

CHAPTER-16

Bharatiya Bhasha Pariwar framework for interpreting NEP 2020: Policy, practice, and multilingual education reform in India

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ABSTRACT

This paper employs the Bharatiya Bhasha framework to interpret the NEP 2020's vision for multilingual education and its ripple effect on policy formulation, the teaching & learning process, and the reform of multilingual education in India. Although the recent literature has been rather intensive in paying attention to the pedagogical and implementation features of multilingual education, relatively little has been undertaken on the linguistic and philosophical underpinnings of this policy change. The paper treats NEP 2020 in conceptual terms of Bharatiya Bhasha Pariwar in the sense that Indian languages are not seen as separate and hierarchically ranked systems, but as a system of organically connected and long-standing contact, convergence, and mutual knowledge practices. The paper moving beyond the often-divisive colonial linguistic taxonomies to reconsider Bharatiya Bhasha Pariwar as a decolonial alternative. It infers that, as a corollary, NEP 2020 distances itself from Eurocentric paradigms which consider languages to be inherently separate and competing entities. The paper, through linguistic theory, research on multilingual education, and policy analysis, examines the provisions of the model, providing a culturally grounded account of the principles of mother tongue-based instruction and multilingual pedagogy. Telangana state has been used as an example to explore the possibilities and contradictions of applying this paradigm in practice in highly multilingual classrooms that involve regional, minority, tribal, and migrant languages. One can discern the pedagogical and structural merits and demerits of this approach from the working of a program like Tholimettu and the multilingualism practice in tribal residential schools. The paper identifies the persistent problems, including a language misfit between teachers and learners, and a lack of materials in more than one language for learning, despite society's preference for English-based education. It asserts that the model of Bharatiya Bhasha Pariwar can help improve the validity of multilingual education by restoring the Indian languages as epistemic sources, which can convey scientific, cultural, and intellectual knowledge. The paper argues that, for the realization of the dream of an education system that is not only inclusive but also decolonized, as envisioned in NEP 2020, teacher education, curriculum development, and community engagement must be geared towards incorporating a civilizational approach to linguistics.

KEYWORDS: Bharatiya Bhasha Pariwar; Multilingualism; NEP 2020; Mother-Tongue Education; Decolonising Linguistics

1 INTRODUCTION

The language diversity problem in India is not a novelty to the language classification models and language-in-education policies. Traditional linguistic theories in most of the legacy of colonial and Eurocentric cultures have borne an inclination to theorise languages in discrete and genealogically defined systems in hierarchical family trees. Such models despite their analytical strength cannot be employed to explain why there can be several languages in the Indian subcontinent where the evolution of languages over time has been based on the contractual relation, convergence, and sharing of a common cultural practice, as opposed to being segmented (Pattanayak, 1981; Annamalai, 2001). These assumptions in a schooling situation have also led to schooling practices which relegate monolingual and discriminate against those linguistic repertoire that children take to schooling by their home and community (Mohanty, 2006; Jhingran, 2009). The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 can be regarded as the major turn in the certain directions as it has explicitly accepted the value of using multilingualism and the instruction in the mother-tongue as the key to the cognitive development, understanding, and meaningful education (Ministry of Education, 2020). The policy controversies culminated in monolingual and English-based trends of schooling by recommending home language/mother tongue to be the mainstream language at the elementary years of schooling. The cognitive linguistics and education literature have always shown that familiar language in early age is the key to acquisition of other languages with time (Cummins, 2000; Baker, 2011; Benson, 2005). Nonetheless, despite the fact that NEP 2020 has a solid pedagogical basis of multilingual education, the linguistic philosophy of such a change remains under-theorized in both policy discourses and studies. The sense of multilingualism has been understood as an instructional policy or a process that transcends a period and not an epistemic way of existence that was formed by centuries of linguistic coexistence and the historical civilization of India (Mohanty, 2019). The fact that the current study is an extension of the idea of Bharatiya Bhasha Pariwar into a critical interpretive approach of deconstruction of the deeper linguistic vision concealed in NEP 2020 meets this gap. The Bharatiya Bhasha Pariwar school of thought has its foundation on Indian intellectual traditions and views Indian languages as part of a civilizational range that mutually informs and share semantic worlds and engage in mutual communicative practices, and not competitive or hierarchically superior or inferior (Devy, 2017).

