



Analysing the Role of National Education Policy 2020 in Saving Linguistic Diversity of India

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Abstract

As per the Census report of 2011, there are 121 languages and 270 mother tongues in India. The presence of so large number of languages makes India one of the most diverse linguistic nations of the world. According to a report of Language Conservancy 61% of the language spoken as first language since 1795 have been extinct; nine languages uses to be extinct every year and if the languages are not saved, then half of the languages what are spoken today will be extinct in hundred years. In India according to ex Director, D.G. Rao, Central Institute of Indian Languages (CIIL), of Mysuru, that India has lost about 220 languages in the last 50 years.

The National Policy of Education 2020 has been implemented by the national government of India. The NEP-2020 as an educational policy document is now analysed by the educationists and experts in context of their own fields of study. In the background of above mentioned problems, there is need to analysis the role of National Education Policy 2020 in saving the linguistic diversity of India. The present paper has analysed the role of NEP-2020 in preserving and saving the languages from the extinction. The present study would be helpful to the various stakeholders, researchers, policy makers and planners in formulating an effective strong policy for the revival and saving of the language diversity of India.

Key Words: NEP-2020; Linguistic Diversity; Mother Tongue; Census Survey; Extinction

Introduction

From the time immemorial, by the virtue of geographical diversity ,India is the homes of the numerous groups of people with different languages, faiths and cultures. India can be divided into five physiographical regions ¹, into seven cultural zones ² and into nine major faiths³. While the diversity in languages can be seen in 19500 dialects and 121 languages (more than 10,000 speakers) ⁴. So,the diversity is in the fate of India and Indian people. The diversity is beauty of Indian nation. In spite of so much diversity, unity is among the people of India. The unity in diversity is the sacred verse of India ⁵ acknowledged by the scholars and constitution of the nation.

In the unity of diversity, language plays an important role as a medium of communication and contact among the various groups of people. Languages are not just the medium of expression but a major bonding factor among the people. Various studies have shown the role of language in the unity in diversity of India. Chandras (2020) hails the language in diversity of India in these words “ as language plays an important part in our daily

interactions, multilingualism and linguistic diversity in India have shaped the country and unique cultural practices and policies within it.”⁶ This has been also acknowledged by the government at various levels from the constitution to programmes and policies. The constitution of India has given special emphasis on the preserving and promoting all sorts of diversity especially the language for the integration and unity. The constitutional provisions about the of language of Union (Article 343), Legislature (Article 210) ,Parliament (Article 120), State (Article 345) are important in acknowledging the priority of the nation in the context of diversity.⁷ The constitutional provision to safeguard the mother tongues states that “it shall be the endeavour of every State and of every local authority within the State to provide adequate facilities for instruction in the Mother Tongue at the primary stage of education to children belonging to linguistic minority groups(Article 350 A)”. ⁸ Even the “National Curriculum Framework (NCF-2005) endorses the use of Mother Tongue in primary education.” ⁹ Further the constitution lays down the provision for preservation of the language of minority when it states that “[Article 29(1)]: right of ‘any section of the citizens’ to ‘conserve’ its ‘distinct language, script or culture’.”, “[Article 30(1)]: right of all Religious and Linguistic Minorities to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice.”, “[Article 350 A]: provision for facilities for instruction in mother-tongue at primary stage.” and “ [Article 350 B]:provision for a Special Officer for Linguistic Minorities and his duties; “ ¹⁰ All these provisions mean to save the linguistic diversity of the nation and responsibility to maintain the diversity has not been put on the people but on the state.

The responsibility of the state can be seen in the official languages of the 8th schedule of the constitution which has 22 languages in present. It had 14 languages when the constitution was implemented in 1950. The schedule expanded in 1967 with one language-Sindhi added, in 1992, three languages- Konkani, Nepali and Manipur were added and 2003, four language-Bodo, Dogri, Maithili and Santhali were added which brought official language to 22. So, in present there are 22 schedule/official languages in India which has been given in Table-01. This is an example of the recognition of language diversity of India by the constitution.

