

CHAPTER-17

Telugu-centric mother-tongue-based multilingual education under nep 2020: An exploratory study within the Bharatiya Bhasha Pariwar framework

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ABSTRACT

Positive developments for equitable education for Indian languages include a strong advocacy for mother-tongue based Multilingual education (MTB-MLE), especially at the foundational and preparatory stages, and the importance of MTB education per NEP 2020 4.11. NEP 2020 has a broad set of principles and yet offers little language-specific guidance for curriculum design and development. This paper attempts to fill this gap by developing a Telugu model of MTB-MLE within the framework of the Bharatiya Bhasha Pariwar, which perceives Indian languages as a family of languages rather than as separate and individual systems.

The paper attempts to support the language pedagogy of MTB-MLE for the other Indian languages of the multilingual policy of NEP 2020 by proposing the Telugu language as a cognitive and cultural anchor for the effective/ transfer/ acquisition of the languages of Hindi and English. The study proposes a unique curriculum framework of the Interlinked Linguistic Transfer Model (ILTM) to support and promote multilingualism. This model tackles the pedagogical gap of integrating languages at the level of phonology, semantics, and culture. The paper has three primary objectives:

- i. To assess the pedagogy of the English and Telugu bilingual instruction within the NEP 2020 framework.
- ii. To architect the Bharatiya Bhasha Pariwar concept in curriculum design, and
- iii. To propose implementable strategies for multilingual pedagogy and assessment

Methodologically, the study takes a conceptual and analytical perspective, integrating elements of linguistic theory, edu-psychology, policy studies, and research in multilingual education. Language policy documents, studies and pedagogy are used in tandem to develop a critical synthesis of a language oriented curriculum framework.

The paper's relevance to current discussions on language education stems from the fact that it addresses the disjuncture between the policy perspective and the classroom. By placing Telugu in a developed multilingual paradigm, the study illustrates the potential of the NEP 2020 in achieving linguistic equity, cognitive and cultural development, sustaining cultural continuity, and fostering integration and global connectedness.

KEYWORDS: Telugu Language, Mother-Tongue-Based Multilingual Education, Bharatiya

Bhasha Pariwar, Curriculum Design, NEP 2020.

1 Introduction

Although the primary function of language is the exchange of information, it also facilitates thought, guides social engagement, and promotes the continuity of culture. For young learners, the language of the classroom is key to internalizing knowledge and the manifestation of one's confidence to articulate and elaborate on ideas. Familiar linguistic systems enable children to gain a deeper understanding and to foster critical thinking, while alleviating the stress associated with the learning process. On the other hand, unfamiliar instructional language at the start of a learner's educational journey tends to create a gap between their lived experiences and the school's academic content, resulting in surface learning with little to no understanding at all. In multilingual settings like India, this gap has contributed to the uneven learning achievements, among children in the primary years of schooling.

The NEP 2020 responds to this challenge by prioritizing the use of one's mother tongue or a regional language as the medium of instruction in the initial years of schooling. This suggests a significant departure from previous models that prioritized a single global or national language to the exclusion and marginalization of local languages. Focusing on language accessibility should help NEP 2020 anchor foundational literacy and numeracy while also maintaining the diverse linguistic heritage of the country. Within this policy framework, the regional languages are no longer seen as instrumental/ ancillary; they are viewed as equal means to thinking, knowing and learning intellectually and advancing academically.

Telugu has a unique place of unexplored potential in the current circumstances. Being a classical Indian language with a developed grammatical structure, extensive literary traditions, and a strong contemporary presence, Telugu has the potential to be a strong language for conceptual. Yet, in practice, it is often considered only a temporary language of transition to more dominant languages, rather than a fully-meaningful language of learning. This paper proposes a Telugu-centric multilingual model of education in consonance with the Bharatiya Bhasha Pariwar, where Telugu acts as the cognitive anchor and the foundation for the structured learning of other Indian and foreign languages. Such an approach not only positively impacts the learning experience but, more importantly, fosters linguistic equity, cultural continuity, and right to multilingualism as per the vision of NEP 2020.

2 Bharatiya Bhasha Pariwar: Theoretical Foundations

According to the Bharatiya Bhasha Pariwar, all of India's languages are part of a larger cultural continuum and can therefore be viewed collectively rather than as discrete or oppositional systems. This view engenders the idea that all of India's languages are co-existing, interdependent, and have enriched one another as they have evolved through ongoing and sustained interactions in social, philosophical and literary contexts. In opposition to traditional hierarchical linguistic theories, which prioritise dominance and exclusivity, the Bharatiya model embodies parity and co-operation, as well as the pluralistic character of Indian culture (Rao, 2018).

