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ANALYSIS OF LANGUAGE  
IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES**

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**MULTILINGUALISM AND THE NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY  
2020: A STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS OF LANGUAGE  
IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES**

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**Abstract**

The complex multilingual milieu of India, which carries a myriad of cultures and identities has been navigated over the years through a series of policies and guidelines. To guarantee the representation and preservation of regional languages in India, the *Three-Language Formula* was introduced in 1968, marking a crucial turning point in the country's linguistic strategy. This directive sought to promote the understanding and use of three languages, namely, the mother tongue, Hindi, and English, in schools across the country. The formula profoundly influenced the nation's approach to language education and set a precedent for subsequent linguistic policies. Recently, it has witnessed a renewed emphasis with its incorporation in the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, indicating a continued commitment to linguistic inclusivity and the advancement of multilingual education in India. This paper argues that although integration of language education into the students' cultural environments is important to reach a wider audience, recognising the real-world difficulties faced by key stakeholders is crucial for effectively implementing this goal. The success of the NEP's linguistic vision hinges on addressing the challenges posed by pedagogical, societal, and infrastructural challenges. Accordingly, this study investigates the challenges associated with multilingualism in urban settings from the perspectives of two primary stakeholders: parents and teachers. It examines the experiences of teachers, who are the main educators in

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the classroom, and the difficulties they face when presenting curriculum material in local languages. Understanding their perspectives provides insights into the practicalities of implementing a multilingual approach in schools and underscores the necessity of addressing their concerns to ensure successful language education reform. On the other hand, outside the educational institution, parents play a primary role in language dissemination. Consequently, this study also examines the challenges encountered by parents in promoting and sustaining the use of regional or mother tongues at home. It conducts a comprehensive analysis of the factors influencing parents' views toward regional languages, including the perceived prestige of the English language and concerns about future opportunities. The research aims to identify gaps and viable strategies for successfully realising the NEP's multilingual goals.

**Keywords:** Multilingualism, Language Inclusivity, National Education Policy, Mother tongue

## I. Introduction

Throughout the post-independence decades, English has remained the chosen language for formal work, education, and economy in India's multilingual society. English has dominated the formal language landscape of metropolitan Indian cities, particularly in education and the professional sectors, even though the actual percentage of the Indian population that speaks the language is relatively low. This is especially so when socioeconomic factors and urban-rural divisions across the country are considered. Over the years, this formalisation of the English language has run parallelly with attempts to preserve the country's multilingual environment, a challenge that has been constantly navigated through various policy decisions. An important milestone in this journey was the establishment of the *Three-Language Formula* in 1968, introduced to guide the country's linguistic strategy on the path of representation and preservation of regional languages in India, albeit recognising the significance of English in official communication. This directive sought to promote the understanding and use of three languages, namely, the mother tongue, Hindi, and English, in schools across the country. Recently, the inclusion of the three-language formula in the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, demonstrates a sustained state interest in multilingual education in India along with preserving linguistic diversity. It is within this context that the following essay

attempts to explore the complex relationship between language and education in India, with a particular emphasis on the negotiations that take place between policy-level efforts to preserve native languages on one hand and their implementation at the school level on the other. The paper simultaneously analyses native language practices at home in response to the demands of a changing society that is trying to adjust its everyday language choices. By reading the NEP 2020 as a document that reiterates the emphasis on imparting regional language education, the goal is to comprehend the linkages between language preservation in the family, language policy implementation at schools, and the larger vision of the NEP 2020.

## II. The Historical Connection: Language and Schooling

Since Independence, language has been a priority in India's educational system and it cannot be seen as disconnected from the Nehruvian goal of fostering a scientific temperament, recognising education as essential for national growth and advancement. Given its status as the primary language of science and technology, English emerged as a crucial tool for cultivating this scientific mindset. Efforts to balance scientific and economic progress with cultural diversity and language preservation led to the establishment of commissions such as the Secondary Education Commission (1952) and the University Education Commission (1948–1949, Radhakrishnan Commission). In this context, the 1968 *Three-Language Formula* and its revitalisation in the NEP 2020 are significant as they are based on the vision of integrating education into the cultural contexts of students, making learning more relevant and accessible. The following principles had been stated in the National Policy on Education (NPE) of 1968:

1. Free and compulsory education
2. Status, Emoluments, and Education of Teachers
3. Development of Languages -
  - a) Regional languages
  - b) Three Language Formula

First language: It will be the mother tongue or regional language.

