

Overview

Population

India has a population of 1.2 billion (1200 million) according to the last census report (2011). This is more than the entire population of Europe. There are 22 recognised languages, each distinct with their own script, evolved from the mother language Sanskrit, which is only taught for academic purposes (similar to Latin and European languages). The official languages of India are Hindi and English. Hindi is the most spoken language and is commonly spoken in the North of the country. Hindi is less spoken in the South, but is taught in schools and there is an all-prevailing exposure to Hindi through films, media and signage. India is culturally diverse and it is hard to generalise based on any one feature; religion, ethnicity, region, language to name a few. This has led to multiple identities amongst Indians eg: Gujarati, Bengali, Punjabi. However, there are many qualities that do overlap across the population of the semi continent with an unambiguous, fixed identity based on nationality as being Indian.

Climate

India has Temperate (North), Tropical (South) Semi Arid and Arid climates. Generally, it can be thought to be tropical with many exceptions. Seasons in India are summer, Monsoon, Post Monsoon and winter. Almost all of the rainfall happens during the Monsoon and Post Monsoon season. The weather is usually predictable and is of less interest in everyday conversation. Temperatures are usually around 30°C but can vary between seasons/regions from -6°C to 40°C.

Education System (for children from India)

Broadly, there are two systems between which parents have to choose for their children when joining school. A regionally agreed "State Board" curriculum or a nationally agreed "CBSE/ICSE" curriculum.

Education System – main differences and implications for schools

School starting age

Children begin formal schooling from the age of 3 or 4 (based on their age at the start of the school term) usually around April or June.

- School is usually 2+10+2 (two years of Kindergarten, Year 1 to 10 followed by Plus 1 and Plus 2 in Year 11 and Year 12).
- English letters and numbers are usually taught from Kindergarten before their mother tongue.
- Group activities are not common and children sit at their desks in class. Children are hesitant to speak in front of the class or may not be used to discussing topics with their peers whilst in class.
- Learning is not through play; concepts are taught formally in class.
- Children have three terms, each term ending with tests. Tests in the final term decide whether the child is moved onto the next year or has to repeat the whole year.
- Parents can usually understand simple English spoken one to one or if it is written down. Conversations over the phone may be harder for them to understand.

School day

- School days are usually 7 hours with a long break in the middle from year 1. Start and end times vary from school to school.
- Parents may not be used to the concept of "learning through play" There is a general perception that children are not taught seriously in UK schools; this view is held by some parents. Inviting parents into the classroom would help increase awareness and understanding.
- Schools/classrooms are usually mixed (segregated faith schools may be an exception) but close interaction between boys and girls or separated seating between boys and girls is not uncommon.
- State funded schools have a basic free school meal, mostly to encourage poor families to send their children to school.

Curriculum

- Children have a planned, set curriculum for each year.
- They often have homework to complete everyday.
- Children bring and take home all books and parents get to see everything done in school.

Literacy

- English is not taught phonetically, but Indian languages are phonetic with vowel sounds and consonant sounds adding up to roughly 50 letters (the total varies between languages).
- New words are introduced in each lesson alongside grammar rules and meanings explained using synonyms in English vs translations.
- Cursive writing is encouraged with a right-side incline and all Indian script except Urdu (derived from Arabic) is written from right to left.
- Some Indian script is written wholly beneath the line; however children are aware of these distinctions.
- Noun, verb and connective placements in sentences are different from English and children who are bilingual often need to restructure a sentence if asked to translate it.
- Newly-arrived junior school children often try direct translations which appear as badly worded but understandable sentences, often using the wrong tense.
- Independent writing with chronologically arranged ideas and detailed character descriptions may not be familiar to newly arrived Indian children.

Maths

- Schools in India do not use number lines, counters or Numicon.
- For applied mathematics, where children have to derive mathematical sentences based on the text, "plus", "minus", "times" and "divided by" are used in almost all cases. "add" and "take away" may be unfamiliar terminology.
- Pupils are competent in counting in English, sometimes better than they can in their first language, but understanding of quantity and place value may not reflect their knowledge of the number sequences memorised.
- Longer numbers may be expressed as "Lakhs" (vs one hundred thousand; 1,00,000) and "Crores" (ten million; 1,00,00,000) *Notice the comma placements.*

Cultural sensitivities

- UK schools often include Indian cultural events as part of the curriculum. These are limited to the faith/region children are from. It may be a new concept despite being labelled as an Indian custom.
- Interventions from school may need to be explained delicately as parents may assume their child has been graded as an underachiever.
- Parental expectations are often high and discussing progress can influence parental involvement/support from home.

Parental involvement and attendance in India

- A minimum pass level is mandatory to progress to a higher class and the onus rests on parents to ensure this is achieved. Lack of attendance is less of a problem in India. Drop outs and attendance can be a problem in deprived areas due to socioeconomic reasons.
- Attendance issues for Indian Children in the UK may reflect the absence of wider family to fall back on, strong home ties of parents, support during maternity, extended family woes etc.
- Private tuition and extracurricular lessons in arts and crafts/religious education etc. are not uncommon.
- Parent-teacher meeting sessions happen once a year. Inviting a parent to school for anything other than this can be concerning for both parent and child, if not dealt with sensitively.
- School talent shows and sporting events are widely regarded as a platform to promote talent and are conducted with much pomp and show. Children are encouraged by schools and parents to advance to higher tier competitions. Exam boards/Universities give grace marks/admission quotas to pupils who secure prizes in District/State/National level competitions.