This paradigm is a criticism of the colonial linguistic taxonomies, which have imposed artificial division of the Indian languages, and encouraged English as the major language of knowledge, administration, and learning. Bharatiya Bhasha Pariwar provides a decolonial perspective through the accentuation of the characteristics of convergence, continuity of culture, and plurality in epistemology, which can help to rethink multilingual education. The article relocates the concept of mother tongue-based multilingual education to NEP 2020 paradigm as epistemic repositioning and not policy interventions as per the linguistic realities of India. Based on the case of Telangana, this paper will discuss the ways the framework can be implemented to determine the opportunities and limitations of adopting the concept of multilingual education in the contemporary classroom, comprising of regional, minority, tribal, and migrant languages (Reddy, 2021). Thus, this paper shall add to the broader arguments of decolonizing linguistics, reconsidering what language education is, and how culturally-based models of multilingual societies could be constructed.

2 THEORETICAL FOUNDATION: BHARATIYA BHASHA PARIWAR AS A LANGUAGE PARADIGM.

Bharatiya Bhasha Pariwar can be seen as a concept that provides civilizational ground framework on linguistic diversity of Indian subcontinent. This framework sees Indian languages as constituents of an interrelated network of linguistic relationships, in contrast to dominant linguistic paradigms which theorize languages as discrete, bounded entities organized in strict genealogical hierarchies. These relations have been developed in centuries of continuing contact, convergence and similar cultural-epistemological traditions. By doing this, Bharatiya Bhasha Pariwar leaves the classification logic of colonial linguistics and preempts interaction, mutual intelligibility and co-existence as characteristic of Indian multilingualism (Pattanayak, 1981; Annamalai, 2001).

In India, colonial linguistic scholarship was dominated by taxonomical, standardization, and administrative convenience concerns. The models of historical reconstruction that were formulated within the European setting were very instrumental in classifying languages with special emphasis on Indo-European lineages and sidelining non-dominant, tribal, and oral languages (Phillipson, 1992; Mohanty, 2006). Though these methods assisted in the officialization of modern linguistics, they were not good enough to embody the sociolinguistic facts of India. The historical functioning of Indian multilingualism has been based on permeable language boundaries, systemic bilingualism, and shared semantic and pragmatic resources where linguistic diversity was an enacted social practice and not solely an administrative or educational object.

The Bharatiya Bhasha Pariwar system refutes such assumptions by highlighting the fact that the Indian languages have not developed in seclusion rather, they have developed through prolonged interaction in common cultural, philosophical and communicative spheres. This form of view finds empirical evidence in the fact that Emeneau (1956) developed India as a linguistic area, and it was discovered that the languages of dissimilar genetic origin show high rates of structural convergence because of the long-term contacts. Elaborating on this point, the framework places linguistic convergence in a wider civilizational context in terms of common narrative traditions, conceptual vocabularies, and meaning-making practices that cut across individual languages (Devy, 2017).

One of the major postulates of Bharatiya Bhasha Pariwar is the concept of epistemic equality between the Indian languages. Instead of considering some of the languages as transitional or preparatory languages that lead to the prevalent or global languages, the framework acknowledges that all Indian languages are legitimate and complete vehicles of knowledge. These languages are considered as capable of expressing scientific, cultural, and philosophical ideas in the same way. This stance squarely opposes the colonial and postcolonial orders which have made English the main language of the contemporary knowledge, pushing Indian languages to the sphere of tradition or informality (Mohanty, 2019). The framework considers epistemic plurality as a normative and analytical position, which allows re-imagining the use of language in education, politics and in everyday life.