Second language: In Hindi-speaking states, it will be other modern Indian languages or English. In non-Hindi-speaking states, it will be Hindi or English.

Third Language: In Hindi-speaking states, it will be English or a modern Indian language. In the non-Hindi-speaking state, it will be English or a modern Indian language.

- c) Promotion of Hindi Language
- d) Sanskrit Language
- e) International Language

Additionally, NEP 2020 emphasises on the importance of using home or regional language as the medium of instruction, recommending this approach at least until Grade 5 and preferably extending it to Grade 8. The benefits of mother-tongue based instruction are explicitly acknowledged in the new National Education Policy (NEP), which was unveiled in July 2020. It says that when feasible, the home language, mother tongue, local language, or regional language will be used as the medium of instruction through at least Grade 5, but ideally through Grade 8 and beyond. After then, whenever it is feasible, language instruction in the home or local tongue will continue. By declaring that this strategy to be followed by both public and private schools, the policy goes beyond other earlier documentation. The policy highlights multilingualism as a goal of school curriculum and pedagogy and encourages the use of many languages in the classroom. It aims to enhance the students' cognitive and academic development by grounding their early education in their native languages. This is consistent with the new idea of the 'multilingual turn,' as some scholars have called the increasing recognition of the importance of and need for a multilingual focus in education (Semiante, 2016). Students are encouraged to gain proficiency in multiple languages due to the perceived benefits, including better employment opportunities, richer engagement with diverse cinematic and literary traditions, and enhanced travel prospects. The new NEP favours teaching English as a subject rather than using it as the language of instruction for the whole curriculum. It believes that all students will receive high-quality instruction in all languages; instruction in a language is not necessary for language acquisition. NEP 2020 adopts a flexible approach, allowing states and regions the autonomy to choose languages as long as two out of three are indigenous to India, thereby not mandating the adoption of any specific language. Furthermore, the emphasis upon the use of regional languages as the medium of

instruction in early education indicates an attempt to enhance not only cognitive and academic development but also limit the dominance of languages such as English in leveraging for broader socio-economic growth.

However, policy does not specifically address the issues that teachers face, especially in urban contexts, when there are multiple home languages represented in the classroom along with a lack of training on how to best leverage these funds of knowledge or scaffold the learning of new language skills. Nevertheless, the policy acknowledges the opportunity and value that multilingualism offers.

Accordingly, it becomes worthwhile to evaluate the real-world implementation and challenges that NEP 2020 is presented with, given that it will allow an assessment of the practical feasibility of the policy by identifying gaps between theoretical intentions and actual practices (Kumar, 2020). Furthermore, such an examination will help identify specific challenges, such as infrastructural deficits and the availability of trained teachers proficient in regional languages along with addressing socio-economic resistance from parents who prefer English-medium instruction due to perceived economic advantages. Lastly, it evaluates the impact of the policy on the learning outcomes of students, addressing the impact of the educational goals of NEP 2020 and the extent to which they are being met effectively.

### **III. Theoretical and Methodological Premise**

To develop a comprehensive understanding of the concept and components of multilingual education, it is essential to examine how teachers and parents perceive regional language-based multilingual education in comparison to English language instruction. Theoretically, this analysis draws on Bourdieu's (1984, 1990) study on 'symbolic power and language', which offers a crucial perspective for understanding the dissemination, application, and maintenance of native languages within Indian families. Bourdieu's theoretical framework emphasises that language serves not only as a medium of communication but also as a tool for the assertion and negotiation of social power and identity. Bourdieu's analysis points to the manner in which the choice of one language over another, such as Hindi or English, within a family can signify not merely a linguistic

