

# Impact Of Multilingual Approach to Education on Young Learners in India

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**Abstract:** Learning is an outcome of various social and cultural factors and young learners develop it through communication with their surroundings. One of the most crucial features of an exceptional education system is the capability of educators to involve learners' previous perceptions and experiences as well as existing information base. The NEP 2020 ardently promotes multilingualism and the influence of local languages. According to NEP 2020, young learners have a much better chance to comprehend ideas in their native languages as such the medium of teaching till Grade 5, and if possible, Grade 8 should be in local languages.

The notion that a learner can attain fundamental skills better in their mother tongue is generally accepted across the world. At the same time, one cannot deny the fact that English is regarded as the Lingua Franca in India and most part of the world. Proficiency in English is considered an essential skill required for success in the contemporary times all over the world. Multilingual Education can play an important part in appealing diverse learners. Experts believe that Multilingualism can be beneficial for the learners' overall growth in the long run but only if it is implemented properly. Integrating multilingual approach into education can have an everlasting impact on the young learners hence a proper study is very much essential.

**Key Words:** Multilingualism, Native Language, Lingua Franca, Proficiency

## INTRODUCTION

Language shapes the way we think, and determines what we can think about. –

Benjamin Lee Whorf

Language is essential for human communication. People need a language for communicating with each other. Multilingualism is an integral feature of India, essential for the success of the democratic, ideological and fiscal system of the country. Human are divided into three categories based on their language skills;

Monolingual, Bilingual, and Multilingual. Someone who knows only one language is called Monolingual. Those who are able to use two languages are bilingual, multilingual is a person who is able to speak more than two languages.

Indians have always had problems with the concept of a Single, National Language, as the country is fundamentally an accumulation of diverse people, with exclusive languages, food habits, clothing, customs & traditions etc. Multilingualism provides an opportunity to understand other cultures and enhances one's appreciation of their own cultures. Advancement of multilingual aptitude is broadly acknowledged as one of the objectives of Indian education.

Bilingual and Multilingual curriculum is being introduced in various nations around the world. National Education Policy experts believe that youngsters are better motivated to comprehend ideas in their native languages, the mode of teaching till 5<sup>th</sup> Grade and if possible, till 8<sup>th</sup> Grade should be in local languages. The usual objection against the policy for using the mother tongue in educational institutions is that it expands the gap between those who can connect with others in English and those who cannot.

## OBJECTIVES

- To study the various aspects of Multilingualism.
- To assess the impact of Multilingual Approach to Education on Young Learners in India.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

- Primary Source – Data collection through a structured questionnaire.
- Secondary Source – Books, Journals, Newspaper, Internet etc.

### **Area Of Study**

The Research Study was limited to Mumbai City and the Suburbs. The sample size of the respondents was 150 out of which 130 responses were received. The respondents comprised of Teachers/Professors [45], Other Professionals [40], Students [45].

### **Literature Review**

In this world, language is a necessary for human communication. People need language to communicate with others. As per Jendra (Jendra, 2010, p. 1) language is used only by humans for communication. It means that mostly humans cannot communicate with another without language. So, it must be difficult for human to interact with another. Language will be unusable if it is not applied or used by human in their society. Therefore, it shows that language and civilization is complementary to each other. Janet Holmes specifies that sociolinguistics is the study of the relationship between language and civilization.

All humans use a language to communicate with each other, many of them to use more than one language for communication. An individual who speaks two languages for the purpose of communication is termed as bilingual. (Jendra, 2010, p. 68). Anyone can be bilingual; based on the capability of using two languages. At times people are unaware that they are bilingual even though they do communicate with more than one language every day. Hence, everyone can be bilingual.

Multilingualism is considered a skill, when people are able to speak more than two languages to interact with other (Chaer and Agustine, 2004:85). In a way students learning English are one of the multilingual communities. A Multilingual community is one that has more than two languages to speak and to communicate each other. While Holmes (2013:76) defines that multilingualism is a skill to use more than two languages in communication for certain purpose.

There are certain aspects determining if a person can be bilingual or multilingual, such as Nationalism, Mobilization, Culture, Education, or Religion. Mobilization can create a need for bilingual condition when an immigrant has to interact with native, they will learn the native language. Nationalism movement demonstrates a requirement of a national language to bond a whole nation together.

People have a choice of language when they communicate with each other, in their day-to-day life. According to Grosjean (1982:127) the day-to-day communication with other, people are constantly changing the variety of language they use. Human beings are not for a particular language for their communication as some people may not comprehend their language. So, many people choose to use a certain language for their communication to make the receiver comprehend what their message.