Table- 1 (8th Schedule/official Languages)

Assamese	Bengali	Guajarati	Hindi	Kannada	Kashmiri	Marathi
Malayalam	Oriya	Punjabi	Sanskrit	Tamil	Telugu	Urdu
Sindhi	Konkani	Nepali	Manipuri	Bodo	Dogri	Maithili
Santhali						

(Source: https://www.mha.gov.in/sites/default/files/EighthSchedule_19052017.pdf)

The Union of India comprises on the 28 states and 08 Union territories in which various languages are spoken by the people with sizeable numbers. This is another example of language diversity of India. Table-02 shows the percentage of the speakers in the states and Union territories.

Table-02 Number of Speakers in States and Union Territories
(https://www.education.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/upload_document/languagebr.pdf)

SET	States	Major Language	Other Languages with Significant Population
A	Kerala	Malayalam (96.6%)	Tamil, Kannada
	Punjab	Punjabi (92.2%)	Hindi,Urdu
	Gujarat	Gujarati (91.5%)	Hindi,Sindhi
	Haryana	Hindi (91.0%)	Punjabi, Urdu
	U.P.	Hindi (90.1%)	Urdu,Punjabi
	Rajasthan	Hindi (89.6%)	Bhili,Urdu
	H.P.	Hindi (88.9%)	Punjabi. Kinnauri
	Tamil Nadu	Tamil (86.7%)	Telugu, Kannada
	West Bengal	Bangla (86.0%)	Hindi, Urdu
	A.P.	Telugu ((84.8%)	Urdu,Hindi
B	M.P.	Hindi (85.6%)	Bhili,Gondi
	Bihar	Hindi (80.9%)	Urdu, Santhali
	Orissa	Oriya (82.8%)	Hindu,Telugu
	Mizoram	Lushai (75.1%)	Bangla, Lakher
	Maharashtra	Marathi (73.3%)	Hindi , Urdu
C	Goa	Konkani (51.5%)	Marathi, Kannada
	Meghalaya	Khasi (49.5%)	Garo,Bangla
	Tripura	Bangla (68.9%)	Tripuri,Hindi
	Karnataka	Kannada(66.2%)	Urdu,Telugu
D	Sikkim	Nepali (63.1%)	Bhotia. Lepcha
	Manipur	Manipuri (60.4%)	Thadou, Tangkhul
	Assam	Assamese (57.8%)	Bangla,Boro
E	Arunachal	Nissi (19.9%)	Nepali, Bangla
	Nagaland	Ao(14.0%)	Sema,Konyak

(Source: Census 2011)

The table-02 shows the language diversity in India. The numbers of the speakers are high in almost every states of India. In term of the most spoken languages , the Table-03 shows the seventeen languages with number of the population and percentage in which they are spoken;another sign of language diversity of India.

Table-03 Most Spoken Languages in India by Number of Speakers

Language	Total Language Speakers (in Crores)	Languages Spoken in India Percentage
Hindi	52.83	43.6
Bengali	9.72	8.30
Marathi	8.30	6.86
Telugu	8.11	6.7
Tamil	6.90	5.70
Gujarati	5.0	4.58
Urdu	5.07	4.19
Kannada	4.37	3.61
Odia	3.75	3.10
Malayalam	3.40	2.88
Punjabi	3.31	2.74
Assamese	1.53	1.26
Maithili	1.35	1.12
Meitei	1,761,079	0.15
English	259,678	0.02
Sanskrit	24821	0.00185

(Source: <https://devnagri.com/12-most-spoken-languages-in-india-by-number-of-speakers/>)

The background of the problem under investigation is whether the languages are dying or have been died and how scholars use to see the dying languages and posing a threat to the linguistic diversity of India? There are two ways as researchers believe to assess the status of languages. One is to see it in terms of declining numbers of speakers of a language and second is to see in term of the languages which died/extinct (means negligible number of speakers).