A key theoretical assumption of the Bharatiya model is that the various Indian languages also exhibit significant similarities in both structural and cultural aspects. Examples of these similarities include similarities in the phonetic inventories of constituent tongues, the existence of equivalent sound/symbol relationships and overlapping semantic domains associated with moral/ethical concerns, social relationships, spirituality and ecological awareness. Due to these considerations, all Indian languages permit cognitive transfer between them—a circumstance which allows speakers to construct new linguistic knowledge based on existing cognitive

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structures. Through the dissemination of epics, folklore, devotional works, and other forms of literature and philosophical teachings across linguistic borders, the linguistic legacy of the entire Indian populace has been further enhanced.

Telugu serves as an excellent example to illustrate this theory. While structurally belonging to the Dravidian language family category, up to the present time Telugu has incorporated a considerable amount of Sanskrit vocabulary into it, without modifying its grammar. Similarly Dravidian syntax is combined with Indo-Aryan Lexis. This combination of Dravidian syntax with Indo-Aryan lexis is indicative of the centuries of cultural interaction and intellectual exchange between these two groups. As stated by Krishnamurti (2003) the linguistic complexity of Telugu provides it with a high degree of adaptability, enabling the usage in terms of classical, regional and modern means of communication.

From a pedagogical standpoint, the Bharatiya Bhasha Pariwar framework argues against viewing the development of multilingualism as an issue of language replacement. The framework provides an alternative model of an individual developing multilingualism from a foundation based upon the learner's first language. Therefore, when implementing multilingual instructional practice that is based upon shared language structures, learners are less likely to experience cognitive overload, and have greater clarity in thinking. Further, the application of the idea of designing the curriculum around shared language structures allows for Telugu to continue to be utilized not only as a vehicle for instruction but as a long-term source of knowledge that has formed confident, culturally aware, and highly proficient multilingual individuals.

The theoretical framework of the Bharatiya Bhasha Pariwar has much in common with Michael Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), which views language as more than simply a structural system; it is also a social semiotic resource for the creation of meaning. According to Halliday (1978, 1994), language is derived from its functional use in social, cultural and educational contexts through three metafunctions in particular: ideational, interpersonal and textual. Under the Bharatiya Bhasha Pariwar model, the languages of Telugu and English can be used as the primary means for learners to make sense of their world, construct knowledge and engage in social interactions. By using Telugu as a continued medium for instruction, it gives learners the opportunity to develop academic concepts based on familiar cultural and semantic patterns, then extending these across other languages.

SFL perspective states that learning different languages is more effective when it builds on the student's prior linguistic repertoire than when it replaces it. Telugu offers a solid foundation for developing functional language use over time to other Indian or global languages, since there are rich narratives and explanations that exist in the language already. This functional continuity allows students to understand concepts at a deeper level, transfer between genres more easily, and develop confidence in their academic abilities. Thus, adding Halliday's SFL theory to the Bharatiya Bhasha Pariwar approach helps greatly by providing a theoretical base for Telugu to remain as an enduring language for knowledge, as opposed to just temporary support for various learning outcomes. As a result, strong multilingual realities will continue to exist in through the body of knowledge, thereby resulting in strong and meaningful multilingual education.

3 Telugu as a Cognitive and Cultural Anchor

3.1 *Linguistic Characteristics of Telugu*

Many aspects of the Telugu language make it an excellent choice for teaching during the first and second levels of education. First, because Telugu is a syllabic language, it has a fairly consistent flow of speech which will help students speak clearly and read at a steady rate (Krishnamurti, 2003). In addition, the writing system of Telugu is mostly phonetic and consists

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largely of sounds and symbols that remain consistent from one word to another, allowing children to quickly and confidently decode the written language. Because of this consistency, children will have less difficulty learning to read and write the Telugu language during the first stages of acquiring literacy.

Another important characteristic of the Telugu language is that it uses an agglutinative form of morphology. In this system, words are made by adding a suffix to a base word. The suffix provides additional grammatical or semantic information to the word. As a result of this clear and systematic structure, students will learn how to make a word from the base by adding the suffix. Because of the consistency of this pattern, students will develop an understanding of how to create sentences logically. Therefore, as students become more aware of how smaller units of language combine to create more complex forms of language, they are developing analytical, categorizing, and generalizing skills that are transferable from subject to subject and from language to language.