Language differences that may cause problems with Literacy

Alphabet/Script

- Indian languages have about 50 letters and are phonetic.
- Word order is different from English.
- There are no capital letters.

Spellings

- Spelling mistakes are mostly the wrong choice of letter, based on levels of stress applied to a sound. Mixing formal and informal words can also lead to misspelt words.

Punctuation

- Punctuation is exactly the same, although intonation varies from language to language.

Auxiliaries/negatives/questions/tenses

- Auxiliaries are usually added on to the verb
- Negatives can be a conjoint word (usually preceding) or after the clause as a stand-alone negative converting the positive to a negative.
- Questions usually have a distinct intonation style that varies between languages. “May I” and “Can I” can be replaced by intonations. A directly translated question can come across as rude.
- Tenses are often formed with specific tweaks to the verb, sometimes entirely based on the context of the conversation.

Modal verbs

- Tweaked verb: “must/should/may do” is written “do (must), do (should) do (may)”. Subtle differences between Indian languages exist.

Word order

- The word order in Indian languages is different from English.
- “I went to the park yesterday” when translated would read “I yesterday park go” (go is tweaked to fit the tense)
- “Are people gathering there?” is written There people gathering (are)? “Are” is usually a tweak of the verb and the tone/punctuation makes it a question. There are variations between Indian languages as well.

Gender/Articles

- Some Indian languages only have a male and female gender e.g. Hindi. Inanimate objects can have a male or female preference. Other Indian languages also have a neutral gender.

Vocabulary

- English words are often written in Indian script (sort of adapting to cultural influxes). Translations for an English word, something as common as a footpath, can be a highly advanced word. (Literally meaning “that which people walk on” often using joint, higher order synonyms). Usually these are used for academic/formal purposes and are uncommon.

Classroom words: Malayalam

Greetings

Welcome സ്വാഗതം *swaa ga tham*

Hello നമസ്കാരം *na mas kaa rum*

Thank you നന്ദി *na nni*, Thanks

Please (tweaked words)

Goodbye (formal) *same as hello*

Bye (casual) Gestured

Morning same *as hello*

Afternoon *same as hello*

Are you OK?സുഖമാണോ *su kha man O*

School Routine

English / English word written in Indian scripts.

Playground – *Ground/ playground*

School office - *Office*

Hall – *Hall / Big room*

School - വിദ്യാലയം *Vid ya la yam*

Assembly - *assembly*

Toilets - *toilet*

School field - *ground*

Classroom – *class പാഠശാല* *pa ta mu ri*

Registration – to *register*

Computer suite - *computer room*

Tutor group (class) - *class teacher*

Break time - *break ഇടവേള* *E da ve la*

Outside - പുറത്ത് *pu ra (th)*

Inside - അകത്ത് *A ka (th)*

Fire drill – if fire തീ വന്നാൽ *thee van*

Packed lunch – *home lunch*

School dinner - *school lunch*

School nurse – *school nurse*

First aid room - *first aid*

Staff room - *teacher’s room*

Lunchtime - *lunch*

School uniform - *uniform*

Library - വായനശാല *va ya na sha la*

Book - *book പുസ്തകം*

Copy - *copy*

Label - *label*

Colour - നിറം *ni rum (not colouring)*

Pen – പേന, *pay na*

Pencil - *pencil*

Yes – *gestured*

No - *gestured*

Days of the week

Monday	തിങ്കളാഴ്ച
Tuesday	ചൊവ്വാഴ്ച
Wednesday	ബുധനാഴ്ച
Thursday	വ്യാഴാഴ്ച
Friday	വെള്ളിയാഴ്ച
Weekend	ശനിയാഴ്ച - (Sat-Sun)

Numbers

Zero	പൂജ്യം
One	ഒന്ന്
Two	രണ്ട്
Three	മൂന്ന്
Four	നാല്
Five	അഞ്ച്
Six	ആറ്
Seven	ഏഴ്
Eight	എട്ട്
Nine	ഒമ്പത്
Ten	പത്ത്
How many?	എത്ര?

Instructions/Questions

Work with a partner: **oru paṅkāliyumāyi jāliceyyuka**

Use your dictionary: **nighaṇṭu upayēāgikkuka**

Do you understand? **manas'silāyēā?**

Translate at home: **vīṭṭil vivarttanam ceyyuka**

Be quiet: **miṇṭātirikkuka**

Come here please: **iviṭe varū**

Sit: **irikkuka**

Where does it hurt? **ēdana eviṭeyāṇ**

Well done! **Nannāy**

Do you want to go home ? **vīṭṭil pēākaṇēā?**

Are you scared? **pēṭiccēā?**

Who: **ār**

For what? **entinuvenṅi**