There are many surveys and studies which findings prove the declining of the languages in India. The first Linguistic Survey of India (1894-1928) and the last linguistic survey of India show the decline of languages from 179 to 121.¹¹ On the basis of speakers various studies show a constant decline of the languages in India. As per the Census report of 2011, there are 121 languages and 270 mother tongues in India. ¹² The presence of so large number of languages makes India one of the most diverse linguistic nations of the world. According to a report of Language Conservancy 61% of the language spoken as first language since 1795 have been extinct; nine languages uses to be extinct every year and if the languages are not saved, then half of the languages what are spoken today will be extinct in hundred years.¹³ . In India according to ex Director, D.G. Rao, Central Institute of Indian Languages (CIIL), of Mysuru, that India has lost about 220 languages in the last 50 years.¹⁴ The Table-04 shows the Status of the language of India in comparison to the language of the world.

Table 04 Status of languages in India and the World

Nations	Unsafe	Definitely Endangered	Severely Endangered	Critically Endangered	Extinct	Total Endangered
India	84	62	6	35	9	196
US	11	25	32	71	53	192
Brazil	97	17	19	45	12	190
Indonesia	56	30	19	32	10	147
China	41	49	22	23	9	144
Mexico	52	38	33	21	-	144
Russian Fed	21	47	29	20	19	136
Australia	17	13	30	42	6	108
Papua Mew Guinea	24	15	29	20	10	98
Canada	24	14	16	32	2	88

(Source: UNESCO (2009))

In the light of the above mentioned problems related to declining language diversity there is need to ponder over to find the solution of how stop this decline and what the various stakeholders can do to save the decaying languages? What recommendations have been put forwarded by National Education Policy 2020 to promote and save the language?

After 34 years, the government of India introduced the National Education Policy in 2020 which is also called New Education policy 2020 (NEP2020). The introduction of NEP 2020 has brought much hope for introducing new direction to education and solving the long persisting problems with the help of new resources, plans and technology. The problem of declining the languages and saving the linguistic diversity is an issue for those who are associated with this. How NEP 2020 can help to save the decline of the languages and thus the linguistic diversity? This study has analysed the role of NEP 2020 in saving the linguistic diversity of India. This study

is important for the nation like India where various groups of the people live together, trust on each other and protect their cultures, faiths, languages through the constitutional safeguards. Saving language is important to save the culture of a particular group. Any threat to any group of people by marginalising or discriminating to decline would counter productive and a major problem for the diverse nation like India.

Objectives of the Study

The present study has the following objectives:

- I) To study the status of the languages in India.
- II) To study the provisions of National Policy of Education 2020 for saving of the linguistic diversity of India
- III) To analysis the status of implementation of National Policy of Education 2020 for saving of the Linguistic diversity of India.

Research Question

The present paper has the following research questions:

- I) What is the status of the language in India?
- II) What are the provisions laid down by the National policy of Education 2020 for the saving of the linguistic diversity of India?
- III) What is the status of implementation of the provisions of the NEP2020 for the saving of the linguistic diversity of India?

Research Methodology

The present paper has adopted the Qualitative Research Design with Descriptive Analytic Method to study the problem under investigation. The researcher has opted Qualitative design to study the present problems due to availability of sources in secondary form which needed to be analysed to reach on the conclusion. The data has been taken from various surveys, studies, census reports, debates and articles from Journals, newspapers, government departments and agencies and organizations working in this field.

Status of Linguistic Diversity

In the light of the set objectives, the first research question is related to the status of diversity of language in India. As per the Census report of 2011, there are 121 languages and 270 mother tongues in India. ¹⁵ At the time of the first linguistic survey which carried out from 1894 to 1928 by George A. Grierson there were 179 languages and 544 dialects in India which shows considerable decline in the linguistic diversity. ¹⁶ After independence to do in-depth survey of languages the task had been assigned to Central Institute of Indian Languages (CIIL) but could not complete. ¹⁷ Another incomplete attempt was done in 1984. Then came the Census of 1991, which listed 1576 mother tongues and 1796 as other mother tongue. ¹⁸ In Eleventh Five Year Plan (2007-2012) 2.8 billion given for 'New linguistic Survey of India' to 'Survey of Minor and Endangered Languages' but by reaching to year 2010 this was abandoned. The another attempt was made by 'People's Linguistic Survey of India (PLSI)' which started under an NGO 'Bhasha Research and Publication Centre'. As per the report from G.N. Devy "currently as many as 780 different languages are spoken and 86 different scripts are used in the country. While it is surely is a fact to celebrate the diversity of the country, the sad part is we have lost nearly 250 languages in the last 50 years or so". ¹⁹ But for the number of languages under endangered category, he did not disclose the exact numbers. Further G.N.Devye says that nearly 10 percent of the world's 4000 languages facing extinction threat in the next 50 years which is spoken in India. ²⁰ The UNESCO reports

