

Revamping NEP Paradigms to Boost Multilingualism and Elevate English Language and Communication Skills in India

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Abstract- *The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 aims to promote an equitable society through universal access to quality education. A significant aspect of the policy is its emphasis on multilingualism, recognising the crucial role of language in enhancing critical thinking skills. This research paper explores the evolution of India's National Education Policies (NEPs), the shift from promoting regional and national languages in earlier policies to a more global, employability-driven focus in recent initiatives. This transition highlights the increasing importance of English language proficiency and effective communication as essential competencies for academic and professional success. Language instruction is evolving towards experiential learning, prioritising conversation and interactive engagement rather than merely emphasising literature, vocabulary, and grammar. The paper examines the integration of English language skills with skill development in the latest policy, which prepares students to navigate an increasingly interconnected and competitive job market. This holistic approach seeks to enhance both linguistic proficiency and critical thinking, ultimately contributing to a more equitable educational landscape in India*

Keywords: *English, Communication Skills, Multilingualism, Employability, Language Policy, India*

I. INTRODUCTION

Language has always played a critical role in India's education system. Language is closely tied to art and culture, shaping how people perceive their world. It influences the communication styles and the tone of conversations. The familiarity and shades in these interactions reflect the underlying culture, indicating that culture is deeply embedded in our languages. In India, English is not just a language; it is a powerful tool for economic growth and global connection. It is essential for individual success and the nation's progress.

The new NEP 2020 has provided Innovative frameworks that empower language learning and strengthen effective communication in our diverse

nation. From the early National Education Policies of 1968 and 1986 to the NEP 2020, language has served as both a medium of instruction and a tool for shaping national identity. India's deep-rooted dedication to multilingualism is clear, with Hindi and English recognised as its two official languages, alongside 22 languages included in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution. However, globalisation and rapid technological advances have transformed the role of language, particularly English. The NEP 2020 signals a decisive shift in India's language policy, positioning English language proficiency and communication skills as essential tools for global engagement and personal development.

English is a valuable asset for India's future. It empowers our workforce, enriches our knowledge, and strengthens our position on the world stage, ensuring India continues to thrive. Multilingual education helps create a more inclusive and effective learning environment. Research in countries such as Kenya and Burundi in sub-Saharan Africa, Vietnam, and Malaysia in Southeast Asia shows that students learn better when taught in languages they understand well. This is especially important in early education, where using the mother tongue builds a strong foundation for future learning. India's deep-rooted dedication to multilingualism is clear, with Hindi and English recognised as its two official languages, alongside 22 languages included in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution.

English Language and Communication in Earlier NEPs:

The emphasis of English Language and Communication in earlier NEPs was different. The earlier policies emphasised a three-language formula, promoting Hindi, English, and regional languages to foster national integration. English was primarily viewed as a language for academic reference rather than for active use as it is nowadays. In a diverse

country like India, the English language has served as a bridge language in government and professional settings, facilitating communication among different regions and thereby enhancing their sense of national unity (The Hindu, 2017).

The NEP 1968, based on recommendations by the Kothari Commission (1964–66), introduced the three-language formula as a tool for national integration. It emphasised the study of regional languages, Hindi, and English (or another modern Indian language). However, English was mainly described as a “library language”, intended to support academic work rather than professional fluency. Communication skills were not viewed as separate or vital competencies in the learning process (Ministry of Education, 1968).

The modified National Education Policy (NEP) in 1992 recognised that English is important for higher education but mainly focused on reading and writing skills rather than helping students communicate effectively. The new NEP 2020, however, changes this perspective by connecting language education to overall personal growth and job readiness. It views English not just as something required academically, but as a valuable global skill necessary for good communication in various fields. While NEP 2020 encourages teaching in students' native languages until at least Grade 5, it also emphasises the need for English proficiency and strong communication skills in both Indian languages and international languages. This approach is essential for preparing students for opportunities in a globalised world.

