

# ROLE OF LANGUAGE IN HIGHER EDUCATION AND CHALLENGES UNDER THE INDIAN NEP 2020

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## ABSTRACT

*Language is an essential tool of education. In other words, language is the vehicle of knowledge and also transmission of culture. Language is the backbone and integral part of education. Knowledge and language are the two sides of the same coin. Language plays an important role in man-making character building. The aim of education is to impart knowledge to the younger generation, using language as the means of communication. A country's societal and economic growth needs well-planned, dedicated, open, and technological advancements in education systems and learning policies. Since ancient times, India has dominated education, and university education is widespread there. Before and after independence, India's education system had many improvements. The language issues in the document and how Multilingualism and the power of language of the NEP document can play a vital role for holistic development of the students from primary to higher education. This paper throws light on the role of language in education. Moreover, the study uncovers challenges, curriculum, approaches, opportunities, and implementations under the NEP 2020.*

**Keywords:** Language, Higher Education, NEP, Multilingualism

Higher Education has been considered as a site of knowledge, and it is a place where one can pursue it. But, the distribution of knowledge and acquiring knowledge is controlled by various factors. For example, caste, class, language, region, religion, gender, race, etc. The two principal factors, i.e. language and caste, determine one's access and then survival in higher educational institutions. Language plays a significant role in speech, understanding, and communication which is primarily crucial in acquiring and producing knowledge.. Though English is regarded as the second official language in India, it has, however, become the dominant language in all spheres of education in contemporary times. The Hegemony of the English language becomes very problematic for non-English background students in the higher educational classroom in India. The National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020) has emphasized on the use of mother tongue or local language as the medium of instruction till Class 5 while recommending its continuance till Class 8 and beyond. It recommends

that all students will learn three languages in their school under the formula. The three languages learned by children will be the choices of States, regions, and of course the students' themselves.

## Role of Language in Education

As acknowledged from the beginning of human thinking, language is a vehicle of every kind of education. Teaching and learning are the basic pillars of education and these pillars depend on language. Without language there is no meaning for Education. No matter what the subject area, students understand new perceptions when they listen in, talk, read and write about what they are learning. Speaking and writing reflects the thinking process of the student. For this process language plays the role of mediator and way of communication to understand and act on the thoughts and ideas learnt. The role of language in Education can be listed like:

- Language as an important component for higher order of thinking and successful learning.
- Language for all types and levels of education

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to be used as the medium of instruction from the 'beginning of education till the end.

- Language is the prerequisite of all formal education without language education is like human without life.
- Language learning in education encourages interactive processes that facilitate the social construction of knowledge.
- Language acts as a tool for making meaning in education. Without meaning there is no use of any communication hence language is the tool for making education meaningful.

### **The Hegemony of English Language in Indian Universities**

The dominance of English is not only in Indian educational institutions but across all the globe. But, in a multilingual society like India, education in mother tongue or regional language is made available till secondary level in government-run schools. When the students get enrolled in the higher educational institutions for further studies, they have to face linguistic discrimination at different levels. In the classroom context of Indian Central Universities both students and teachers from the English medium are dominated. Indeed the field of study of natural and professional sciences, almost all, is possessed by English medium, but the social sciences is also dominated by the English medium though a large number is opted from Hindi medium background. The strength of English medium students is less than Hindi medium students in the classrooms. But English medium students have participated more in the classroom because of their comfort ability in this language. A number of factors contribute to the increase in the status of the English language in different contexts around the world. The factors are; uniformity of the textbook, language usage by higher officials spreading as a medium of communication across the world and giving priority to English language by the higher educational institutions are the main factors for its status. State machinery like the judiciary system, Bureaucracy and other administrative and academic cutting disciplines and regions are accepting the English language unconditionally.

### **NEP 2020 and Pedagogical Enhancement Policies in NEP of English Language in Higher Education**

The Indian NEP 2020 is a blueprint for the new India that aims to reform the educational system. On July 29, 2020, the Indian cabinet gave their approval to implement this in the Indian education system (Aithal and Aithal, 2020). One of NEP 2020's key goals is to boost student enrollment by 2030 throughout all educational institutions, including elementary, secondary, and higher education. It has proposed gradual reforms to the current educational and governmental structures to accomplish that (Jha and Parvati, 2020). Higher education is anticipated to make significant strides under NEP 2020. The goal is to build India 2.0 for the twenty-first century, which will undoubtedly assume a leadership position on the world stage. Most of NEP 2020 is a reasonably forward-thinking text with a clear understanding of the existing socio-economic landscape and the potential to tackle future difficulties. By 2030, India might become a hub for education on a global scale if this plan is successfully executed (Kumar, 2021).