In addition to its structural elements, Telugu has a wealth of cultural and literary history that links language acquisition with lived experiences. Proverbs, classical poems, oral traditions, and current stories found in Telugu provide culturally familiar frameworks in which to learn abstract concepts. The embedding of culture into learning ensures that language teaching is not just technical but also profound, emotionally rich, and socially relevant.

3.2 Cognitive Advantages

Studies in educational psychology provide strong evidence that first-language instruction has identifiable cognitive advantages, especially in the early years of school. When students are taught in a language they know well (for example, their mother tongue or home language), they will have less unnecessary cognitive load placed on them and will be focused on learning the content rather than on the task of decoding an unfamiliar language. Consequently, they will be able to use their working memory in a more efficient manner and will have a better understanding of the material and longer recall of it.

Telugu can have a positive influence on the development of mental representations, the ability to make connections between concepts, and the ability to think critically by providing a foundation for learning at the very beginning of formal schooling. According to research conducted by Mohanty (2019), education that is based on a child's mother-tongue language builds both cognitive development and success in school, because the child's cultural and linguistic knowledge system has been taken into account in the process of classroom instruction.

In addition, the establishment of a conceptual understanding of a concept using Telugu can facilitate the learning of other languages by allowing a student to use the understanding gained through Telugu to connect to another language or new linguistic structure, thus enabling effective transfer of learning from one language to another. Therefore, Telugu will not only serve as a means of communication between the student and teacher, but will also serve as a cognitive reference point for the student; they will use Telugu to establish a stable learning environment, to increase their ability to engage intellectually, and to strengthen their appreciation of their cultural and linguistic identity (Krishnamurti, 2003; Mohanty, 2019).

4 Interlinked Linguistic Transfer Model (ILTM)

The Interlinked Linguistic Transfer Model (ILTM) is the newest educational model proposed to improve and encourage multilingual education throughout India. The model offers a method for using the Telugu language as the target language for cognitive development while establishing clear and well-defined links between the other languages taught in schools (both

Indian and globally). In ILTM, language acquisition is seen as an interrelated process where knowledge, skills and concepts may be transferred across languages as opposed to an independent acquisition of each language as an isolated subject area. By developing these links within the design of the curriculum, methods of teaching and methods of assessment, ILTM seeks to establish an integrated system of multilingualism rather than teach multilingualism through a series of unrelated and parallel language acquisition processes.

Planned linguistic mapping provides ILTM's greatest point of difference - through the alignment of vocabulary, grammatical structure, semantic fields and cultural ideas, learners can identify relationships and similarities that exist between languages. For example, learners will see the relationships between their "roots" in each language, they will learn to recognise similar sentence structures and learn to understand that stories from different languages share similar themes. As a result, learners will have less redundancy in their language acquisition process and will be able to draw on their prior knowledge of Telugu as a method of assisting them to develop new language skills with greater efficiency and confidence.

4.1 Core Assumption

The Interlinked Language Transfer Model assumes that language learners learn better by demonstrating and recognizing similarities and connections among languages. Research in educational linguistics demonstrates that the skills acquired in one language (i.e., comprehension skills, grammatical awareness and metalinguistic knowledge) can transfer to another language when the conditions of instruction facilitate this transfer (Cummins, 2000).

The ILTM utilizes this principle to advance the idea that Telugu is more than just a subject or transitional medium; it serves as the scaffolding the basis of the cognitive processes supporting multilingual development. Learners experience reduced cognitive load and greater conceptual clarity when they see how Telugu structures are similar to or different from structures in the other languages they are learning. This structure of linking causes students to be metalinguistically aware enabling them to critically assess language, methods, and in multiple languages. Ultimately, through the multiple-touch process, the learner is becoming competent in multiple languages by learning academic subject area knowledge while developing a high level of proficiency in their native or home language as well as their target languages.

ILTM Example: Shared Word “Darśanam / Darshan”

(Telugu–Hindi–English, non-scientific)

Step 1: Meaning First in Telugu (Cognitive Anchor)

The teacher begins with a familiar word used in daily life:

➤ **Telugu:** మేము దేవాలయానికి వెళ్లి దేవుని దర్శనం చేసుకున్నాము.

(We went to the temple and had darśanam of God.)

The teacher explains in Telugu that దర్శనం means చూడడం (seeing with respect).