In terms of education, Bharatiya Bhasha Pariwar has been found to be more or less aligned with the multilingual pedagogical theories that underline the importance of the entire linguistic repertoire of learners in cognitive development. It is a continuously proven fact in research on bilingual education that instruction based on the first language of the learner and conceptual transfer between languages are two factors that make learning most effective (Cummins, 2000; Baker, 2011). The idea of translanguaging scholarship also supports this opinion, idea of

multilingual language practices as being fluid, integrated, and non-compartmentalized (Garcia, 2009). In the Indian context, these practices are not innovations in the pedagogical approaches, but historical-based communicative norms, which have long been used in the day-to-day interaction of people.

Related to the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, Bharatiya Bhasha Pariwar allows seeing an implicit epistemic change instead of a simple policy reform. The focus on multilingual education through the use of mother-tongues in the policy is a result of the frameworks interpretation of languages as complementary resources that are based on similar cultural realities (Ministry of Education, 2020). NEP 2020 appeals to the fundamental value of epistemic continuum, which states that effective learning is based on language familiarity and cultural grounding, because it places the mother tongue as the central source of instructional resources, as opposed to being a mediating tool.

This paper will use Bharatiya Bhasha Pariwar as the major analytical prism to study the policy of language and practice in the classroom. The framework adds value to the analysis of NEP 2020 by predetermining the worries of linguistic epistemology, civilizational continuum, and decolonization. It also gives a theoretical ground by which multilingual classroom practices can be interpreted based on the concepts of convergence, flexibility, and cultural grounding. Through the step into a more instrumental discussion of the issue of language selection, the framework facilitates the more profound comprehension of the phenomenon of multilingualism as a state of epistemology necessary in the future of Indian education and linguistic thinking.

3 LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 *Multilingualism and Language Learning: Global Scholarship.*

The fact that multilingualism is a normal and healthy state of the human mind has been open and commonly agreed in both linguistic and educational study disciplines as opposed to being an anomaly of monolingualism rules. The pre-work carried out by UNESCO (1953) beforehand stipulated that the teaching of language to a child in a language that he or she is conversant with, offers insight, sense of security and development of positive ideas. Follow-on research in an extremely disparate range of sociolinguistic contexts has recurrently demonstrated that when students are first taught in the linguistic tools with which they are already familiar, they acquire literacy and numeracy skills more easily (Benson, 2005; Baker, 2011).

The theory of interdependence of Cummins (2000) still stands at the heart of the multilingual processes of learning. The hypothesis is that the acquisition of other languages particularly within the formal school system is based upon the competence acquired in the first or native language as both a cognitive and a scholarly foundation in the acquisition of the other languages. The empirical studies of African, Asian, and Latin American groups have proven that the premature exposure to foreign languages of instructions might result in the superficial learning, rote learning, and poor performance in the adulthood (Heugh, 2011).

Theorizing of increased recent approaches have also shifted to a perspective of translanguaging as opposed to additive and subtractive models of bilingualism, which postulates multiple lingual speakers employing a single though not separate repertoire rather than switch between two language systems (Garcia, 2009). Translanguaging research criticizes the monolingualism of educational institutions and indicates the pedagogical significance of fluid language activities as a source of meaning, self-affirming, and learning processes. This has been mainly

observed in multilingual societies where language separation cannot be a social or pedagogical fact.

3.2 *Language-in-Education Policy at the Postcolonial.*

Despite strong evidence on the application of mother-tongue-based multilingual education at a global level, its application in postcolonial societies has been intermittent and controversial. The language policies that the colonialists in most cases established institutionalised the colonialists language as the most important one of administration, education and the power of epistemology and the native languages were reduced to minor or informal levels (Phillipson, 1992). These hierarchies have continued to be applied in postcolonial education systems in the name of modernization and global competitiveness.

The post-independent Indian language policy formally recognized the linguistic diversities but the schooling policies tended to replicate the monolingual ideologies by imposing the use of regional languages and by promoting English-mediated education (Annamalai, 2001). It is noted that, this policy practice dislocation has contributed to the continued marginalization of languages particularly among tribal and minority-language speakers and first-generation learners (Pattanayak, 1981; Mohanty, 2006).