that out of 2500 endangered languages, 197 Indian Languages are in category of endangered. (The UNESCO Atlas of World Languages in Danger 2010) 21.

According to a report of Language Conservancy 61% of the language spoken as first language since 1795 have been extinct; nine languages uses to be extinct every year and if the languages are not saved, then half of the languages what are spoken today will be extinct in hundred years.() In India according to ex Director, D.G. Rao, Central Institute of Indian Languages (CIIL), of Mysuru, that India has lost about 220 languages in the last 50 years. 22. In the context of the above data, there is threat to linguistic diversity of India and which proved the first proposition/research question.

NEP 2020 and Provisions related to Languages

In the light of the status of diversity of language and the various problems that arise, the National Policy of Education (NEP) 2020 came with various provisions to solve it. The National Policy of Education 2020 has been implemented by the national government of India. The NEP-2020 as an educational policy document is now analysed by the educationists and experts in the context of their own fields of study. In the background of above mentioned problems, there is need to analysis the role of National Education Policy 2020 in saving the linguistic diversity of India.

The NEP 2020 acknowledges the importance of art, culture and language for an ‘incredible India’ (p-53) 23. For self esteem and strong positive cultural identity there is needed to develop a strong sense of cultural history, arts and language (p-53). 24 The language gives knowledge about the perception and experiences of the people. Therefore, there is need to preserve and promote the culture and language.(p-53).25 The NEP 2020 recognizes the endangered nature of Indian language as it mentions loosing of 220 languages in the last 50 years and declaration of UNESCO of endangered 197 Indian languages. (P-53).26

In the light of the problems, NEP 2020 recommends the following provisions for preserving and promoting the Indian languages. The NEP 2020 recommends the:

- i) Integration of languages in Teaching and Learning at every level from school to higher education.27
- ii) Development and production of high quality learning and print materials i.e. textbooks, workbooks, videos, plays, poems novels etc. in the languages.28
- iii) Updating of the vocabularies and dictionaries in the lights of the best international languages standard and practices.29
- iv) Producing highly languages skilled teachers.30
- v) Implementation of three-language formula to promote multilingualism.31
- vi) Development of local languages with the help of local resource persons. 32
- vii) Greater flexibility in the curriculum from secondary school to higher education.33
- viii) At higher level of education to achieve the objectives of National Education Policy many language courses would be started. 34
- ix) The groups of excellent teachers and faculties would be developed.35
- x) “Strong departments and programmes in Indian languages, comparative literature, creative writing, arts, music philosophy will be launched across the country.” 36
- xi) Degree of four years B.Ed programmes would be launched to produce quality teachers.37
- xii) The programmes and departments would help in producing the large numbers of high quality languages teachers.38
- xiii) National Research Fund (NRF) would fund the quality research in languages.39
- xiv) The local artists, crafts persons would be hired as Guest faculty to promote the local languages. 40