NEP 2020 promotes the three-language formula, encouraging learning in the mother tongue/regional language at the foundational stage, while also emphasising the importance of learning other Indian and international languages, especially English.

"Students will be able to choose languages that they wish to study, including Indian and foreign languages." (NEP 2020, Ministry of Education, 2020, p.14)

The NEP 2020 integrates communication skills into experiential and project-based learning, promoting activities like group work, debates, and presentations to enhance both interpersonal and language skills. This shift is especially important in the digital education landscape, where English dominates

learning platforms like SWAYAM and NPTEL. English language skills are related to employability, entrepreneurship, and innovation.

"Higher education institutions will aim to develop individuals who are creative and critical thinkers with excellent communication skills." (NEP 2020, p. 36)

English for Research and Innovation

The English language is vital in global research, as it serves as the primary medium for publishing papers, articles, and journals in fields such as science, technology, and medicine. This widespread use enhances accessibility, enabling researchers from around the world to build upon one another's work. In the context of conferences and presentations, English promotes international discussions, allowing researchers from diverse backgrounds to effectively share their findings.

In terms of collaboration, English enables researchers from various countries to work together seamlessly. It also provides access to a wealth of information found in online resources and databases, most of which are primarily available in English. Additionally, advancements in technology rely heavily on English, particularly in software development and artificial intelligence research, where many platforms and publications are presented in this language.

However, non-native speakers often face challenges. The dominance of English can create barriers, highlighting the need for support and a push toward multilingualism in research. It's essential to appreciate and promote linguistic diversity while also recognising the importance of English in the academic world. Research and innovation are key areas within the NEP vision, and English serves as the lingua franca of global research.

"Promoting a culture of research and innovation from early stages will be supported through strong communication skill development." (NEP 2020, p. 45)

Proficiency in English often leads to better job opportunities and higher incomes. India's rapidly growing IT and service sectors benefit from having a large, English-speaking workforce capable of collaborating with clients across nations. (The Economic Times, 2023) For entrepreneurs, fluency in English is essential for securing funding and expanding into international markets (Bajaj Broking, 2025). Research indicates that English proficiency can improve employability by over 50%, particularly

in sectors like IT and services. The NEP 2020 acknowledges this by embedding language and communication skills into vocational and professional education. A key aspect of NEP 2020 is its emphasis on teacher training, mandating training in bilingual or multilingual instruction and communication pedagogy. Teachers are expected to model effective communication, thus preparing students for both local and global contexts. The NEP 2020 marks a significant growth in India's educational language policy. English language and communication skills are fundamental to student success in an interconnected world. By growing multilingualism alongside English proficiency, the policy aims to create a more equitable and capable educational environment. The NEP highlights the importance of foundational literacy and numeracy, encompassing skills in reading comprehension, speaking, writing, and listening, all of which are essential for effective communication.

“The ability to communicate effectively, both orally and in writing, will be considered a foundational skill for all students.”(NEP 2020, p. 12)

Unlike past policies, NEP 2020 goes beyond just teaching language. It includes hands-on projects, teamwork, internships, and real-world tasks in all subjects. This approach makes communication an active and valuable skill for jobs. English has emerged as a crucial means for accessing knowledge and enhancing social mobility. A majority of advanced research and international learning resources are predominantly in English, which allows Indian students and professionals to tap into a wealth of information. This access is vital for driving innovation and remaining competitive in a globalised world (Vajirao & Reddy IAS Institute, 2024).

For countless individuals, proficiency in English opens doors to improved educational and career prospects, enabling them to rise on the social ladder and better their circumstances (ThePrint, 2025)

English and its Role in Teacher training

Teachers should be trained in English for several important reasons. First, when teachers have strong English skills, they can explain lessons more clearly. This clarity helps students understand the topics better, which can lead to improved learning outcomes. Additionally, teachers with proficient English abilities can guide students in developing

critical thinking skills. They are better equipped to encourage students to analyse information and solve problems effectively. This is essential for preparing students for future challenges. In diverse classrooms, teachers must be adept at using English to create an inclusive environment. Good language skills ensure that all students feel valued and included, regardless of their backgrounds. This inclusivity enhances the classroom experience for everyone.