As Jhingran (2009) discovered, when considering classroom practice in the Indian states, the issue of the language difference between the home and school setup continues to be a major impediment to success in learning practices. Low basic literacy and numeracy attainment have been a frequent focus of mass surveys, e.g. of the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER), and language discontinuities are also cited as indicative of the problem (ASER Centre, 2022). These outcomes underscore the inefficiencies of the English-only and monolingual models of instruction, especially in lower grades.

In the meantime, the trend towards the popularity of English-medium education in society still influences the preferences of parents and policy-making. Research indicates that English is usually viewed as a path to social economic mobility, which obscures pedagogical discoveries in support of mother-tongue pedagogy (Annamalai, 2001; Kumar Singh, 2021). This dilemma between the language interests in aspiration research and education research is one of the significant issues of multilingual education reform.

3.3 *NEP 2020 and Multilingual Education Rearticulation.*

The introduction of multilingualism status at the policy level in India is a remarkable move that has been brought in by the National Education Policy 2020. The policy falls in line with the international research on cognitive development and the acquisition of language, indicating that the native language or the mother tongue should be applied as the medium of instruction during the initial years of schooling (Ministry of Education, 2020). Another cognitive resource that NEP 2020 pays attention to is multilingual competence, which emphasizes the role of Indian languages in the formation of knowledge, cultural continuity, and nationalism.

However, the implementation issue, teacher readiness, curriculum development, and the resources accessibility are the primary areas of NEP 2020 that have been analyzed (Kaul & Sankar, 2019; NIEPA, 2020). Despite the significance of the studies in helping to clarify the problem of systemic issues, they usually present the notion of multilingualism as a pedagogical or administrative problem, but not as an epistemically focused phenomenon, based on the history of Indian languages.

This gap in the literature suggests the necessity to create interpretive frameworks that will go beyond the evaluation of the policies to address the philosophical and linguistic assumptions

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behind the language provisions of NEP 2020. This approach enables to understand why the concept of multilingual education was put in the policy as the root and not the auxiliary one.

3.4 *Indian Linguistic thought and Convergence-based models.*

Besides the multilingualism studies in the world community in general, the Indian linguistic school of thought was always conscious of the interdependence of languages in the subcontinent. The attempt by Emeneau (1956) to construct India as a linguistic region was the initial effort at providing empirical information of the concept of structural convergence between genetically unrelated languages and validated the impacts of prolonged interactions on phonology, syntax, and semantics. It was an anti-genealogical typological work, which focused on the inconvenience of family tree models in elucidating Indian linguistic facts.

The observations are later expounded by researchers who have placed linguistic convergence in the larger cultural and epistemic contexts. The concept that multilingualism in India is not a social fact, but a civilizational principle, is part and parcel of everyday life, the practice of culture (Pattanayak, 1981). By emphasizing more the Indian languages as the means by which people exchange cultural memory and knowledge system, Devy (2017) has questioned the hierarchical values that the colonial linguistic thought has brought.

All these opinions are brought together on the idea that Indian languages will only be deciphered in terms of communion and co-existence and epistemic continuity, not seclusion and rivalry. The insights are useful theoretical bases of debate on the issue of multilingual education and language policy existing today.

3.5 *Placement of Bharatiya Bhasha Pariwar in the Literature.*

The Bharatiya Bhasha Pariwar paradigm is an effort to harmonize the study of multilingual education in the world with the Indian linguistic wisdom into a complete civilizational paradigm. Even though the empirical data of cognitive and pedagogical benefits of mother-tongue-based education is rather considerable in terms of world-school philosophy, the Indian linguistic tradition is revealed to give a deeper epistemic account of the history of coexistence and convergence.

The Bharatiya Bhasha Pariwar establishes an epistemic parity between Indian languages and opposing the rigid hierarchical system of classification, establishes a conceptual distance between the theory of linguistics and the language in education policy. This interpretation framework of NEP 2020 enables substituting instrumental discourse of language choice with an enhanced understanding of multilingualism as an epistemic state, which lies at the heart of the future of Indian education.