preference but also a negotiation of social status. Since language carries symbolic power that can influence social mobility and economic prospects, families may opt for a dominant language like English over native tongues, believing it will provide greater status and economic opportunities. This perspective is vital for understanding the real-world implications of the NEP 2020's language policy and its potential to balance the goals of linguistic diversity and socio-economic advancement. Complementing Bourdieu's perspective, this analysis also employs Saussure's (1966) concept of *parole*, which is the particular act or occurrence of speech in language use. The concept of *parole* highlights the importance of the active use of native languages in everyday conversation for their preservation. According to Saussure, while the grammatical structure of a language (*langue*) may remain intact, the decline in its active use (*parole*) can lead to language erosion. This distinction is crucial for understanding monolingualism and multilingualism in families, as it underscores how native languages are transferred and perpetuated through actual language use. Furthermore, Freire's (1973) critical pedagogy on teaching Brazilian working-class students becomes particularly pertinent here, as it explores how education functions under social and economic constraints. Freire highlights the significance of the student's language and cultural backgrounds, particularly from working-class or underprivileged groups. Examining 'the banking model of education', Freire examines how educators implant 'knowledge coins' into the minds of the students to facilitate learning. This is done, irrespective of the interest or level of commitment of the students into the process. By establishing that students can educate one another and themselves without the need of a 'banking' dictator, Freire disproves the banking paradigm and proposes a dialogic method where students use collaborative dialogues as the primary means to learn. In language education, this can be translated into fostering meaningful conversations, discussions, and collaborative learning experiences where students actively engage with language, both native language and official language.

Furthermore, essential to the theoretical premise of the essay is Leonard's (2017) discussion of the challenges of negotiating with indigenous languages, where he emphasises the need to shift away from traditional approaches that theorise indigenous

language efforts through *language revitalization*. Instead, he advocates for focusing on how such efforts can contribute to *language reclamation*. He explains that language revitalization typically centres on the language itself, with goals and measures based on factors like the number of speakers. In contrast, language reclamation involves a broader community-driven effort to assert the right to speak a language, with goals shaped by the needs and perspectives of the community. Reclamation, therefore, represents a form of decolonisation, as it prioritises community histories and current needs over a top-down approach that imposes objectives like grammatical fluency or transmission across generations. The process begins with the community's input and uses this foundation to guide and develop language initiatives.

Building on Leonard's framework of language reclamation, this study adopts an in-depth qualitative approach, utilising unstructured interviews to capture the lived experiences of teachers and parents within a specific demographic. By focusing on these key community agents, the study aims to explore how their perspectives align with or challenge the top-down approaches in language revitalisation efforts, providing insights into the sociocultural dynamics that shape the implementation of multilingual education policies. The participants include individuals whose roles are crucial to understanding the intersection between community needs and educational reforms, namely:

- **Teachers:** Employed in private schools in the Delhi NCR region, teaching at the primary and secondary levels. Private schools are those which are typically funded and managed by private entities or individuals and they often charge higher tuition fees as compared to public schools.
- **Parents:** Parents were selected from the middle-class and upper-class backgrounds, chosen to explore the relationship between linguistic preferences and based on the socio-economic status.

It is argued that the effective implementation of NEP's linguistic vision cannot be fully understood without examining the experiences of these two stakeholders, who are directly involved in the execution of policy decisions and are significantly impacted by them. Their perspectives are crucial for understanding the Indian classroom experience and the

everyday practice of multilingualism in Indian education. The idea is to develop a comprehensive understanding of the concept and components of multilingual education by examining how teachers and parents perceive regional language-based multilingual education in comparison to English language instruction.

#### **IV. Stakeholder Analysis: Navigating the NEP 2020 in Indian Schools**

##### **Multilingualism and Classroom Engagement: Teacher's Reflections**

Interviews with teachers revealed that, while teachers generally supported the use of languages other than English in the classroom, they faced a conceptual obstacle because of differing opinions on multilingualism. It is important to note that the choice of languages offered in schools, particularly in diverse and multilingual regions like Delhi, is often guided by recommendations and mandates set by governing bodies such as the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) and the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), rather than being in the hands of individual teachers. Accordingly, while some teachers perceived multilingualism as important and helped in promoting the use of several languages in the classroom, others saw English as the primary means of instruction to which regional languages had to be integrated. Additionally, some teachers agreed and attempted to incorporate the local language to explain complex subjects that students found difficult to understand. Teachers also emphasised the importance of allowing students to express themselves in their mother tongue, as many came from low-literate socioeconomic backgrounds. They felt that this approach helped students better relate to the material and developed a deeper appreciation and connection with their culture. Moreover, teachers revealed that classroom multilingualism promoted an appreciation for peers' languages and raised awareness of multilingualism, reducing ethnocentric biases often observed among English-speaking students. This phenomenon is consistent with Bernstein's (1971) assertion that linguistic practices can cause language to change from a 'restricted code' to an 'elaborative code' as it can develop appreciation for peers' languages and raise awareness of multilingualism. Additionally, teachers shared that multilingualism created a more equitable environment both in the classroom and back at home where the students shared

