

CHAPTER-1

Multidisciplinary approaches to the study of Indian languages along with the English language: An observation

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<https://doi.org/10.66483/jsp.2026.001.ch01>

ABSTRACT

In the present globalization, the exploration of language in contemporary academia has significantly evolved, moving away from purely grammar and literature focused methods. In multilingual and multicultural settings like India, comprehending languages encompassing both Indian languages and English necessitates a multidisciplinary approach. This multidisciplinary approach involves integrating insights from linguistics, education, cognitive science, sociology, anthropology, digital humanities, history, philosophy, and policy studies. This article delves into how such an approach enhances the study of Indian languages alongside English emphasizing their mutual complementarity rather than establishing hierarchies. Utilizing Indian Knowledge System (IKS), modern linguistic theories, classroom observations, and frameworks like NEP 2020, the study illustrates how adopting a multidisciplinary perspective can promote linguistic equity, deepen cognitive understanding, ensure cultural preservation, and build global competencies. It concludes by discussing the implications of these findings for pedagogy, research and policy in higher education and school level language studies.

Key words: Language, multidisciplinary approaches, pedagogy, knowledge.

1 Introduction

India is Unity in diversity, Diversity in unity. India represents one of the World's the most linguistically diverse civilizations. As per the Constitution of India, with 22 scheduled languages, hundreds of non-scheduled languages, multiple scripts, and countless dialects, Indian Society is inherently multilingual. Alongside this diversity, English occupies a significant position as a language of Higher Education, Science, Administration, and Global Communication.

Traditionally, the study of Indian languages and English has been compartmentalized. Indian languages often approached through literary, grammatical, or classical frameworks, and English studied through western linguistic and pedagogical models. Such compartmentalization fails to address the complex social, cognitive, cultural, and technological realities of language use in India.

This article argues that the study of Indian languages along with English must be multidisciplinary, integrating insights from multiple fields to reflect real world language practices. Through observation of academic trends, classroom practices, and policy developments, this article shares how multidisciplinary approaches offer holistic understanding and transformative potential.

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Bharatiya Bhasha Pariwar: A New Framework in Linguistics

<https://doi.org/10.66483/jsp.2026.001>

1.1 Multidisciplinary Approaches in Language Studies:

A multidisciplinary approach involves drawing upon multiple disciplines to examine a phenomenon, while each discipline retains its distinct methods and perspectives. Language studies making multidisciplinary not optional but essential i.e. includes:

- Linguistic
- Literature and Cultural Studies
- Education and Pedagogy
- Sociology and Anthropology
- Psychology and Cognitive Science
- History and Philosophy
- Digital Humanities and Technology
- Policy and Governance

1.2 Indian Context - Natural Multidisciplinary:

Indian linguistic traditions have always been multidisciplinary such as:

- Grammar Intertwined with Philosophy (Vyakarana and Darsana)
- Literature connected with Aesthetics (Rasa Theory)
- Language embedded in Social Ethics (Dharma)
- Education rooted in Holistic development

Thus, modern multidisciplinary language studies resonate with Bharatiya epistemologies i.e:

1.2.1 Linguistic Approaches:

1.2.1.1 Structural Approach:

Structural analysis examines Phonology, Morphology, Syntax, and Semantics. Indian languages in the present context like Rich Morphology (Telugu, Tamil, Kannada etc); Free Word Order (Sanskrit, Hindi); Complex agreement systems etc. Comparative structural studies with English help learners understand such as Typological differences, transfer and interference, cross-linguistic patterns etc.

1.2.1.2 Functional Linguistic:

Functional approaches study language as a tool for communication. Indian languages and English are examined in terms of language functions, register, and genre, contextual meaning etc. This is particularly relevant in multilingual Indian classrooms where functional competence matters more than native like accuracy.

1.2.1.3 Cognitive Linguistics:

Cognitive linguistics connects language with thought. Multilingual Indian learners demonstrate for example enhanced meta-linguistic awareness, cognitive flexibility, and conceptual transfer across languages. Studying Indian languages alongside English deepens understanding of how cognition is shaped by linguistic diversity.

1.3 Literary and Cultural Studies Perspectives:

i. Comparative Literature:

Comparative literature allows the study of texts across languages, cultures, and genres. Indian languages and English intersect like translation studies, postcolonial literature, and adaptations and retellings. Students gain insights like shared human concerns, cultural specificity and narrative traditions.

ii. Cultural Studies:

Language reflects culture, cultural studies examine like power relations, identity formation and representation.

English in India functions both as:

- A legacy of colonialism
- A medium of self-expression and resistance

1.4 Indian Languages – Approaches:

Indian languages preserve local knowledge, oral traditions, and community identities.

1.4.1 Sociolinguistic Approaches:

1.4.1.1 Language and Society:

Sociolinguistics examines how language interacts with class, caste, gender, region, power etc. Indian multilingualism is deeply social. English often signals mobility, while Indian languages reflect community belongings.