4 MAKING NEP 2020 READABLE IN TERMS OF THE BHARATIYA BHASHA PARIWAR FRAMEWORK

Applying the conceptual framework of the Bharatiya Bhasha Pariwar to the study of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, the policy can be considered to be an expression of the Indian language, a subsequent shift in attitude, an epistemic change as it relates to language, learning, and knowledge transfer process, but not a pedagogic prescription system. Although the policy document is not operational to embrace the vocabulary of the Bharatiyabhashi pariwar, the accent on the idea of the multilingual system of education to be built on the mother-tongues, the idea of linguistic plurality, and the empowerment of the Indian languages are the concerns

that seem to be attractive to the key assumptions of the framework (Ministry of Education, 2020).

The advocacy of home language or mother tongue as the medium of instruction in the primary years is a sign that Bharatiya Bhasha Pariwar is involved in the identification of home language as a predominant element of cognitive development and signification. Alternatively to considering Indian languages as the gateway to the mainstream or global languages, NEP 2020 treats them as the pillars of the epistemology. Such an approach is consistent with the framework, which sees the epistemic equality of languages and opposes the hierarchies that have been established over a long period, putting English as the language of modern knowledge (Mohanty, 2019).

Convergence-based notion of language can be found in this policy too since it focuses on multilingual competence. NEP 2020 supports the idea of being exposed to more than a single language and recognizes multilingualism as an asset of cognition, and not the failure of pedagogy. As presented in the Bharatiya Bhasha Pariwar prism, this is the historical fact that languages used to coexist in India as multilingual, on which they have been actively operating as support systems of each other in the same cultural space, as opposed to being independent and competing systems (Pattanayak, 1981; Devy, 2017).

Furthermore, putting an emphasis on NEP 2020 and some of its special disciplines, such as early literacy and numeracy (ELN), one may notice the significance of language in early education. As noted continuously, the premature teaching of unknown languages is one of the hindrances to comprehension and interpretation of concepts (Cummins, 2000; Benson, 2005). On the one hand, we can refer to the fact that the policy takes into consideration the Bharatiya Bhasha Pariwar civilizational model when the mother tongue is placed in the focus of the primary school, where we study most of all.

The policy, however, also relies on the structural and sociopolitical factors which are within the policy. Although it theoretically promotes multilingual education, it is influenced by the state policy, politics of language, and even preferences of the society to use English, and also the institutional capacity. This interpretation of NEP 2020, which is given under the framework of the Bharatiya Bhasha Pariwar, is an opportunity to read the document critically not only in the context of its epistemic potential but also in the context of the tension that is present in the process of translating this vision into the practice.

5 MULTILINGUAL EDUCATION REFORM CASE STUDY IN TELANGANA

Using Telangana as a bright illustration, it is possible to discuss the possibility to study the viability of the multilingual vision of NEP 2020 in the situation when the linguistic situation is extremely polycentric. The language ecology of the state includes a dominant language, Telugu, and Urdu, and some tribal languages: Gondi, Koya, Kolami, Lambadi, and migrant languages, such as Bhojpuri, Marathi, Odia, and Chattisgarhi (Reddy, 2021). This is specifically clear in the classroom where students may possess more than a single mother tongue hence straining the monolingual teaching strategies.

The NEP 2020, and national NIPUN Bharat Mission are some of the programs being implemented in Telangana in response to the underlying long term learning deficiencies. Tholimettu programme is based on systematic pedagogy, oral language development, and phonics-based instruction in the early grades with emphasis on literacy and numeracy. Even though most of the instructional languages are Telugu and Urdu, oral language, story telling

and contextualized learning are also integrated which is consistent with mother-tongue based approach to education.

Tholimettu is also a follower and follower of Bharatiya Bhasa Pariwar. On the one hand, it acknowledges the relevance of language knowledge and cultural relevance in early education. Conversely, that in tribal-language cases, the extent to which the programme is covered is small demonstrates that it is difficult to invoke the concept of multilingual education in the classroom when the first language of the learner is not represented by the regional languages.

