



Language Diversity: Perceptions of Students towards Multilingual Instruction in Higher Education Pedagogy under NEP 2020

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Abstract: Speaking multiple languages can take the aplomb at high level. The quality of teaching completely depends on the instruction given by the teacher in the classroom that enable students in acquiring the subject knowledge. Linguistic barrier sometimes occurs when students are taught in the classroom using a language that cannot be understood by the students. It is observed that students from different places get disconnected due to different native languages. In order to overcome such issues that are encountered by the students, the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 in India has brought a transformative change in the educational landscape, focusing on the importance of multilingualism in higher education. The policy focuses on the use of mother tongue and regional languages as mediums of classroom instruction. Some prior findings suggest that majorly students possess positive attitude towards multilingualism in education, associating it with vitrified comprehension and retention. However, the research also highlights significant concerns that cannot be neglected. Students expressed worries about the practical implementation of multilingual instruction in higher education due to the varying proficiency levels. There are also some significant concerns about the competency of teachers in executing multilingual approach in classroom instruction as it requires training.

Keywords: Multilingualism, Nep 2020, Mother Tongue, Regional Language, Higher Education, Pedagogy

1. Introduction

Dolling-out knowledge is primary responsibility of a teacher. If a student is unable to understand the instruction given by a teacher just because the language becomes barrier, the method of pedagogy cannot be considered fruitful as per classroom requirement. The NEP 2020 emphasizes the use of mother tongue or regional languages as mediums of instruction at various educational levels, including higher education, with the goal of fostering cognitive development, cultural awareness, and inclusivity among students (Ministry of Education, 2020). This policy aligns with global trends that recognize the benefits of multilingual education in creating a more equitable and effective learning environment.

As this can be seen in educational institutions that students just listen the teacher's instruction rather than perceiving the intended meaning due to language differences, such learning environment does not contribute in vitrifying cognitive development of students. Language diversity in education has been widely acknowledged for its role in enhancing cognitive abilities and academic performance. Research indicates that students who receive classroom instruction in their mother tongue during the early years of education exhibit better comprehension and retention rates (Cummins, 2000). Moreover, multilingual education assists in preserving cultural heritage and promoting cross-cultural understanding, which are crucial in a diverse country like India (Garcia, 2009). By integrating multilingual instruction in higher education, NEP 2020 aims to bridge the gap between students from different linguistic backgrounds or native languages and provide them equal opportunities for academic success.

Students can have Positive or negative attitude both towards multilingual approach in classroom instruction as it depends on the factors such as environment and quality of multilingual instruction at college etc. For instance, if a student is Bilingual and receives classroom instruction in regional language which is different from the languages that student knows, student will definitely have negative perception and attitude towards the approach



of multilingual classroom instruction. Student perceptions of multilingual instruction are essential to understand the practical implications of this policy. The successful implementation of multilingual education is influenced by student positive attitude. Studies have shown that students generally have favourable perception towards multilingual instruction, associating it with improved learning experiences and greater cultural appreciation (Baker, 2011). However, there are also challenges associated with this approach, including the need for adequately trained educators, development of appropriate instructional materials such as books and digital contents in multi languages, and the potential complexities in assessing student performance in multiple languages (Hornberger, 2003).

In the Indian context, the implementation of NEP 2020's multilingual mandate faces unique challenges and opportunities. At the level of school education, the use of regional language in classroom instruction can be considered as there are hardly some students who are from different region or proficient at different native language. Diversity in language proficiency can be seen within higher educational institutions as multiple students are found from various linguistic background knowing different native language. The policy's emphasis on mother tongue instruction in early education is well-supported, its extension to higher education requires careful consideration of various factors. These include the diverse linguistic landscape of India, the varying levels of proficiency among students and educators in different languages, and the existing infrastructure in higher educational institutions (Annamalai, 2004).

The present research aims to explore student perceptions and attitude towards multilingual instruction in higher education within the framework of NEP 2020, utilizing a mixed-methods approach. The study gathers data to provide a comprehensive understanding of student attitudes and perceptions associated with multilingual instruction in higher education.