1.4.1.2 Code Switching and Trans-Language:

Indian speakers naturally engage in code switching (Hindi-English, Telugu-English, Hindi-Telugu etc) and trans-language practices, rather than viewing these as deficiencies, multidisciplinary approaches recognize them as communicative resources.

1.4.2 Anthropological and Ethnographic Perspective:

i. Anthropological linguistics studies language as lived practice. Observations show like language tied to rituals, and daily life; oral traditions shaping worldview; English adapted to local contexts. Ethnographic studies reveal how learners negotiate identity through Indian languages and English.

ii. Psychological and Cognitive Approaches:

a. **Language Acquisition and Learning:** Psycholinguistics explores how languages are learned and processed. Multilingual Indian learners show simultaneous language acquisition, cross-linguistic influence and strong memory and pattern recognition. Studying Indian languages alongside English improves second language acquisition strategies.

b. **Affective Factors:** Motivation, anxiety, and identity play crucial roles. Multidisciplinary approaches help reduce English language anxiety, validate mother tongues, promote confidence and agency etc.

1.5 Educational and Pedagogical Perspectives:

1.5.1 Multilingual Pedagogy:

1 teaching English alongside Indian languages enhances comprehension and inclusion. Education research supports:

- Mother tongue based multilingual education
- Bridging strategies to English
- Contextual and Experiential learning

1.5.2 Curriculum Design:

i. A multidisciplinary curriculum integrates language skills, cultural knowledge, critical thinking, ethical communication etc. NEP 2020 strongly endorses such integration.

2 Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) and Language Study:

Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) contribute Paninian Grammar and generative insights, Rasa, and Dhvani theories, Dialogic discourse traditions, Ethical communication norms etc. These frameworks enrich modern linguistic and pedagogical models.

2.1 Philosophical Perspectives on Language:

comparing these with western philosophy of language deepens semantic and pragmatic understanding. Indian philosophy views language as:

- Means of Knowledge (Sabda Pramana)
- Cognitive process (Sphota)
- Moral and ethical act

2.1.1 Historical Perspectives:

Languages evolve through history, studying Indian languages with English reveals Sanskritization, and persianization; colonial language policies; postcolonial language negotiations etc., historical perspectives explain current linguistic hierarchies and attitudes.

2.1.2 Digital Humanities and Technology:

2.1.2.1 Digital Language Resource:

Technology enables like digitization of manuscripts, corpora creation, translation tools. Language learning apps etc. Indian languages and English benefit from shared digital platforms.

2.1.2.2 Computational Linguistics:

NLP, AI, and machine translation require for example multilingual datasets, cross-linguistic analysis, indigenous languages modelling. Multidisciplinary collaboration is essential here.

2.1.3 Media and Communication Studies:

Languages function in media ecosystems like print, television, cinema, social media and digital platforms. Indian languages and English coexist in hybrid forms, shaping public discourse and popular culture.

2.1.4 Policy and Governance Perspectives:

Language policy shapes education and society, NEP 2020 emphasises such as multilingualism, equity, Indian languages alongside English. Policy studies help evaluate implementation challenges and outcomes.

2.1.5 Interdisciplinary – Multidisciplinary Models:

While interdisciplinary approaches integrates methods, multidisciplinary models allow coexistence of perspectives. Indian languages studies benefits from both especially higher education, teacher training, research design etc.

2.1.6 Classroom Observation:

Observed classrooms using multidisciplinary approaches show higher learner engagement. Improved comprehension, stronger identity affirmation, better English proficiency. Students relate English learning to their linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

2.1.7 Challenges in Multidisciplinary Language Studies:

Institutional silos, curriculum, teacher preparedness, resource limitations. Assessment alignment, addressing these requires systematic reforms.

2.1.7.1 Implications for Research:

Future research should explore multilingual cognition, comparative discourse studies, digital humanities for Indian languages. Policy impact studies, collaborative research teams are essential.

Implications for Teaching and Teacher Education: Teacher education must include multilingual pedagogy, cultural linguistics, technology integration, reflective practice. Teachers become facilitators of meaning rather than transmitters of rules.

3 Conclusion:

The study of Indian languages along with English demands multidisciplinary approaches that reflect the complexity of languages as human phenomenon. Linguistic structures, cultural meanings, social realities, cognitive processes, historical, and technological transformations interest in real world language use observations from classrooms, policy frameworks like NEP 2020, and academic research indicate that multidisciplinary language studies promote linguistic equity, cognitive depth, cultural continuity, and global competence rather than positioning English against Indian languages approaches foster complementary and coexistence. In embracing multidisciplinary india can offer the world a model of language education that is rooted, inclusive and forward looking a model where Indian languages and English enrich one another in the pursuit of knowledge, communication and human understandings.

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