### **Challenges**

- **Shift in Hiring Paradigm:** The decision to promote regional language in tertiary education will interfere with the hiring decisions of the premier institutions as they will be forced to consider language proficiency as primary criteria as opposed to subject matter expertise. They will also have to give up on looking from the global talent pool for teaching.
- **Availability of Quality Material in Regional Languages:** Another challenge is the availability of study material such as textbooks and scholarly literature. Also, quality control of these translations will be of utmost importance to keep semantic irregularities at bay.
- **Placement Associated Challenge:** Many public sector units accept Graduate Aptitude Test in Engineering (GATE) scores for entry-level positions, which is conducted in English medium. Given the already lamentable employability of college-educated individuals,

studying in a regional language could further inhibit job opportunities.

- **Availability of Faculty:** Given the English-medium legacy of higher education in India, attracting and retaining quality teachers who are willing and able to teach in regional languages will be a challenge.

### Curriculum

Effective English language learning necessitates a comprehensive strategy that includes a suitable curriculum, engaging pedagogy, ongoing formative evaluation, and sufficient student support. In addition, the curriculum must be interesting and up-to-date to meet the most recent needs for knowledge and meet specific learning goals for teaching and learning English. The vision of NEP 2020 focuses on transforming and reshaping the structure of the Indian education system. Online education is especially focused on NEP 2020. Institutions and universities conduct pilot studies through digital learning to maximize the benefits in India. Virtual English communication labs are created for the students to practice their new and advanced course contents and theoretical knowledge in English language learning. It also emphasizes online examinations and assessments of the English language. The era of digital technology has had more impact on English language learning with the influence of the internet.

### Approaches

The art of looking at how language learning and teaching are done is known as the “approach.” Approaches like the audio-lingual or aural-oral approach, cognitive coding, and communicative approach are used effectively to enhance English language learning in higher education. The methodology used here is task-based teaching. In the modern language learning classroom, learners use different approaches and techniques, such as the eclectic approach. English language teachers can select a particular approach according to the learner’s needs. To make Indian higher education competitive internationally, it needs growth opportunities based on performance, incentives to improve skills and

hierarchy, and a focused approach to giving faculty more power, autonomy, and freedom (Pathak, 2021).

### Opportunities

The NEP 2020 is a remarkably detailed planning document. Higher education and its delivery have received the majority of attention. The current NEP recommends that higher education institutions should use the mother tongue/local language as a medium of instruction, and/or offer bilingual programmes. This will help provide quality teaching to more students and thus increase Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in higher education. It will also promote the strength, usage, and vibrancy of all Indian languages. This way, private institutions too will be motivated to use Indian languages as a medium of instruction and/or offer bilingual programmes. This will ensure that there is no difference between government and private institutions. Teaching in the mother tongue/regional language will help in building an equitable education system. The ministry of education will work to develop an equitable system based on the principles of fairness and inclusion. For the system to be fair, we should ensure that the personal and social circumstances of students should in no way be obstacles to realizing their full academic potential. At the same time, to ensure inclusion through the use of the mother tongue/ regional language, we should set up a basic minimum standard of education which eliminates all disparity.

### Implementations

In the overview of NEP-2020, the policy’s strengths and weaknesses in the higher education and research sectors are listed, as are its implementation and recommendations. Based on the data collection discussion, possible generic strategies for putting NEP-2020 into action to reach its goals are also listed and analyzed. The study has yielded numerous predictions on the topic, such as the creation of high-quality colleges and universities with English-language institutional consolidation under restructuring, multidisciplinary and complete education, and the best learning environment and support for students changing to the regulatory system in higher education that integrates and uses technology, digital, and online education.

## Conclusion

“India is a treasure trove of culture, developed over thousands of years and manifested in the form of arts, works of literature, customs, traditions, linguistic expressions, artifacts, heritage sites, and more” (NEP-2020, para 22.1). These must be protected at the grassroots by drawing insights from our policies. NEP-2020 has sketched the direction and requires proper implementation. The policy has advocated education through the mother tongue, at least at the primary level. This research study evaluated overall the high impact of pedagogy and enhancement of English language teaching and learning under NEP 2020. In addition, the challenges, approaches, opportunities, implementations, and implications are discussed and evaluated through this research study.. It is, of course, not possible to get higher education, science and technology-based research, and employment in every mother tongue in the country. Nevertheless, using them as the medium of instruction at every possible level will revive them for the future, and thus speedy death of the marginal languages may be stopped.. It is, of course, not possible to get higher education, science and technology-based research, and employment in every mother tongue in the country. Nevertheless, using them as the medium of instruction at every possible level will revive them for the future, and thus speedy death of the marginal languages may be stopped.

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