2. Methodology

Primary data was collected through a structured questionnaire administered to students pursuing higher education. The questionnaire was based on student attitudes towards multilingual instruction, Linguistic background, environment, quality of multilingual instruction etc. Secondary data was gathered through a comprehensive literature review of books, academic journals, and previous research studies.

2.1 Area of Research

This research is focused on the perceptions of students regarding multilingual instruction within higher education institutions located in Jaipur city, its outskirts and nearby places. The study includes a variety of higher education institutions, including university and college students pursuing technical and non-technical courses, to receive a broad spectrum of student experiences and perspectives. The sample size consisted of 100 respondents, out of which 85 responses were successfully received.

3. Literature Review

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 mounts significant emphasis on associating higher education with multilingual instruction in the classroom, recognizing the potential of multilingualism to enhance cognitive development of students, cultural awareness, and academic excellence in higher education institutions. There are multiple researches that consistently highlight the cognitive, academic, and social benefits of multilingual education. Bialystok (2001) and Cummins (2000) indicate that bilingual and multilingual individuals depict improved cognitive flexibility, problem-solving abilities, and elevated metalinguistic awareness comparatively monolingual peers. These cognitive benefits usually convert into improved academic performance, as multilingual students can take benefits of their linguistic resources to connect more deeply with the curriculum. Furthermore, García & Wei's (2014) concept of translanguaging highlights the dynamic and fluid utilization of multiple languages in the classroom, executing deeper understanding and more effective communication. In the context of higher education, multilingual instruction in the classroom has been introduced to generate more inclusive learning environment that increase the number of participants. Mohanty (2009) highlights that student engagement and



motivation can be accelerated by multilingual classrooms, letting them use their full linguistic collection, as a result fostering better comprehension and retention of academic content.

The study of [Cenoz & Gorter \(2011\)](#) also shows the multiple social benefits of multilingual education, noting that it develops a sense of cultural pride and identity, by which student self-esteem and academic outcomes can be influenced positively. Student perceptions and attitude towards multilingual pedagogical approaches has a significant importance in its effectiveness. Having positive attitudes towards language diversity and multilingual instruction in the college classroom can take the motivation, engagement, and learning outcomes at high level. [Annamalai \(2004\)](#) and [Panda & Mohanty \(2017\)](#) have found that students in India generally favour the multilingual instruction, appreciating its importance in protecting cultural heritage and vitiating employability skills. However, these perceptions of student are influenced by factors such as native language surroundings, attitude of society towards different languages, and the quality of instruction given by the teacher. Studies show that students with proficiency in multiple languages possess more positive attitudes towards multilingual education system ([Cenoz & Gorter, 2011](#)). Conversely, students who have difficulty in acquiring additional languages may splash negative perceptions, as this might impact their academic performance and motivation. Despite its benefits, there are several challenges that occur after the implementation of multilingual instruction in higher education. Teacher training is extremely required, as effective multilingual instruction can be executed only when teachers are skilled enough, having good command over multiple languages and full awareness of multilingual pedagogical strategies positively influence its successful implementation. [García & Wei \(2014\)](#) quoted the need for professional development programs to furnish teachers with the required skills and knowledge by which the execution of multilingual instruction can be beneficial. Institutional support is also essential, as multilingual education cannot become fruitful without the required resources which includes teaching materials, language labs, and support services for students. [Mohanty \(2009\)](#) points out that many educational institutions in India have deficiency of necessary infrastructure and resources to implement multilingual instruction effectively.

In India, English is often perceived as the language that indicates the movement of people from lower to higher, and becomes hindrance to the use of regional languages in education ([Annamalai, 2004](#)). The NEP 2020 emphasizes for utilizing multilingualism in education, significance of using the mother tongue or native language as the medium of classroom instruction. The ultimate goal of the policy is to enhance cognitive growth, protect cultural heritage, and achieving desired learning goals. The policy cannot be implemented without comprehensive planning, adequate resources, and supportive environment for educators and students. In summary, the literature focuses on the significant benefits of multilingual instruction in college classroom, particularly in improving cognitive skills, academic performance of learners, and understanding of cultural diversity. Student perceptions are most vital in the success of multilingual education, and positive attitudes towards delivering lectures using multiple languages can motivate students and get them better learning outcomes. However, some factors such as teacher preparedness or training, institutional support and environment, and societal attitudes towards languages must be considered so that multilingual instruction can be implemented effectively in the context of NEP 2020. As India moves forward with its required educational reforms in current education system, it will be essential to focus on promoting and supporting the use of native language in classroom instruction along with L1 and L2 in order to achieve the goals which are outlined in NEP 2020.