Based on Holmes (2013:22) choice of language of communication occurs mainly in spoken communications. Furthermore, multilingual communities will find people using more than two languages. The use of more than one language by the speaker in communication shows that they make a language choice. A person chooses a suitable language when they speak, they switch from one language to another language depending on the situation and recipient. Even though at times they are not fluent in a particular language, they try to be confident while communicating with others.

There is general understanding that young learners' capacity to acquire languages and their developing reading and writing skills are influenced by their social surroundings, including the language(s) to which they are exposed, the language socialization methods of their guardians (Heath, 1983; PESCO & Crago, 2008; Van Kleeck, 1994), and language training. The youngsters are born into families which use more than one language so they begin to acquire two primary languages concurrently (e.g., McLaughlin, 1984). Some youngsters begin as monolingual, and at a later stage acquire a second language, for example, in school or through external communication, and hence can be said to be obtaining a second language.

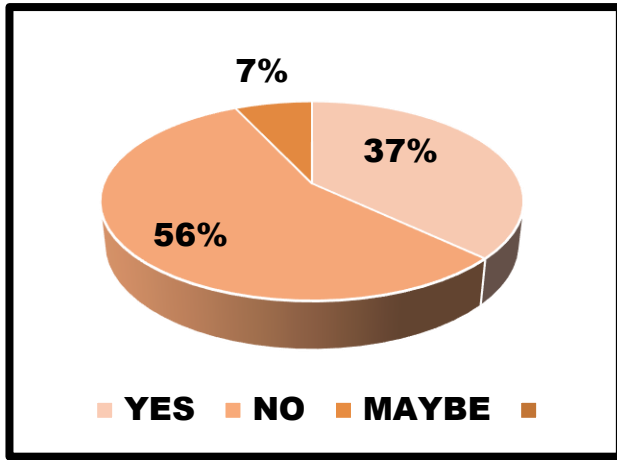
### **Data Analysis & Interpretation**

Multilingualism is a fairly prevalent occurrence in India than monolingualism. Most of the Indian language have multiple dialects. As such it is quite a challenge to select which regional language should be the medium of education. Primary schooling in a child's mother tongue, as recommended in the new National Education Policy, enhances learning, increase learner involvement and lessen the number of dropouts,

The study shows that most Youngsters at the time of starting school have some capability in more than one language as they have grown up bilingual or multilingual from an early stage at home. In some cases, Children can acquire three or more languages in their childhood years. Furthermore, with adequate impetus, experience, proper study, and prospects for training, they can eventually be successful in achieving ability to communicate in numerous languages. Nevertheless, in spite of misconceptions about youngsters being able to learn new languages fast, language skills cannot always be acquired during the early years. Research shows that learning a language usually takes time. The period of learning and the ultimate results of second and third language acquisition depends on a number of factors.

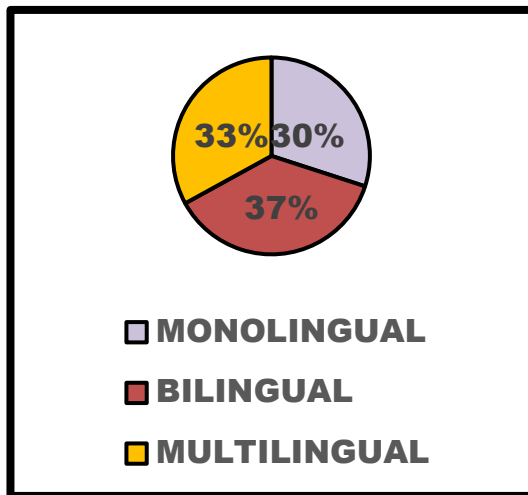
Due to global mobility and migration Multilingual classrooms have become the norm around the world. Within these classrooms, students may have different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, may speak one language at home and another language at school, or be learning the language of instruction as an additional language.

**FIGURE 1**  
Do You Support the Multilingual Approach to Education?



56% Respondents support the Multilingual Approach to Education, 37 % said they don't.