their multilingual classroom experiences with their parents. It therefore demonstrated how the ‘schooled mind’ (Illich, 1971) of a child could influence that of the parents, encouraging them to reconsider the perceived supremacy of the English language. Below are some of the key considerations regarding multilingualism in classrooms, offering additional insights into its practical implementation:

***‘Decolonising the family’ and ‘deschooling the English language’***

This can be achieved by exposing the children to diverse Indian languages at an early age, emphasising competency in their regional language, from the outset of socialization. Learning in their language from the beginning can make students feel proud and safeguard their identity and prevent children from experiencing shame. Managing parental expectations poses a significant challenge to multilingualism since several parents prioritise their child's ability to speak fluent English over other aspects of language competency such as grammar or writing. Middle class parents constantly bargain with themselves because they want their child to stand out from the crowd. It is possible to understand this concept of difference and otherness as characterizing a ‘cultural capital’ project through which these middle-class families aim to maintain their social standing and demonstrate their liberal credentials. This specific segment of the middle class grew to identify as both privileged and dominant through the process of being able to enter and exit areas designated as ‘other.’ Their persistence stems from their conviction that their child's proficiency in English gives them the tools they need to compete well both locally and internationally. Hence, parents should also receive instruction on the significance of regional languages in addition to the importance of English.

***Resource Limitation***

The lack of sufficient resources presents a significant challenge. One major obstacle is the expense associated with hiring and training a large number of language teachers within a short period, which is particularly burdensome for schools with inadequate infrastructure.

### ***Bridging Regional Divides***

A notable challenge is the regional divide in language preferences and readiness to adopt the policy. States in the North East and South India, for instance, may be less prepared to teach Hindi, while Hindi-speaking states may not have included South Indian languages in their curriculum, highlighting the need for a balanced approach. Teachers across the nation should be trained to bridge this regional gap.

### ***Different modes of instruction***

The need for teachers to adapt their teaching strategies and resources to accommodate students' varying levels of language proficiency to meet their diverse linguistic needs. In a multilingual classroom, students from different language backgrounds sit together, but they may not always be able to communicate with each other effectively. This poses a challenge for teachers who cannot instruct students who do not understand the language being used. Consequently, specialised teacher training is essential for effectively managing and instructing in such a multilingual environment. Training should be provided to teachers that helps them to adopt joyful and engaging methods of teaching languages, with an approach that emphasises on opportunities for early conversations, reading, and writing in local tongues. For example, encouraging students to read folktales or stories that they may have heard in their home language in a multilingual classroom. After that, they use some terms from their native tongue to narrate those stories in English. Similarly, translating a poem from another language into English or vice versa is another worthwhile endeavour. This lets the students be imaginative and experiment with new vocabulary. Another way could be that students should instruct their peers in how to say "hi" in their own tongue.

### ***Cultural Sensitivity***

When putting the multilingual policy into place, teachers felt the need to give special attention to being culturally sensitive and empathetic, to prevent any potential prejudices or discrimination in their teaching methods. It is crucial that teachers refrain from establishing linguistic hierarchies among their students. When a teacher respects the

various languages spoken in the classroom, the students automatically welcome their friends from other backgrounds. Children will be able to learn about many cultures and will also feel more bonded to one another.

Overall, complementing the policy focus, our research shows that in schools where the medium of instruction differs significantly from the students' home language, teachers often resort to using multilingual resources to facilitate understanding. However, they heavily depended on prescribed textbooks and employed a mix of languages (Pillar & Skillings, 2005; Mili & Winch, 2019; Erling et al., 2016), including English and other dominant media of instruction, to communicate and teach effectively. Students similarly responded by mixing the languages they knew with the medium of instruction, creating a dynamic, multilingual classroom environment. Our findings thus highlight the effectiveness of multilingual education in promoting better understanding and retention of knowledge, as it leverages students' linguistic strengths and cultural backgrounds.