4. Analysis & Interpretation

There are very less people in India who speak only single language as one language consists multiple dialects. In analysing student perceptions and attitudes towards multilingual instruction in higher education, many responses collected from the students were emerged. The majority of students expressed their overall positivity towards multilingual instruction, as students have recognized its potential benefits which are required to improve language proficiency and fostering cultural awareness so that students can be aware of different cultures. However, depicted their concerns regarding the consistency, college environment and quality of instructional delivery across different courses and faculty members. Most of the students displayed their concern about the faculty training on multilingual instruction as students find the implementation of native language as a medium of classroom instruction beneficial considering multiple factors. Diverse linguistic background of students was a remarkable finding, in which majority of students were identified as bilingual or multilingual that indicates student positive perception towards multilingualism in education.



Students generally perceived the college environment as supportive for multilingual learners, yet splashed their notion on the need for improved resources as per requirement and adequate skilled teachers to deliver lecture using multiple languages in classroom instruction as teacher and student both may have different native language from each other that later becomes hindrance during the classroom instruction. As revealed by the study that there are some challenges by which student positive perceptions are getting hampered, that suggests need for systematic improvements in available resources and faculty training so that teacher can be empowered and equipped with required competencies that assures successful implementation of the policy. A significant number of students mounted focus on impact of native language use on their English language proficiency as listening native language consistently in classroom can be one of the factors by which their English language skills get influenced negatively. Moreover, emphasized the need of maintaining balance between the use of native language and English so that execution of multilingual instruction in higher education

4.1. On a scale of 1-5, how effective do you find multilingual instruction in the classroom?

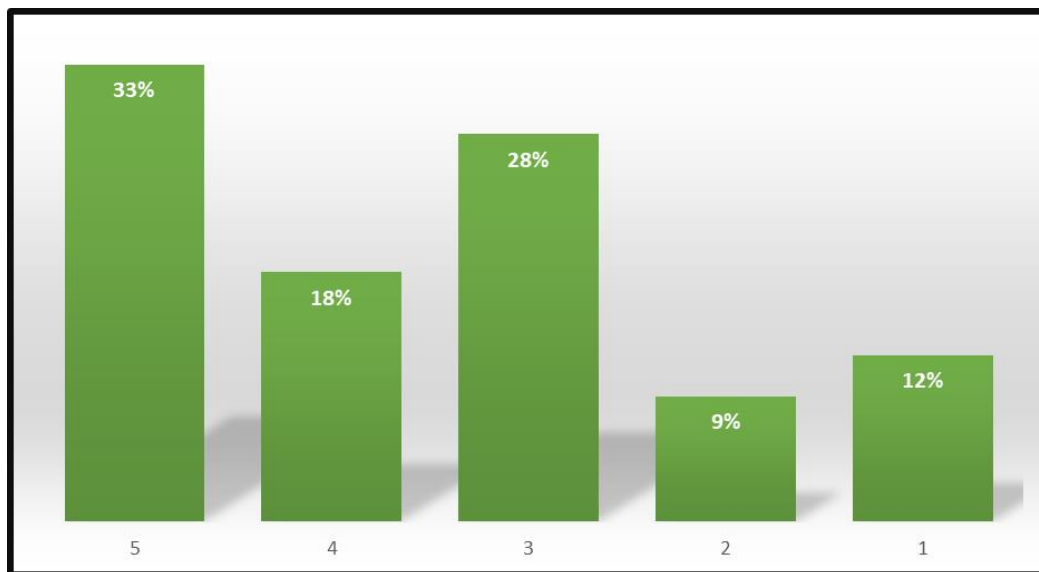


Figure 1. Represents the opinion of students on effectiveness of multilingual teaching methods in the classroom

33% students found it effective and given highest number, 18% students given 4, 28% students kept it in middle and given 3, 9% students given 2, and rest 12% given 1 out of 5.