- xv) More and more Institutions of higher education would use mother tongues as medium of instruction and offer programmes of study bilingually.⁴¹
- xvi) The languages would be used to promote and develop the local arts, crafts and culture of the regions.⁴²
- xvii) The large employment opportunities would be created for the youths by developing the tourist centers in local areas with local arts, crafts and culture to preserve the diversity of languages and cultures.⁴³
- xviii) To promote the culture of translation and interpretation to enrich the Indian knowledge system Indian Institute of Translation and Interpretation (IITI) would be established.⁴⁴
- xix) Use of technology in enriching Indian Knowledge system would be enhanced to be relevant in changing scenario.⁴⁵
- xx) To promote the classical languages of India those will be linked to teaching, learning, literature, employment, arts etc. ⁴⁶
- xxi) Sanskrit as one of the oldest languages would be promoted from schools to universities. The universities of Sanskrit would work on multi-disciplinary model and would be brought in line with other main subjects like mathematics, science etc. ⁴⁷
- xxii) Departments for other classical languages like Pali, Persian, Prakrit etc. would be promoted.⁴⁸
- xxiii) “Efforts to preserve and promote all Indian languages including classical, tribal and endangered languages will be taken on with new vigour. Technology and crowdsourcing, with extensive participation of the people, will play a crucial role in these efforts.”⁴⁹
- xxiv) Academies would be opened to promote the official languages mentions in the 8th Schedule and other highly spoken languages. The Academies would produce languages dictionaries. The Academics would be supported by the centre and states. ⁵⁰
- xxv) All the Indian languages and their associates would be preserved and save from decaying by documenting through online with strong relation with the people. ⁵¹
- xxvi) Prizes, incentives, Scholarships etc would be given to the people of all ages associated with the study of study Indian Languages. Vibrant poetry, novels, nonfiction books, textbooks, journalism, and other works in all Indian languages would be promoted. “Proficiency in Indian languages will be included as part of qualification parameters for employment opportunities.” ⁵²

Status of Implementation of provisions related to NEP 2020

New Education Policy (NEP) 2020 was approved by the Government of India on July 29, 2020 and implemented during the academic year 2022-23. And as on January 2024, according to Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan almost all the states in India have implemented the NEP 2020.⁵³ The period of 3.5 years has been passed and now time has come to see what has been achieved in the light of the recommendations of NEP 2020 related to the language policy to save the linguistic diversity of India?

To see this researcher has gone through various documents related to implementation of NEP 2020 related to promotion and saving of the languages. As per the Press Information Bureau (PIB) of the Government of India of 2021, 2022 and 2024, the following actions have been taken in the light of the recommendation of the NEP 2020.

I) Consultation has been completed with the states and Union territories to formulate plan for the implementation of NEP 2020.

II) Various bodies like Ministry of Education, CABE, Boards, Departments of education of the States and Union Territories, NTA, HEIs etc have been integrated in line to implement the NEP 2020.⁵⁴

III) For the development and promotion of Indian Languages many separate organizations have been strengthened e.g. for Sanskrit Language, three Central Universities viz, Central Sanskrit University, New Delhi, Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri National Sanskrit University, New Delhi and National Sanskrit University, Tirupati. ; for Hindi Kendriya Hindi Sansthan (KHS) Agra, Central Hindi Directorate (CHD), New Delhi and Commission for Scientific and Technical Terminology (CSTT), New Delhi ; for Sindhi National Council for Promotion of

Sindhi Language (NCPUL),” New Delhi and for Urdu National Council for Promotion of Urdu Language (NCPUL), New Delhi.’55

IV) For the development and promotion of all Indian languages like schedule and non-schedule and classical e.g. Kannada, Telugu, Malayalam and Odia Central Institute of Indian Languages (CIIL), Mysore has been assigned the task. While for the development and promotion of Classical Tamil the Central Institute of Classical Tamil (CICT), Chennai has been assigned task .56

V) The guidelines permitting technical education institutions to offer their courses in local languages have been issued by All India Council for Technical education (AICTE). “So far 19 institutions from 10 states have started offering such courses. AICTE has developed a tool called AICTE Automation Artificial Intelligence Tool to translate English language online courses into 11 Indian languages.”57

VI) Many online portals are facilitating the working for the development of the reference materials. “Translation of reference material for Engineering courses are made available in Regional languages on SWAYAM MOOCS portal. Course material including text books and teaching resources for Grades 1-12 are available on DIKSHA portal of the Government in 33 Indian languages and Indian Sign language. JEE and NEET exams are conducted in 13 Indian languages.”58

VII) The budget for the promotion of Indian languages and the institutions in 2023-24 has increased to ₹300.7 crore from ₹250 crore which is about 70% more than ₹176.5 crore in 2021-22. These institutions are Central Sanskrit University, Kendriya Hindi Sansthan, National Council for Promotion of Urdu Language, National Council for Promotion of Sindhi Language, Central Institute of Classical Tamil and National Initiative for Quality Higher Education in Indian Languages. 59