### **Language at Home: Transmission, Utilization, and Preservation of regional languages within Indian Families**

The second section of the study examines the factors influencing language usage, transmission, and maintenance within family settings, specifically focusing on middle-class and upper-middle-class households in the Delhi National Capital Region (NCR). The purpose is to shed light on language preservation, intergenerational language transfer, and the impact of external influences on language preferences. The study aims to understand why and how parents prioritise certain languages at home, especially in multilingual family environments. The findings indicate the key themes that emerged from conversations with families, demonstrating how language, culture, identity, and socioeconomic factors interact in complex ways to influence the use and preservation of local languages.

#### ***Narrative 1: Language Continuity in a Monoethnic Family***

The first narrative features a mono-ethnic family comprising a couple from the same state who have relocated to the National Capital Region (NCR). This family predominantly

uses their native tongue at home, resulting in a high degree of linguistic consistency within the household. Their shared upbringing in the same region facilitates communication in their native language, which they regard as integral to their identity and cultural heritage. The couple places significant importance on preserving their original language, which minimises linguistic shift towards the region's dominant language. Consequently, language transmission to their children is generally smooth. However, it is revealed here that while the children acquire their parents' native language, they do not necessarily reproduce the same regional accent, indicating a subtle shift in language patterns, particularly in their speech or *parole* aspect. The presence of grandparents who also speak the native language further reinforces linguistic coherence within the family, as they communicate with their grandchildren in the same language. This narrative illustrates how shared cultural and linguistic backgrounds within a family can promote the preservation and transmission of native languages across generations, despite external influences..

***Narrative 2: Language Challenges in a Monoethnic Family***

Shared cultural and ethnic backgrounds however do not necessarily ensure linguistic cohesion within families, as illustrated in this narrative. Despite their shared heritage, this couple predominantly speaks Hindi and English at home, mirroring the linguistic landscape of the NCR, rather than their native tongue. This creates a significant challenge as their first born child fails to learn the native language. Furthermore, in this family, the grandparents are compelled to speak in Hindi with their grandchildren to maintain communication. Recognising the issue, the parents attempt to transmit their native language to their second child, especially after awkward encounters with extended family members who expect the children to be proficient in their native language. They hope that by doing so, the elder child might also pick up the language. This situation underscores the influence of extended family expectations on language choices within the household and highlights the complexities of transmitting native languages in predominantly monolingual environments. It reveals how external pressures and internal family dynamics can affect language preservation and transmission, leading to efforts to correct perceived linguistic deficiencies among children.

*Narrative 3: English or Hindi predominance in Multiethnic Families*

This set of narratives delves into multiethnic families, where the spouses, despite coming from linguistically different backgrounds, have resided in the NCR from birth. Within these families, languages like English or Hindi often take precedence as the primary means of communication. This is particularly notable when both spouses are fluent in these dominant languages, having used them for interaction before and after marriage.

There may be a further classification of families here, based on whether the native language of one of the spouses is Hindi or not. In cases where Hindi is the native language of one parent, there is often an almost complete loss of the other parent's native language in the next generation. Children predominantly use Hindi and English, with occasional references to words or phrases from the non-Hindi-speaking parent's language. This occurs primarily due to the overlap between Hindi as the dominant language in NCR and one parent's native language, making Hindi the primary mode of communication both inside and outside the home. Given that this is a patrilineal setup of families, despite carrying the ethnic surname of the father, children in such families do not actively learn or transmit his ethnic language. This phenomenon highlights the significant influence of external factors, such as the dominant NCR language, on language choices within multilingual households. It underscores how the prevalence of Hindi in the region can overshadow the transmission of other native languages, shaping the linguistic environment of the home.