Having analysed the above figure 1, it is clear that majority of students support the use of native language in the classroom instruction. As students possess a different native language when they move to study higher education. Students prefer their native language to be used in classroom instruction as sometimes it becomes really very hard for them to understand English language that is nowadays prioritized by teachers in the classroom.

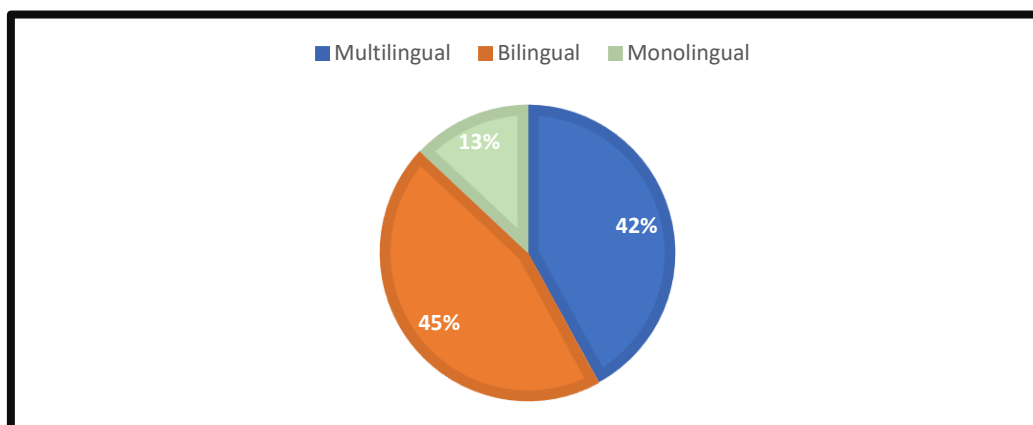


Figure 2. Showing the overview of language diversity among students, highlighting the dominance of bilingualism and multilingualism

45% or majority of students found Bilingual, 42% were Multilingual and 13% students were Monolingual. Most of the students acquiring higher education are bilingual or able to use two languages that includes Hindi as their first language and their native language. Hindi is regarded as the primary language of India and English is the language that is used to show the status having said this the use of English language cannot be considered less important in classroom instruction. This distribution of language diversity not only highlights the relevance of multilingual instruction but also mark the benefits of having multilingualism in higher education.

4.2. Faculty Training for Effective Implementation of Multilingual Instruction

Faculty training is utmost vital to execute the approach of multilingualism in higher education, as responded by student in the context of NEP 2020. A large number of students found it extremely required for faculty to have proficiency and preparedness. The survey findings highlighted the need of faculty training by which educators can be equipped with the required pedagogical strategies that aligns with multilingual instruction in the classroom and proficiency in language. Many students expressed their concerns about the used native language by the teacher is absolutely different from students' native language.

