# The Punjab English Skilling Program

2025 - 2028
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# Summary

The Government of Punjab, recognizing the need to enhance English communication skills among high school students, has partnered with EnglishHelper to launch a three-year large-scale, tech-enabled English Skilling program targeting **750,000 students** in Grades 9–12 across **3,600 government schools**. While prior efforts improved basic reading abilities, students still lack confidence in speaking English—a barrier to higher education and employability.

EnglishHelper, an EdTech enterprise with global reach and deep impact in India, has implemented its AI-powered learning tools in Punjab since 2013. Under the English Skilling program, two key solutions will be deployed:

1. **Reading & Comprehension Assistant (RCA):** A self-paced, AI-powered tool enabling listening, reading, speaking, and writing practice with real-time feedback.

2. **ReadToMe (RTM):** A multisensory classroom tool that supports teachers in delivering English instruction using the school's textbook content.

The program uses a **blended learning model**, integrating self-learning with curriculum-aligned classroom instruction. It is underpinned by learning science, supports low-resource environments, and is aligned with NEP 2020 priorities such as foundational literacy, equitable access, and technology integration.

Implementation will proceed in **three phases (2025–2026)**, with built-in mechanisms for **teacher training, program monitoring, and engagement**. A **rigorous impact evaluation** using Randomized Controlled Trials (RCTs) and surveys will measure vocabulary, grammar, reading comprehension, and spoken English outcomes, supported by AI-based diagnostics.

The **program cost is Rs. 750 per student per year** for three years. The model emphasizes long-term **sustainability, public-private collaboration**, and **scalable impact** on youth skilling in Punjab.

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## The English Challenge

The 2024 ASER Report underscores a concerning learning gap: only 60% of Grade 5 students can read a Grade II-level text, pointing to deep-rooted challenges in foundational literacy and comprehension.

This problem is more imperative in the case of English. ASER 2022 highlighted that 46.6% students of Grade 8 can read easy sentences in English and only a little over two-thirds of them (68.5%) can understand what they have read. Students from Punjab perform better than the national average in reading and comprehension in English, with 76.7% of Grade 8 students being able to read easy English sentences. This has been the result of multiple initiatives that the Government of Punjab has undertaken to improve students' English language abilities, including EnglishHelper's English learning solutions for students and teachers.

However, the Government of Punjab has recognized that while students in Punjab possess basic English reading and comprehension skills, they lack the confidence to communicate effectively in the language. The lack of English-speaking skills excludes students from many opportunities of higher education as well as vocational training and employability.

This gap is very critical in Grades 9 to 12, a pivotal stage in shaping students' academic and career trajectories.

To address this, the Government of Punjab is launching a dedicated English Skilling Program, focused on enhancing English communication skills among secondary school students, empowering them for future success. To this end, it has invited EnglishHelper to offer its tech-based solutions in improving the English outcomes of students from Punjab.

## EnglishHelper in Punjab

Founded in 2008, EnglishHelper is a mission-driven EdTech enterprise committed to making high-quality, AI-powered English language learning accessible and affordable for learners of all types, worldwide. As an 'Impact First' for-profit organization, EnglishHelper combines innovation with purpose, having positively influenced the lives of over 26 million learners in 100,000 schools across 10 countries — with a significant footprint in India.

EnglishHelper's solutions have been deployed in Punjab since 2013. Starting with a pilot that year, the programs expanded in 2015 in partnership with USAID. Subsequently, the Government of Punjab signed an MOU with EnglishHelper to scale its solutions to all 19,600 government schools in the state, with specific focus on the 6,400 secondary and senior secondary schools (high schools) in the state.

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The successful scaled up implementation of EnglishHelper's programs, the deployment model, and positive feedback from students and teachers resulted in the Government of Punjab selecting EnglishHelper to launch a large-scale initiative aimed at enhancing English proficiency and confidence among students in Grades 9 to 12.

This time, the program aims to reach a scale of approximately 750,000 students in Grades 9 to 12 across 3,600 government schools in Punjab. It will adopt a hybrid model, blending a personalized self-learning component that students can engage with to build their foundational English skills, together with curriculum-aligned English learning delivered in classrooms.

## EnglishHelper's Solutions

**Reading & Comprehension Assistant - Self-Learning Solution**

AI-powered application that helps learners of all ages improve and enhance their English skills in listening, speaking, reading, and writing

*Features & Capabilities*

- **Instant Feedback:** Provides immediate feedback on listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills
- **Adaptive**: Learning engine that customizes to the learner
- **Artificial Intelligence**: Explainable, transparent, stable, non-hallucinating AI that also provides active assistance
- **Interactive Tools**: Allows users to translate learning content into different languages, adjust accents, and modify the speed of reading aloud of passages
- **Curriculum Agnostic**: Aligns with multiple curriculums including Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), Common Core Standards

**ReadToMe - In-Class Solution**

Multi-sensory reading and comprehension software that enables reading and comprehension of curriculum-prescribed English textbooks

*Features & Capabilities*

- **Aligned with the school curriculum:** ReadToMe 'trains' itself to read the prescribed English textbook, enabling easy integration into the school timetable.
- **Teacher-led**: ReadToMe supports—not replaces—the teacher. It makes teaching easier and enhances classroom effectiveness.
- **Student-friendly:** De-mystifies English phonics and decodes words through slow reading aloud, vernacular translation, and picture dictionary.

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- **Low Resource:** Runs online/offline on existing school infrastructure — Windows, Linux, Android OS, OHP, smart boards, and TVs.

**Learning Expectations**

- **RCA (Reading & Comprehension Assistant)**: Students are expected to engage with RCA weekly:
  - A minimum of 2 sessions of 30 minutes each during school hours (ideally in a monitored setting)
  - Complemented sessions at home, using their own devices or during study time, based on availability
- **RTM (ReadToMe):** A minimum of 2 out of 6 scheduled English periods per week should be conducted using the ReadToMe program.