In a similar case where the native language of one of the spouses is already Hindi, we explore the dynamics of a high-profile multiethnic couple who take pride in their culture and heritage. However, they face challenges in transferring their native language to their children. Despite their deep connection to their heritage, the family prioritises English as the dominant spoken language. This preference for English stems from its prestige and the societal context where English is considered a symbol of success and advancement. The family's choice reflects how pride in cultural heritage does not necessarily override factors related to the influence of professional and social capital. Indeed, this reflects how language becomes a marker of social class in the way that Bourdieu had argued. We find

that although such families from higher socioeconomic backgrounds prioritise the preservation of native languages as a marker of cultural capital and identity, they may still be unable to transmit their native language to their children.

***Narrative 4: English or Hindi predominance in Monoethnic Families***

The phenomenon of prioritising the English language over the native tongue within monolingual households is an important window to understand how specifically socio-economic motivations influence the choice of language. Perceptions of English as a means to enhance educational and career opportunities are reflected in this specific narrative involving a monolingual family where Hindi serves as the native language. The family's insistence and instruction to their child to communicate primarily in English both inside the home and outside with peers is emblematic of the prestige associated with English in both local and global contexts. Furthermore, the use of cartoon programs, such as *Peppa Pig*, as a medium for language transmission within the family, along with the expressed satisfaction when the child acquires a 'British accent', strong enough to be recognised by school educators, presents an intriguing facet of contemporary language dynamics with neo-colonial implications. This phenomenon underscores the enduring influence of former colonial languages and cultures on contemporary language choices and preferences. The deliberate exposure of children to foreign media, accompanied by the desire for them to acquire a specific accent associated with a former colonial power, reflects the complex interplay between linguistic prestige, cultural identity, and aspirations for social advancement. Moreover, it raises questions about how language is utilised not only as a means of communication but also as a symbol of affiliation with globalised cultural and linguistic norms, often rooted in colonial legacies. In another case, we observe how a monoethnic family has been unable to transmit their native language to their children, and Hindi too is not actively used in this setting, despite residing in NCR. This narrative highlights a case of the predominance of English over Hindi despite the dominant presence of the latter in NCR. Interestingly, despite maintaining distinct and culturally specific food traditions, the family predominantly communicates in English, thus highlighting how food habits do not necessarily correlate to language use. No attempt is made to transmit the language and parents now see it as a hopeless situation,

assuming that the children would never learn the language. Consequently, even the grandparents communicate exclusively in English when interacting with their grandchildren.

Additionally, a significant pattern discerned from our study pertains to the erosion of specifically Punjabi in the NCR in favour of Hindi. This linguistic shift can be attributed to the linguistic proximity between Punjabi and Hindi and the dominant status of Hindi within the NCR. Consequently, children with Punjabi parents, born and brought up in this region frequently gravitate towards Hindi as their primary means of communication, often resulting in diminished proficiency or, in some instances, a complete lack of language competence in Punjabi. This phenomenon has had a substantial adverse impact on the intergenerational transmission of Punjabi within the NCR. The sociolinguistic landscape within the region reflects the complex interplay of linguistic, cultural, and societal factors that contribute to the dominance of Hindi over other regional languages, thus highlighting the challenges faced by similar languages like Punjabi in maintaining their presence and continuity in an environment dominated by a more widely spoken language. It is interesting to see how the imposition of a dominant language, whether subtle or overt, often triggers resistance, reflecting the complexities inherent in multilingual societies. Historical precedents show that when a language is perceived as being forced upon a community, it can lead to tensions and challenges in maintaining linguistic diversity. This resistance arises from a desire to preserve cultural identity and autonomy, which are closely tied to one's native language. This is evident in C.R. Park, a migrant colony in Delhi, where the majority of residents share a common linguistic background. Communication is not necessarily dominated by the state's primary language, Hindi. In C.R. Park, special classes are organised to teach Bangla to children, reflecting the community's effort to preserve and promote their mother tongue. Families in this area take pride in their children's fluency in Bangla, seeing it as a way to transmit their rich cultural heritage to the next generation. Parents actively support these initiatives, valuing the cultural connection and identity that comes with maintaining their native language.