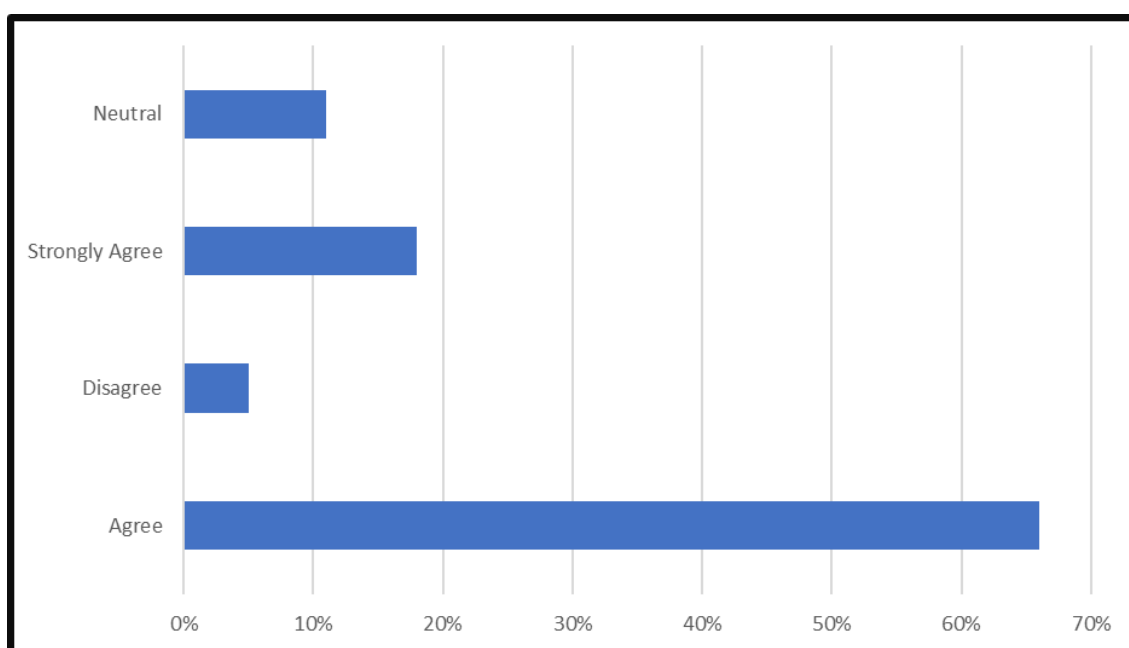


Figure 3. Showing student opinion on need of faculty training for effective implementation of multilingual instruction

66% students do agree, 18% students strongly agree, 11% students are neutral, and rest 5% students disagree.

If the number of agreed and strongly agreed students put together, it becomes a large number of students who found faculty training essential to implement multilingual instruction in the classroom. Having good command over three or more language is not adequate for successful implementation of multilingualism in higher education, teachers need to be aware of strategies that can be utilized in multilingual classroom. If teachers are equipped with essential training, they will be prepared enough to execute multilingual approach implemented by NEP 2020.

4.3 Impact of Regional Language Use on English Proficiency

As per received responses from the survey revealed multiple opinions among students regarding this issue. While some students expressed positive opinion towards the use of regional language, as this way students will be able to enhance their overall linguistic skills and cultural understanding, others expressed concerns about its potential impact on their English language skills. A considerable number of students acknowledged the benefits of bilingual instruction but emphasized the importance of maintaining a balance that prioritizes proficiency in English, considering its global importance and role in higher education and professional settings. English is considered as a

lingua franca which is used by business communities, considering it students are concerned about the required balance in the use of native language as classroom instruction, as excess use of regional language can influence their English language fluency. The importance of English language proficiency should not be neglected as it vitrifies employability skills and develops the ability to speak up with a high level of aplomb. It is found in many studies that listening and speaking both have interplay in language acquisition, the most listening language plays a crucial role in generating a language in brain. The figure below represents perception of students regarding the impact of native language use on English proficiency.

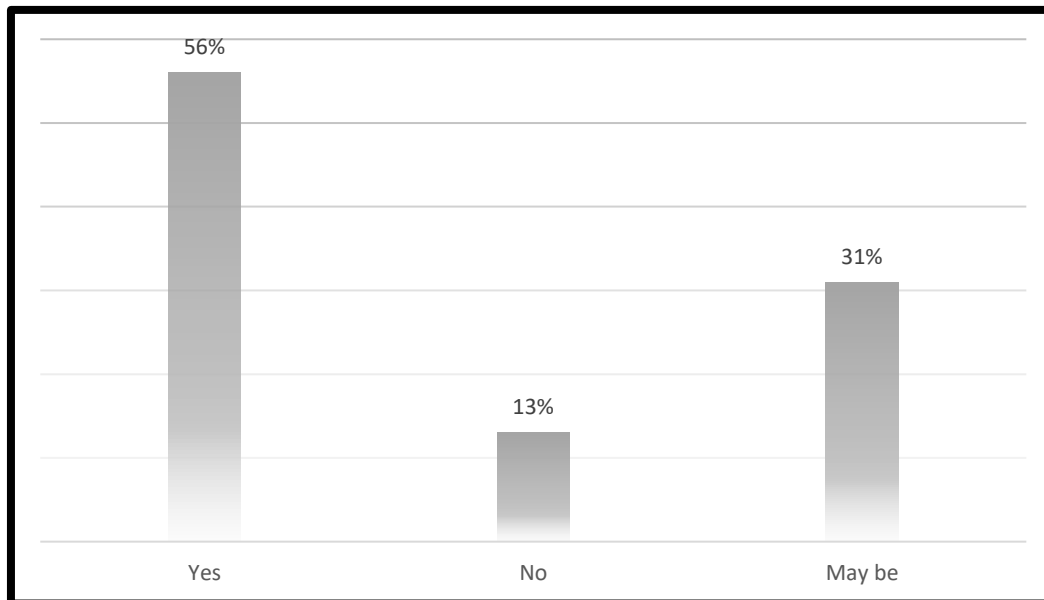


Figure 4. Showing how native language use in the classroom affects English proficiency, emphasizing the importance of balanced language input for effective language acquisition.

