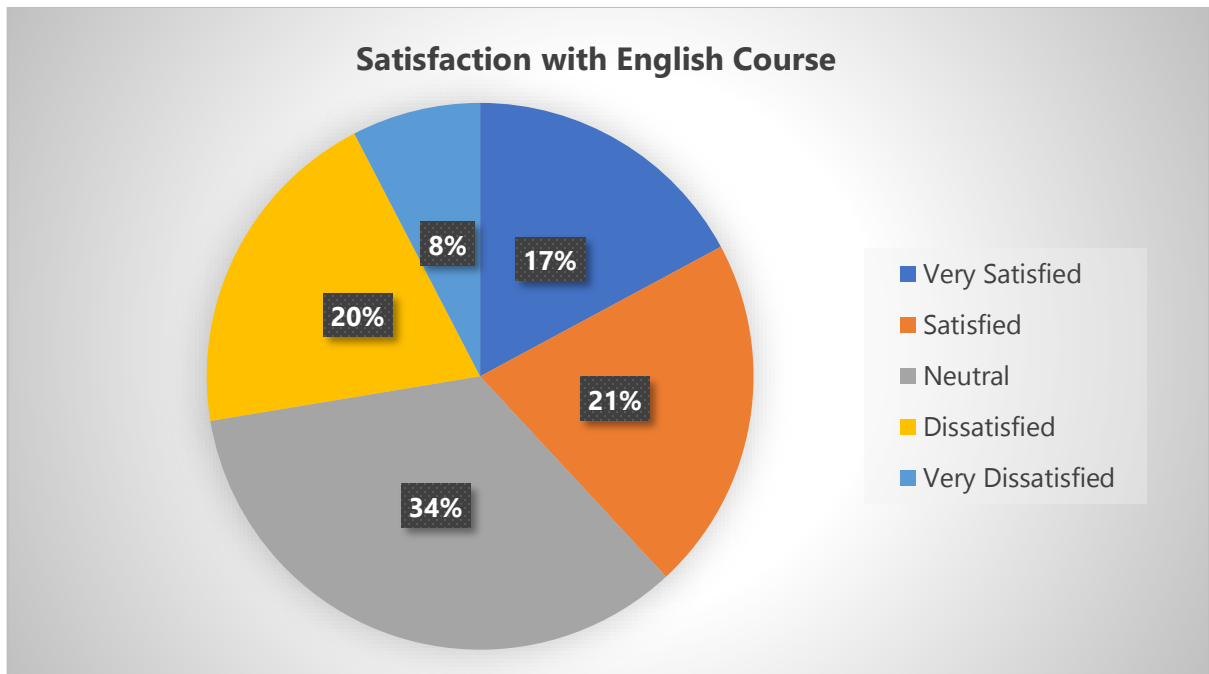


**Figure 14**

Satisfaction with English course						
School	Total Students	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Neutral	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied
School 1	20	3	4	8	4	1
School 2	22	3	6	6	5	2
School 3	23	4	4	7	5	3
School 4	20	4	3	6	5	2
School 5	20	4	5	9	2	0
Total	105	18	22	36	21	8
Percentage	100%	17.14%	20.95%	34.28%	20%	7.61%

**Figure 15**





**Figure 16**

From the data shown in Figures 9 to 18, we observe the following-

Preference for Translanguaging in Classroom:

- Always/Often: Highest in School 2.
- Sometimes: Evenly distributed.
- Rarely/Never: Present but not predominant.

Preference for Monolingual Teaching Method (English Only):

- Always/Often: Relatively low preference.
- Sometimes: Most students fall into this category.
- Rarely/Never: A significant portion prefers avoiding English-only teaching.

Need for Culturally Relevant Texts for Learning English:

- Strongly Favor/Somewhat Favor: Majority of students.
- Neutral: Moderate portion.
- Somewhat Oppose/Strongly Oppose: Minimal presence.

Satisfaction with the English Course:

- Very Satisfied/Satisfied: About 38% of students.
- Neutral: Largest group.
- Dissatisfied/Very Dissatisfied: Significant minority

So, there is a significant preference for translanguaging practices over monolingual methods and a strong demand for culturally relevant texts in English learning. Satisfaction with English courses shows a mix of responses, with a notable portion remaining neutral or dissatisfied.

### **3.6. Findings and Implications**

Through the learner's language background, we witnessed that almost all the learners in the classroom can speak two or more languages, thus making the classroom a multilingual one. The ESL learners of the present context (Assam, India) are not so exposed to the English language. The learners rarely use the English language at home with friends and family members, whereas they get the chance to interact in the English language inside the classroom, mostly in the presence of the teacher. Moreover, in English medium schools, the learners are bound to speak completely in English, but they have a space, though limited, to interact in their home/other languages. This implies the presence of a space inside as well as outside the classroom for learner's possible development of multilingual identities.

While exploring learners' interests in the English language, there is a clear preference for home/local language media over English media, reflecting cultural engagement and possibly limited English exposure in everyday life. We can see that the learners are mostly interested in mass media communication in their language, as they can relate to it. However, they are not so interested in mass media communicating in the English language because they cannot relate to them and sometimes find it difficult to comprehend. This indicates learners' strong cultural retention and a disconnection with the foreign language. Therefore, there is a need to make the learners aware of their multilingual repertoire by accepting linguistic identities as a whole.

While exploring learners' motivation for learning the English language, we witnessed that the learners have a moderate view towards integrating into the English language and becoming like native English speakers, but when asked about their desire to express themselves as multilingual learners, there was very high response. So, in the present context, Gardner's original notion of integrativeness turns out to be a failure; instead, they have a blended form of motivation, which they consider English learning to be important for achieving better future opportunities as well as social status.

Lastly, the learners' responses toward different classroom practices were very positive as they prefer translanguaging/ language mixing in English language classrooms, but do not prefer the monolingual method of teaching English through English only. These multilingual learners are not so satisfied with their English courses in the schools. Through their responses, it became clear that one of the reasons for this is the English course content, where they rarely find representation of their community and culture, thus preventing them from connecting with the text. Therefore, when asked about their preference for culturally relevant text for learning English, the learners provided positive responses.

## **4. Conclusion**

The 'Inclusive Integrativeness', thus, demonstrates an approach that specifically addresses the issues of ESL classrooms. The study mainly tries to bring the real situations in an ESL classroom through the learner's perspective. This learner-centred study highlights the diverse linguistic backgrounds of the learners, their choices and needs for learning the English language; it witnessed that the learners are positive towards reconceptualizing their linguistic repertoire, where they could incorporate different languages together and reflect upon it personally and

emotionally, hence, building an inclusive multilingual identity, and further indicates for an inclusive approach of learning where they could learn the English language through integrating the English language with their languages. Thus, English language learners in India, specifically in multilingual and multicultural states like Assam, need to adopt such an inclusive approach to learning the English language, providing them with a sense of 'self' and confidence in learning the language without feeling disconnected and alienated. The findings of the present study positively imply the possible implementation of this new and adapted inclusive integrativeness approach in Indian ESL classrooms since it blends in seamlessly with the multilingual learning environment while also meeting the linguistic needs of the students and their linguistic identities. These are the preliminary results and implications of a large-scale future study that point to the viability of the suggested strategy, the ultimate objective of which is undoubtedly to invest in English language acquisition.

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