***Narrative 5: Language Prioritisation in Multiethnic Families***

In this narrative, we explore the complexities of language prioritisation within multilingual familial contexts, particularly when one spouse hails from a different region, while the other one is also not a native Hindi speaker. Therefore, both the spouses are not Hindi speakers, though one of them is native to NCR. In this case, we observe how a struggle emerges over which language will be prioritised within the family. This struggle becomes pronounced as we find the prominent role of language ideologies in the use and preservation of native language. Language ideology not only impacts the personal value of a native language but also causes immense anxiety toward its loss and thus a stronger inclination to preserve it. In such cases, the choice of language for communication within the family becomes an important marker of political aspirations within private and intimate spaces, such that the use of another person's native language can be seen as a threat to one's own. Video conversations with grandparents are often carefully guarded to avoid the use of the other person's language, and the children's ability to speak fluently in the native language to grandparents back home becomes a matter of both pride and relief. In this case, we also see the partner who did not previously know how to read and write the language before the birth of their children learn the language to facilitate its transmission to the next generation. This narrative highlights the cultural and political anxiety accompanied by a presumed threat of language and identity loss undergone by multilingual couples.

***Narrative 6: Learning of Language After Marriage***

This narrative discusses a unique case in which a bilingual family's mother, who had never learned her mother tongue before marriage, learnt her native language after she got married. This decision was driven by the husband's proficiency in the same language. The willingness of the mother to learn her mother tongue post-marriage underscores the role of patriarchal family dynamics within marital relationships in shaping language choices and practices. The mother's inability to speak her mother tongue often becomes a source of humour for the children and the husband and rebuked by the in-laws.

***Narrative 7: The Prestige of Not Knowing the Native Language***

Yet another interesting narrative presents the case of adolescents attending native language schools, where knowing the native language too well is often perceived as a sign of being un-trendy. Consequently, not being highly proficient in the native language and choosing to speak in English becomes a symbol of social advancement and prestige for the child. The child often pretends not to know the native language too well at school, where the peers come from the same ethnic and linguistic background, highlighting the complex relationship between language, social status, and identity within monoethnic environments.

**V. Observations on Preservation and Use of Native Languages in Families in NCR**

The narratives presented highlight the complex interplay of cultural, linguistic, and socio-economic factors that shape language use and transmission within families in multilingual contexts. While some families strive to preserve their native languages amidst external pressures, others face challenges in maintaining linguistic continuity due to the dominance of regional or global languages like Hindi and English. Across these varied scenarios, English emerges as a pervasive force, often associated with social prestige, educational advancement, and economic success. This dominance of English, coupled with the regional influence of Hindi in areas like the NCR, underscores the shifting linguistic landscape where native languages are increasingly marginalised. The interconnectedness of these responses reflects broader socio-political dynamics, revealing how language choices within families are influenced by factors such as identity, heritage, and aspirations for upward mobility, ultimately leading to a more pervasive adoption of English as a marker of modernity and success. Based on the above set of narratives, following are the key observations on the preservation and use of native languages in Indian families in NCR.

**Extended Family Expectations**

The pressure from extended family members is an interesting push towards transmitting conversational competency in the native language by the parents to the children.

Interestingly, our study finds that parents often feel compelled to transmit the language to their children by observing their contemporaries rather than the elders, who often have to speak to the grandchildren in Hindi or English.

### **Socioeconomic Factors**

Socioeconomic motivations often lead to the prioritisation of dominant languages like English and Hindi over native languages. This reflects the challenge of native language continuity even in economically well-off families, where the prestige of English does not diminish, even if a greater cultural and ethnic pride is present in this setting.

### **Language Ideologies**

The struggle over language prioritisation within multiethnic families highlights the challenge posed by language ideologies. Political aspirations and the perceived threat of language loss can create tensions within the family and therefore seep into negotiations within intimate relationships.

### **Linguistic Proximity**

The erosion of regional languages, as seen in the case of Punjabi for example can be attributed to the linguistic proximity between regional and dominant languages, specifically Hindi. This presents an interesting challenge for the continuity of regional languages, given that the intergenerational language erosion here is both slow and subtle.

### **Peer Influence**

Adolescents may face peer pressure to distance themselves from their native language, perceiving it as un-trendy. Even if they come from ethnically and linguistically similar backgrounds, choosing to speak in English reflects the challenge of peer influence on language attitudes. Here, the aspect of English language prestige resurfaces an attitude that seemingly gets transmitted to the children from the parents.