Majority of students do agree as their English language proficiency is influenced by the use of native language in the classroom. According to Krashen's Input Hypothesis, comprehensible input obtained through listening is crucial for language development (Krashen, 1985). This input forms the basis for output, where learners use the language in speaking activities. In simple words, if students listen the native language more in the classroom as compare to English, they will start acquiring that particular language as listening play a vital role in acquiring a language. It is essential to maintain a balance in the use of native language or else it might influence English language proficiency.

4.4 Benefits of Multilingual Instruction

Improvement in comprehension: Many students preferred learning in multiple language as this way they are able to understand the complicated topics more easily. The use of native language makes learning more easy to understand. When students learn intricate concepts, the use of their native language provides a familiar context that gives a proper understanding.

Awareness of different cultures: Multilingual instruction in the classroom promotes awareness of different cultures and makes students feel comfortable in the classroom. This cultural awareness create a harmonious classroom environment where students from diverse background feel respected.

Enhanced cognitive skills: Students found improvement in their cognitive skills such as problem solving and critical thinking when engaged in multilingual education. The research has highlighted that bilingual and multilingual students perform better comparatively monolinguals. These cognitive skills enable students to think beyond the classroom.

4.5 Challenges of multilingual instruction

Teacher training: In order to successful implementation of multilingual instruction, teacher training must be mandatory so that teachers can be aware of execution strategies. This includes understanding the approaches of multilingual education, appropriate teaching strategies. Without adequate training teachers may face difficulty in delivering classroom using multiple languages that leads ineffective instruction and frustration among students.

Availability required resource: The most significant challenge is insufficient resources such as books and digital contents in multiple languages. This scarcity of resources can be a barrier in the way of successful implementation. Educational institutions need to invest in developing multilingual education.

Language proficiency gap: Students with different level of proficiency in their native language and other languages can face difficulty while engaging in multilingual instruction in the classroom. Educators should conduct formative assessment to identify proficiency levels and modify their teaching strategies accordingly.

Planning and implementation gap: The NEP 2020 supports multilingualism in education having said this the practical implementation of the policy is really big challenge as there is a significant number of institutions that are not yet providing supporting environment to students. Effective planning and continuous monitoring by policymakers and educators is essential for successful implementation of policy.

5. Conclusion

The findings of this study highlight a perspective on the effectiveness of multilingual instruction in higher education as per student perspectives, particularly in the context of India's National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. The data reveal that while majority of students rated multilingual instruction as highly effective, the overall response is mixed, that is indicating moderate effectiveness. Conversely, a smaller percentage of students were less favorable. This suggests that a significant portion of students find value in multilingual instruction and consider it beneficial. When delving into language preferences, the majority of students found bilingual and multilingual, and a very less number of students were monolingual. This language proficiency indicates student positive perceptions towards multilingualism in higher education. The study also highlights the importance of faculty training in the successful implementation of multilingual instruction. A substantial majority of students agreed, that faculty training is required, a small minority disagreed. This focuses on the need for well-trained faculty to effectively deliver multilingual education.

Furthermore, the impact of regional language use on English proficiency is also considerable point, with the majority of students agreeing that their English language skills are influenced by the use of their native language in the classroom. This finding aligns with the broader discourse on the interplay between regional languages and English proficiency in multilingual educational settings.

In conclusion, this study suggests that while multilingual instruction is generally perceived positively, its effectiveness varies among students. Additionally, the necessity of faculty training is emphasized to ensure the successful implementation of multilingual pedagogies. The influence of regional languages on English proficiency highlights the complex dynamics of language learning in a multilingual context, providing valuable insights for the ongoing development and refinement of language policies in higher education.

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Has this article been screened for Similarity?

Yes

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