This structure ensures consistent self-paced learning supported by classroom engagement, reinforcing comprehension skills through regular practice.

## Program Scale

The deployment of the solutions will follow a phased approach as presented below.

By the end of the deployment, 750,000 students from grades 9 to 12 across 3,600 Government schools will be beneficiaries of the program. In addition, approximately 7,000+ teachers will be trained in the benefits, implementation and use of the solutions.

| Phase I (July 2025) | Phase II (January 2026) | Phase III (March 2026) |
|---|---|---|
| - 500 schools<br>- 300K Students | - 1,000 schools<br>- 250K Students | - 2,100 schools<br>- 200K Students |

## Theory of Change

**Vision for Change**

All students across Punjab, regardless of their background or proficiency level, demonstrate strong English communication skills and self-confidence—unlocking improved academic achievement, greater employability, and long-term social and economic empowerment.

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**The Challenge**

Many students in Punjab struggle with English speaking and comprehension, which not only limits their ability to engage with the wider curriculum but also hampers future employment opportunities. Teachers face the added challenge of managing classrooms with wide learning disparities, making it difficult to support every student effectively. Without access to personalized support, students often fall further behind, leading to a cycle of low confidence and limited upward mobility.

**The Solution**

EnglishHelper's solutions for the English Skilling program offer a scientifically designed EdTech platform that integrates multisensory learning—blending listening, reading, speaking, and writing—to support all types of learners. Students gain access to personalized learning appropriate to their level. In class, teachers are able to integrate multi-sensory reading and comprehension solutions into their regular classroom instruction. This combination of blended learning is expected to build students' confidence, bridge learning gaps, and help them reach their expected grade-level proficiency.

## Learning Science

EnglishHelper uses an AI-powered framework grounded in learning science to deliver personalized learning to students through their preferred mode of learning. By integrating cognitive theories and evidence-based strategies, the platform aligns with how the brain naturally processes and retains information to boost engagement, retention, and outcomes.

- **Reorganize Learning Content & Curriculum** - AI applies principles like interleaving, spacing, repetition, active learning, and worked examples to redesign and update learning content continuously.
- **Multi-sensory Engagement** - Content is automatically adapted across visual, auditory, and textual modes to improve retention and ensure accessibility, even in low-resource environments.
- **Automated Open Text Assessment & Assisted Writing**- An explainable AI essay grader enables scalable evaluation of open-text responses, overcoming the challenges of manual and peer grading.
- **Native Language Support**- AI translates and localizes content into learners' native languages to improve comprehension and learning effectiveness.

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## Outcomes Evaluation

To ensure rigorous and measurable evaluation of learning outcomes, the program will conduct baseline and endline assessments on a representative sample of the total student population using a Randomized Controlled Trial (RCT) methodology. Learning outcome assessments will evaluate vocabulary, grammar, reading comprehension, and spoken English. Schools will be randomly assigned to treatment and control groups to establish a valid counterfactual. The use of standardized tools and AI-assisted analytics will enable robust measurement of improvements and allow correlation of learning gains with usage patterns. Structured quantitative attitude and perception surveys among teachers and students will be deployed for feedback, and supplemented with anecdotal evidence. Independent experts will be engaged to design, administer, and validate the assessments and surveys, with results shared in a final impact report.

- **Diagnostics**: AI-powered, in-app diagnostics and learning progress tracking across listening, speaking, reading, and writing
- **Surveys**: Teacher and student feedback on gains in speaking confidence
- **Learning Outcomes Assessment**: RCT Baseline and Endline assessments for sample students/schools on vocabulary, grammar, and reading comprehension

## Funding Strategy

While the Government of Punjab remains deeply committed to this initiative, the funding required for statewide implementation exceeds current budgetary allocations. As a result, EnglishHelper has been asked to mobilize support from CSR and philanthropic partners to help make this effort possible.

EnglishHelper has commenced with implementation of the first phase prior to funding. The Government has requested EnglishHelper to mobilize funding from CSR and philanthropic sources. EnglishHelper is seeking to raise the required capital from:

- Corporate CSR programs focused on education, digital access, or youth skilling
- Blended finance and multi-stakeholder funding models
- Foundations and philanthropists aligned with education and equity goals

EnglishHelper is prepared to manage the program end-to-end, reporting, and ensuring measurable impact aligned with funder requirements. To ensure effective delivery and last-mile support, we will partner with NGO implementation agencies who will lead field-level execution and serve as key channels for the flow of program funds.

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## Sustainability of the Program

The English Skilling program aims to ensure continuous, equitable access to English learning in Punjab's government schools through a co-funded, data-driven model aligned with stakeholders. The program seeks to create lasting value for students, governments, and local industries. Integrated into existing government systems, the English Skilling program is designed for high impact in low-resource settings. It focuses on building teacher capacity (including teacher language improvement) and improving learning outcomes at scale, drawing on EnglishHelper's proven expertise. The government education administration and ecosystem will be fully leveraged, with pedagogical techniques designed around curriculum where English is transacted, and fully supported with supplemental English activities that are design, developed, and deployed around the English Skilling program.

The model promotes a state-aligned, multi-beneficiary educational infrastructure by combining public, private, and community efforts. Its low-cost, high-impact design makes it sustainable and appealing for government budgets. Backed by data, the program will generate anonymized insights to support research and policymaking, opening avenues for monetization and broader impact.

Backed by strong outcomes data from the program, we aim to engage with the Government of Punjab to explore integration of the English Skilling program into the State budget for long-term sustainability. This will be pursued through evidence-based dialogue and demonstrated impact.

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