### **The Myth of Monoethnic Environments**

Although monoethnic families may successfully preserve and transmit their native language due to linguistic similarity between parents and extended families, several cases of monoethnic families who have failed to maintain and transmit the language to their children have been observed. Our study finds that there is no necessary link between monoethnic environments and language maintenance and continuity.

### **Interethnic Marriages**

When we uncover narratives, where the multi-ethnic couple actively works to ensure fluency in both partner's original languages, the idea that interethnic marriages inevitably result in a loss of native language proficiency is also called into question. This illustrates an interethnic approach to language preservation by emphasizing attention to cultural differences and an understanding of the heterogeneous sociolinguistic environment.

### **Adaptive Strategies**

We also find that several families make an effort to transmit the native language to their second child, while initially having failed to do so. This effort can be understood as 'adaptive strategies' that reflect the determination of the parents to preserve and transmit a language while having simultaneously faced linguistic challenges. Such an adaptive strategy can be seen to be made even by children who do pick up the native language on one hand while dropping the native accent on the other. So, despite a shift in the language patterns, the children can maintain linguistic cohesion with the family and simultaneously adopt the dominant accent of the NCR, thus allowing for both continuity and change in their native language.

### **Language Learning**

The willingness to learn the native language as an adult post-marriage demonstrates an interesting commitment to preserving one's linguistic identity. However, this also indicates the significant influence of the feeling of embarrassment and loss associated with the inability to converse or read/write in one's native language.

### **Rethinking the idea of a ‘Mother Tongue’ and Patrilineality as the determinant of ‘native language’**

The age-old belief that a child's mother tongue must correspond with the mother's language is questioned in multiethnic households. Sometimes, kids pick up their father's native speech, casting doubt on the idea that a person's mother tongue is the same as their own. The idea that patrilineality or patriarchy alone determines the family's native language is also called into question at the same time because we come across situations where the father's language has completely taken a backseat and is either the mother's or the father's dominant spoken language at home.

### **VI. Concluding remarks**

The linguistic landscape of India is extremely complex, and the lack of devoted attention to addressing the challenges to multilingualism in recent research is significant. Through our study, we have attempted to explore the intricate relationship between language and education in India, shedding light on the challenges and successes in preserving and using native languages in Indian families, in school environments, within the context of the NEP. While NEP 2020 has laid a solid foundation by emphasising the use of regional languages as the primary medium of instruction in early education, several challenges must be addressed for this vision to be effectively implemented at the grassroots level. Our narratives have highlighted the usage and preservation of native languages in Indian households, revealing the complexities and subtleties of linguistic choices and practices. These accounts demonstrate that successful language preservation depends on multiple factors, including socio economic incentives, language ideologies, and adaptive strategies, rather than solely on ethnic or mono-ethnic contexts. It is evident through this work that there are a lot of complexities and challenges involved when one looks at language preference in Delhi NCR, English, being the most sort after by many middle-class parents. Additionally, the concerns raised by teachers regarding the implementation of multilingualism in NEP 2020 underscore the necessity for careful planning and resource allocation. Addressing issues such as resource limitations, inconsistent

implementation, increased burdens on students and teachers, regional divides, diverse modes of instruction, and cultural sensitivity is essential to ensure the policy's success. Comprehensive and targeted strategies will be required to navigate these challenges and realise the NEP 2020's goals of fostering linguistic diversity and enhancing educational outcomes through the use of regional languages.

However, it is evident that effective implementation of multilingual education is not simple and calls for alignment of attitudes, beliefs, knowledge, and abilities. This holds true for all parties involved in the educational system, including parents, instructors, head teachers, administrators, policy makers, as well as students. Although the primary emphasis of this research article was on teachers and parents, it is recognised that these are part of a larger, interconnected system.

Moving forward, it is imperative to recognise that language preservation and multilingual education are not mutually exclusive goals; rather, they can coexist, enriching India's cultural diversity and advancing educational progress. Achieving this requires a collaborative effort involving policymakers, educators, and families. Adequate resource allocation, professional development for teachers, and a nuanced understanding of language dynamics within Indian society are crucial for realising the vision of the NEP 2020. This will ensure the continuity of native languages alongside the promotion of a multilingual educational framework.

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