Step 2: Linking with Hindi (Natural Transfer)

Next, the teacher shows that the same word exists in Hindi with the same meaning:

➤ **Hindi:** हम मंदिर गए और भगवान के दर्शन किए।

The teacher highlights: Telugu దర్శనం (darśanam) Hindi दर्शन (darshan)

Children immediately recognize that the sound and meaning are almost the same.

Step 3: Simple English Meaning (Concept Extension)

Finally, the idea is expressed in simple English

English: We went to the temple and saw God.

The teacher explains that English uses a different word, but the meaning is the same.

Learning Outcome under ILTM:

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Through this simple example:

- Children understand that languages are connected, not separate.
- Telugu helps them understand Hindi naturally.
- English is learned without fear, as meaning is already clear.
- Students begin to think about language, not just use it.

This demonstrates how ILTM helps children move from Telugu → Hindi → English smoothly by using shared cultural words, making multilingual learning easy, joyful, and meaningful.

5 Curriculum Design under NEP 2020

The curriculum design envisioned under NEP 2020 provides an enabling framework for implementing a Telugu-centric multilingual education model aligned with the Interlinked Linguistic Transfer Model (ILTM). The following subsections outline how curriculum can be coherently designed across stages of schooling.

5.1 Foundational Stage

At the foundational stage, instruction is conducted entirely in Telugu, ensuring that early learning is rooted in linguistic familiarity and cultural relevance. Classroom interactions emphasize listening, speaking, and emergent literacy through stories(panchatantra), rhymes, games, and experiential activities drawn from local life. Folk literature, regional songs, proverbs, and oral narratives play a central role, connecting academic learning with community knowledge systems and everyday experiences. This approach nurtures curiosity, imagination, and confidence while strengthening foundational literacy and numeracy skills.

Multilingual exposure at this stage remains informal and non-intrusive. Children encounter other languages through songs, storytelling, and playful interaction rather than formal instruction. Such exposure helps build positive attitudes toward linguistic diversity without placing cognitive or evaluative pressure on learners. This stage aligns with NEP 2020's emphasis on joyful, activity-based learning and the use of the mother tongue as the primary medium of instruction in the early years (Government of India, 2020).

➤ Foundational Stage (LKG–UKG)

Medium of Instruction: Telugu

Activities: This stage emphasizes oral and experiential learning, using traditional Telugu rhymes, folk stories, and interactive play-based activities. Activities are designed to stimulate listening and speaking skills, nurture curiosity, and introduce basic concepts of numeracy, shapes, colors, and environmental awareness.

Objective: Develop emergent literacy, phonological awareness, and social communication skills in a familiar linguistic and cultural context, laying a strong foundation for multilingual learning.

➤ Grades 1–3

Medium of Instruction: Telugu remains primary.

Introduction of Additional Languages:

- English: Gradual exposure through home labeling, classroom vocabulary charts, and guided oral practice.
- Hindi: Introduced via simple rhymes, short songs, and audiovisual materials to provide early comprehension without pressuring literacy skills.

Focus: Strengthen conceptual understanding in Telugu while cultivating familiarity with English and Hindi vocabulary through natural, meaningful contexts.

5.2 *Preparatory Stage*

During the preparatory stage, formal literacy and academic proficiency in Telugu are further consolidated. Reading and writing skills are expanded across subjects, enabling learners to engage with increasingly complex texts and ideas. At this point, additional languages are introduced in a structured yet supportive manner.

English is introduced primarily as an oral language, focusing on listening and speaking skills. This gradual introduction minimizes early literacy pressure and prevents cognitive overload. By postponing intensive reading and writing in English, learners are given sufficient time to develop strong conceptual understanding in Telugu. The preparatory stage thus reinforces linguistic confidence while laying the groundwork for systematic multilingual development, consistent with NEP 2020's flexible and learner-centric approach (Government of India, 2020).

Preparatory Stage (Grades 4–5–6–7)

Curricular Approach

At the preparatory stage, Telugu continues to function as the primary medium for conceptual learning, ensuring cognitive continuity and depth of understanding. Core subject concepts in science, mathematics, and social studies are introduced and explained in Telugu, while explicit mapping to English vocabulary is systematically incorporated to promote cross-linguistic transfer. This approach allows students to acquire English academic terms without compromising conceptual clarity.

Hindi instruction is strengthened through comparative and activity-based pedagogy. Learners engage with Hindi using familiar linguistic and cultural resources such as shared vocabulary, simple sentence structures, rhymes, interactive cartoons, and storytelling sessions. These activities are designed to build listening and speaking confidence while reinforcing similarities between Telugu and Hindi, especially through common Sanskrit-derived words.