English is also a key tool for the overall growth of students. It is not just another subject; it plays a vital role in many aspects of a student's development. Teachers need to be proficient in English to support their students' holistic growth.

Moreover, strong English language skills reflect a teacher's professionalism and commitment to continuous learning. Teachers who take the time to improve their language skills demonstrate their dedication to their craft.

The ability to understand and use multiple languages can be a valuable resource in the classroom. Teachers who are trained in English can better connect with students who speak different languages, enriching the learning experience for all. Training teachers in English is essential for creating better learning experiences and outcomes for students.

In terms of teacher training and pedagogical change, a significant shift in NEP 2020 is the emphasis on preparing teachers. The National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) mandates training in bilingual or multilingual instruction as well as communication pedagogy. Teachers are expected to model effective communication skills, thereby preparing students for both local and international environments (NCTE 12)

Role of English language skills in employability

The role of the English language in employability is significant and multifaceted. Proficiency in English enhances job opportunities across various sectors, particularly in industries that prioritise communication and international collaboration. Many employers value strong English skills, especially in global companies, where effective communication with colleagues and clients from different countries is essential.

Being skilled in English allows for more effective networking and relationship-building for job seekers. Clear communication can make a substantial difference in interviews and workplace interactions, fostering teamwork and collaboration among diverse

teams. This competency is crucial in delivering presentations, participating in meetings, and engaging with stakeholders.

In terms of career advancement, individuals with strong English language skills can access a broader range of professional development opportunities. Many training programs, workshops, and courses are offered in English, helping employees enhance their skills and knowledge in their respective fields. This proficiency also facilitates connections with professionals worldwide, leading to collaborations that can enhance career paths.

Additionally, strong English language skills can positively influence earning potential. Employers often seek candidates who can communicate fluently in English, leading to increased demand for such individuals and potentially better salaries, especially in multinational organisations and sectors where English is the primary language of business. In summary, investing in English language training for teachers not only enhances their career prospects but also improves the quality of education they provide, ultimately benefiting their students and the broader educational community. The Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI) and EY report that proficiency in English can enhance employability by over 50%, particularly in the IT, services, and entrepreneurship sectors (FICCI-EY 2023). NEP 2020 supports this by incorporating language and communication skills into vocational and professional education.

A report by FICCI and EY (2022) found that English language skills increase job opportunities by over 50% in India's service and tech sectors. "English proficiency is often considered a basic eligibility in MNCs, BPOs, and global startups." (*FICCI-EY Report, "Future of Jobs in India", 2022*)

II. CONCLUSION

The transition from NEP 1968 to NEP 2020 represents a significant shift in educational language policy. The Kothari Commission (1964-66) introduced the three-language formula for national integration, stressing regional languages, Hindi, and English as a "library language." However, it did not prioritise communication skills (Ministry of Education, 1968). The modified policy in 1992 upheld this formula, recognising English's

importance for science and higher education, but failed to link language proficiency with employability, focusing instead on equity and literacy (Ministry of Education, 1986). In contrast, the recent policy reflects a paradigm shift, promoting multilingualism and positioning English as a global connector. It emphasises the need for strong communication skills in both Indian and international languages, highlighting their critical role in academic success and employability (Ministry of Education, 2020). While earlier approaches emphasised linguistic nationalism, NEP 2020 highlights the importance of English language proficiency as a crucial skill. By prioritising English language skills and effective communication as fundamental components of education and employability, this policy addresses the shortcomings of previous National Education Policies (NEPs). It effectively balances the preservation of cultural identity through regional languages with the need to prepare students for a globalised world. The policy redefines communication as a vital, transferable skill across all fields and incorporates it into both the curriculum and teacher training. This alignment equips students for success in both local and global contexts in the 21st century. As India progresses in the 21st century, this shift in focus is not just relevant—it's essential.

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