VIII) In the same way for the Central Institute of Indian Languages (CIIL), Mysore, the fund has been increased from ₹ 43.5 crore (revised estimate) in 2022-23 to 53.61 crore in 2023-24. The CIIL uses to work for the promotion of the south Indian language like Telugu, Malayalam, Kannada and Odia. 60

IX) Another important work has been done by UGC by forming “an apex committee to work with Indian authors to prepare textbooks at undergraduate and postgraduate levels in different Indian languages and disciplines. These books will be available in digital format and can be made accessible to the students on the national digital library announced in the budget,” The UGC has also issued the guidelines to train the teachers in Indian knowledge System (IKS). 61

X) Another important works have been done which are related to the propagation of Hindi language. The fund for the promotion has been increased from ₹ 36 crore (2022-23) to ₹ 39.47 crore (2023-24) for the Directorate of Hindi and its four centers to develop Hindi as a linkage language.62. The development of Hindi as a national language would be the milestone.

XI) To promote Hindi among the public and system of government the “ Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has written to the External Affairs Ministry to promote the use of Hindi for official work in banks, public sector undertakings, embassies and other government offices located in foreign countries.”63

Conclusion

India is a nation of diversity. The diversity of India ranges from geographical challenges to faith to culture to language. The important thing is that this diversity is facing numerous. With the coming of globalization, rise of radicalization and policies of extra nationalist governments in many nations have made the challenges complex. In India the diversity of language is also facing problems. The diversity of language is important for the survival of diverse culture, faith etc. With the passage of time the linguistic diversity of India has been declining as the number of the language and speakers of the languages decline which has been confirmed by the numerous studies and surveys.

The government of India introduced National Policy of Education 2020 after 34 years of NEP 1986. The NEP 2020 recommended numerous programmes and policies to boost the education of the nation which have been implementing by the government with multiple approaches. In present paper the NEP2020 recommendations and implementation have been analysed in the context of linguistic diversity of India. With three research questions the linguistic diversity has been analysed and found that the NEP 2020 is helping in promotion and saving of the linguistic diversity of India. The implementation has just started by the all stakeholders from 2022-23 sessions. And this is not so long time to give any final conclusion. Yet, the works which started giving the building of languages a massive structure and promoting and saving the linguistic diversity. But what one thing important is to implement the recommendations of NEP 2020 on projected time as the technological changes are so fast which could not make the recommendations irrelevant.

Suggestions for Saving Linguistic Diversity

In the light of the study of the problem under investigation, the researcher is put forwarding the following suggestions for the saving of linguistic diversity of India with regards to the implementation of NEP2020.

- 1) There is needed an All India Language Survey where the citizens involvement should be guaranteed in place of the government. The citizens should be asked to register their languages in the category of 'Mother Tongue' 'Regional language' and 'National Language of choice'.
- 2) There is needed to use the technology in collection of data in place of using the method of census survey.
- 3) There is needed to broaden the ambit of 8th schedule of the constitution with more official languages by conducting regular survey from time to time.
- 4) There is needed to implement the recommendations of NEP 2020 in time bond manner as the fast changing of the society and nation due to technology would make the recommendations irrelevant.
- 5) The promotion of decaying languages should be adequately funded; policies should be implemented with the concerned people and regular survey should be conducted.
- 6) There is needed to de-politicalise the implementation of the policies of NEP 2020 with regards to languages.
- 7) There is needed to monitor the implementation of the policies by the people's committee and concerned communities. The monitoring should be time bond and on regular basis.
- 8) There is needed to develop a system of quality parameters for employing the local resource persons with constant supervision by using the technology.
- 9) The use of technology in developing resources for various languages needed to be analysed in term of relevancy to modern days particularly in making of dictionary and educational materials.
- 10) There is needed to open India for more foreign languages whose economies are going to dominant the world for trade and commerce, for employment and strong people to people relation to promote the diversity of language.

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