Learning Focus and Outcome

The primary objective at this stage is to develop cognitive transfer skills and foundational literacy across three languages. Students gradually begin to recognize structural patterns, shared meanings, and semantic overlaps among Telugu, Hindi, and English. By learning to connect ideas across languages, learners gain linguistic confidence and develop a positive disposition toward multilingual learning, preparing them for more formal language study in subsequent stages.

5.3 *Middle Stage*

The middle stage marks a transition toward conscious multilingual engagement and higher-order linguistic awareness. At this level, students actively participate in translation exercises, multilingual projects, and comparative grammar activities. Texts and concepts are explored across languages, encouraging learners to analyze structural patterns, semantic nuances, and contextual usage. Such tasks promote metalinguistic awareness, enabling students to reflect on how languages function and relate to one another.

Project-based learning further strengthens this interconnected approach. Students may work on themes such as culture, science, or social issues using sources in multiple languages, synthesizing information and presenting it creatively. Through these activities, learners develop critical thinking, analytical skills, and communicative flexibility. The middle stage thus operationalizes the principles of ILTM by transforming multilingualism into an integrated cognitive process rather than a compartmentalized subject structure, fully aligned with the curricular vision of NEP 2020.

5.4 *Middle Stage (Grades 8–9–10)*

Instructional Focus

The middle stage emphasizes systematic multilingual proficiency and higher-order language awareness. Formal instruction in reading, writing, and grammar is introduced in Telugu, Hindi, and English, with increasing linguistic and academic complexity. Telugu continues to serve as the reference language for explaining complex concepts, while Hindi and English are developed as languages of academic expression and communication.

Project-Based Learning (PBL) forms a core pedagogical strategy at this stage. Students undertake multilingual projects that integrate all three languages, such as preparing reports on environmental issues, historical events, or cultural themes. For instance, conceptual understanding may be developed in Telugu, data or narratives explored in Hindi, and final presentations or summaries produced in English. This integrated approach strengthens conceptual clarity while fostering flexible language use.

Learning Focus and Outcomes

A key outcome of the middle stage is the development of metalinguistic awareness. Learners are encouraged to analyze language structure, compare grammatical patterns, and reflect on contextual usage across languages. Such analytical engagement enables students to understand not only how languages differ, but how they are interconnected. By the end of this stage, students demonstrate improved fluency, literacy, and conceptual competence across Telugu, Hindi, and English, while maintaining Telugu as a strong cognitive and cultural anchor.

6 Assessment Reforms

Traditional assessment systems have often emphasized memorization and the reproduction of content, which can obscure genuine understanding and fail to capture a learner's ability to use language meaningfully. NEP 2020 critiques this model and advocates for competency-based assessment, focusing on the application of knowledge, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills (Government of India, 2020). In the context of a Telugu-centric multilingual curriculum, assessment strategies must align with the goals of the Interlinked Linguistic Transfer Model (ILTM), measuring both conceptual understanding and multilingual proficiency.

6.1 Portfolio-Based Evaluation

Portfolio-based evaluation allows learners to compile a collection of work demonstrating their progress across languages. This can include essays, project reports, translations, creative writing, and reflective journals in Telugu and other languages. By reviewing portfolios over time, educators can assess growth in literacy, analytical thinking, and linguistic transfer, providing a holistic picture of student competence beyond rote recall. Portfolios also encourage self-assessment and metacognition, empowering students to take ownership of their learning.

6.2 Oral Multilingual Assessments

Oral assessments in multiple languages emphasize communication, comprehension, and conceptual clarity. Learners may explain a concept in Telugu and then articulate the same idea in Hindi, Sanskrit, or English, demonstrating their ability to transfer understanding across languages. This approach evaluates not only fluency and pronunciation but also deeper cognitive skills, including reasoning, interpretation, and linguistic adaptability. Oral assessments also reduce test anxiety associated with written examinations and provide immediate feedback.

6.3 Conceptual Transfer Tests

Conceptual transfer tests measure a learner's ability to apply knowledge learned in Telugu to other linguistic contexts. Tasks may involve translating ideas, comparing grammatical structures, or solving problems using multiple languages. These assessments emphasize understanding over reproduction, revealing how effectively learners can navigate interlinked

languages and generalize concepts. By focusing on transfer rather than memorization, these tests align with ILTM's emphasis on integrated multilingual competence and support the development of higher-order thinking skills.