Multilingualism can be seen even further in the Telangana Tribal Welfare Residential Educational Institutions Society (TTWREIS). The schools of TTWREIS have come up with bridge material, oral narration in tribal languages and community based language facilitators as service to students of tribal origin, as a way of promoting early learning. These practices represent a convergence based idea of multilingualism that considers tribal languages as the starting points of the learning process and not as setbacks to the learning process (Mohanty, 2006).

At the same time, however, there is a possibility to consider the policies of the language planning, such as the Telangana (Compulsory Teaching and Learning of Telugu) Act, 2018 as the presentation of the political side of language planning. Insofar as they are supposed to revitalize the identity of the regions, these orders can bring animosity among the minority groups, language learners and tribal language learners where the language of instructions are not close to their native languages. Therefore, the example of the state of Telangana may be used to demonstrate a complicated interaction between the intention of policy, the language diversity, and the reality in the classroom.

6 ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The comparison of NEP 2020 and multilingual programs in Telangana in terms of the Bharatiya Bhasa Pariwar framework unveils a number of important details. To begin with, the framework sheds light on the epistemic justification of the mother-tongue-informed instruction, not only a pedagogical practice, but a declaration of linguistic persistence and cognition structures. This has been considered as an attack on the deficit based policies of multilingualism which regards linguistic diversity as an obstacle to learning.

Second, the case study suggests policy-institutional capacity mismatch. Although NEP 2020 encourages the spirit of multilingualism, it does not have extensive application due to the lack of teachers that speak local languages and limited multilingual educational resources and shortage of training in multilingual teaching (Jhingran, 2009; Kumar Singh, 2021). Such restrictions will tend to drive schools towards default to mainstream languages at the expense of epistemic will of the policy.

Third, the educational choice of individuals in the society is still affected by English-preferred education given the existing associations between English and socio-economic mobility. This is more than a linguistic choice though a Bharatiya Bhasa Pariwar point of view, it is an epistemic privilege based on colonial traditions. To cope with this problem, there is a need to keep in mind the long-term approach to the masses when redesigning Indian languages as aspirational and knowledge-driven (Annamalai, 2001; Devy, 2017). Finally, the review shows that context-responsive models of multilingual education should be accommodated. Indian classrooms often possess multilingual learners and these multilingual learners are more than three as opposed to the three languages model outlined in the policy papers. This flexibility is

conceptualized in Bharatiya Bhasha Pariwar that allows linguistic convergence, translanguaging, and interlanguage bridges to be justified as natural and pedagogically desirable practice (Garciana, 2009).

7 CONCLUSION

This study can be viewed as arguing that the Bharatiya Bhasha Pariwar paradigm is an effective linguistic and civilizational lens with the help of which the Bharatiya concept of multilingual education, which was offered in the 2020 National Education Policy, can be perceived. The very idea about the Indian languages as a continuum of epistemic interdependence is a challenge of the colonial linguistic hegemonies and restores the legitimacy of the mother-tongue-based multilingual education.

Through NEP 2020 and a case study of multi-lingual education reform in Telangana, the study illustrates that, despite the policy being a rather significant epistemic change, the process is not homogenous and, in fact, is constrained by both structural and political aspects and even society. Such projects as Tholimettu and TTWREIS indicate the potential and limitations of the operationalization of multilingual education within the context of various languages.

The findings suggest that the application of the multilingual vision of NEP 2020 does not only need to be followed by curricular change. It involves rethinking the concept of language as an epistemic resource, continuing to invest in non-dominant teacher education, developing learning resources in non-dominant languages, and trying to rethink the cultural perception of Indian languages in society. The Bharatiya Bhasha Pariwar teacher education model, curriculum and the community practice can be used as a means of not only restoring the cultural validity, but also pedagogical efficacy of multilingual education.

Lastly, language policy in terms of civilisationally-driven models is one direction to take on the road towards a more inclusive, equal and even cognitively significant, education system. The fact that multilingualism is an epistemic state of affairs rather than an intermediate issue that India is struggling to extinguish its underlying learning predicaments will be central to building an educational system that is aware of linguistic realities in the country and intellectual tradition.

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