By incorporating these reforms, assessment moves away from superficial metrics and towards a more authentic evaluation of linguistic and cognitive abilities. Such strategies not only reflect NEP 2020's vision of competency-based education but also reinforce the cognitive and cultural advantages of a Telugu-centric multilingual model (Government of India, 2020; Mohanty, 2019; Cummins, 2000).

7 Challenges and Implementation Strategies

Implementing a Telugu-centric multilingual education model under NEP 2020 presents several practical challenges, despite its strong theoretical and pedagogical foundations. Addressing these challenges systematically is essential to ensure that the goals of foundational literacy, multilingual competence, and cultural continuity are achieved.

7.1 Challenges

➤ Shortage of Trained Multilingual Teachers

One of the most significant obstacles is the limited availability of educators proficient in both Telugu and other Indian or global languages. Effective implementation of the Interlinked Linguistic Transfer Model (ILTM) requires teachers who can scaffold multilingual learning, draw explicit cross-linguistic connections, and employ culturally responsive pedagogy. Without such expertise, the potential cognitive and linguistic benefits of mother-tongue instruction may not be fully realized.

➤ Limited Telugu-Medium Digital Resources

While digital education is rapidly expanding, most educational technologies, e-learning platforms, and digital content remain English-centric. The lack of high-quality Telugu-medium resources—including textbooks, interactive apps, videos, and assessment tools—poses a barrier to engaging, modern, and scalable instruction.

➤ Societal Bias Favoring English

Parents and communities often perceive English as a marker of social mobility and academic success, leading to resistance against mother-tongue instruction. Such biases can undermine policy implementation, even when pedagogical research supports the cognitive advantages of learning in the mother tongue (Mohanty, 2019).

7.2 Implementation Strategies

➤ Pre-Service Teacher Training in MTB-MLE

Teacher preparation programs must prioritize multilingual education and mother-tongue-based multilingual education (MTB-MLE) competencies. Training should focus on cross-linguistic awareness, pedagogical strategies for ILTM, and culturally responsive teaching. Ongoing professional development and mentorship can further support teachers in adopting innovative practices.

➤ Telugu-First Educational Technology Development

Investing in Telugu-medium digital infrastructure is essential. Educational apps, interactive multimedia, and AI-assisted learning tools should be designed to strengthen literacy, support multilingual transfer, and align with NEP 2020 curricula. Such resources can make classrooms more engaging, personalized, and accessible to diverse learners.

➤ Awareness Programs Highlighting Cognitive Benefits of Mother-Tongue Education

Community engagement initiatives can counter societal biases by demonstrating the cognitive, academic, and socio-emotional advantages of learning in Telugu. Workshops, seminars, and

parent-teacher interactions can build understanding of how mother-tongue instruction enhances conceptual learning, strengthens multilingual competence, and preserves cultural identity. By addressing these challenges through strategic interventions, the Telugu-centric multilingual model can be implemented effectively, ensuring that NEP 2020's vision of equitable, culturally grounded, and cognitively robust education becomes a reality.

8 Conclusion

Mother-tongue-based multilingual education, as envisioned under NEP 2020, requires a shift from policy articulation to systematic classroom practice. Positioning Telugu as a cognitive and cultural anchor within the Bharatiya Bhasha Pariwar framework provides a strong foundation for conceptual learning, linguistic transfer, and cultural continuity. By leveraging Telugu's transparent orthography, agglutinative morphology, and rich literary heritage, learners can develop robust literacy skills, higher-order thinking, and metalinguistic awareness that facilitate the acquisition of additional languages.

The Interlinked Linguistic Transfer Model (ILTM) proposed in this paper operationalizes these principles by explicitly linking Telugu with other Indian and global languages. Through concept mapping, narrative pedagogy, and culturally embedded instruction, ILTM fosters active, constructivist learning while enabling learners to transfer skills and knowledge across linguistic contexts. Complemented by competency-based assessment strategies, teacher training, and digital resource development, this approach addresses both pedagogical and structural challenges of multilingual education.

Ultimately, a Telugu-centric multilingual curriculum offers a scalable, culturally grounded, and pedagogically sound model that aligns with NEP 2020's vision of equitable, holistic, and high-quality education. By integrating language, cognition, and culture, such a model not only strengthens academic outcomes but also preserves linguistic heritage, promotes social inclusion, and nurtures confident, multilingual citizens capable of thriving in diverse linguistic and cultural environments (Krishnamurti, 2003; Rao, 2018; Mohanty, 2019; Cummins, 2000; Government of India, 2020).

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