**FIGURE 2**

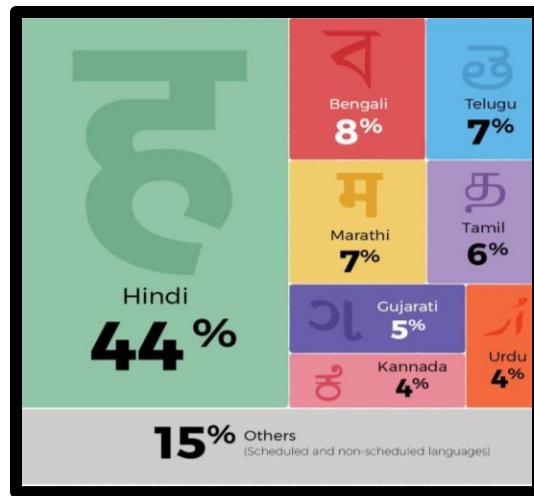


33% Respondents were Multilingual, 37% were Bilingual & 30% of them were Monolingual.

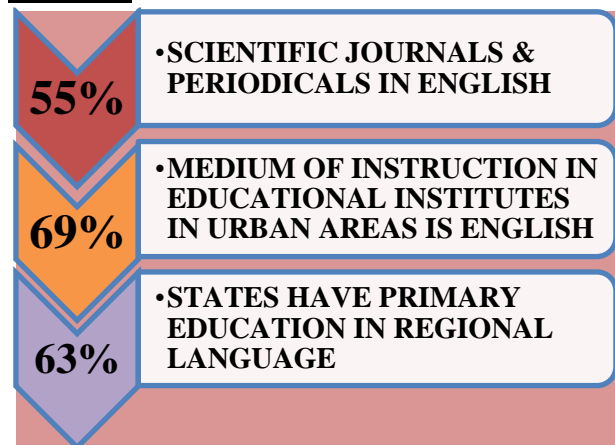
Research reveals that even though Hindi is considered the Dominant Language of India, English is regarded as a Link Language and is 'gaining popularity'. Furthermore, at a time when English is the most spoken Non-Native Language and also the second Most Spoken Language in India, after Hindi; the practical need to learn it, cannot be disregarded.

**Most Spoken Languages In India By Native Speakers**

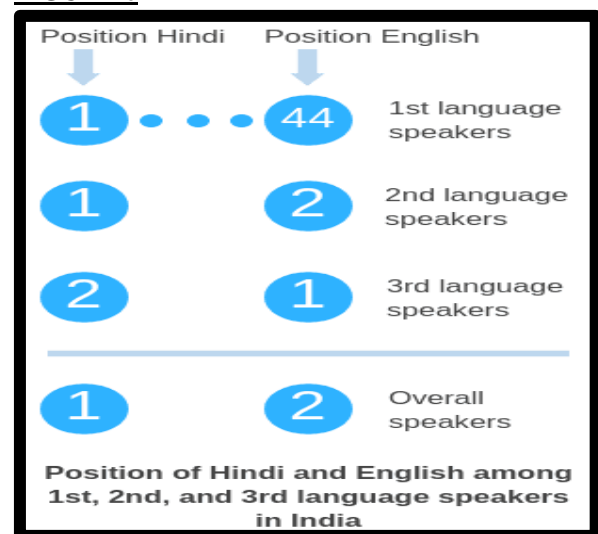
**FIGURE 4**



**FIGURE 5**



**FIGURE 6**



Studies show that multilingual people have a better chance of being successful in life.

**Advantages Of Multilingualism & Language Learning:**

▪ **Improves Analytical Skills**

One of the key advantages of acquiring a new language is Improved Analytical Skills which has a positive result on one’s psychological wellbeing. Studies show that the inception of Alzheimer’s and other mental illness can be delayed by learning a new language. It also improves the capabilities of the brain as it learns to distinguish and differentiate between diverse language structures, which enhances its problem-solving ability. Students who are bilingual perform better on homogenous assessments than their monolingual peers.

Language learning augments one’s retaining power, the studies also illustrate that people knowing two languages are better at recalling instructions and data. The reason being, learning a language comprises of remembering terminology and grammatical structures. Experts say these efforts will definitely enhance the inclusive retention as they reinforce the psychological capacities.

▪ **Enriches Personal Life**

Multilingualism also enhances one’s individual life. Visiting foreign countries can be more pleasant if one knows the language and there is no linguistic barrier. Learning a second language helps to bond and mingle with people from across the world. It helps to understand the social variances and why those differences occur. One can also learn the significance of appreciating different cultures. It encourages harmony and develops open-mindedness, crucial in multiethnic cultures.

▪ **Expands Career Opportunities**

Learning a new language can be beneficial for a person’s professional success. Acquiring a new language is important for working in a corporation dealing with global customers, or if one wants to expand their business overseas.

Knowing the language of the market one wants to operate aids in building and sustaining healthy associations with consumers.

**Disadvantages Of Multilingualism**

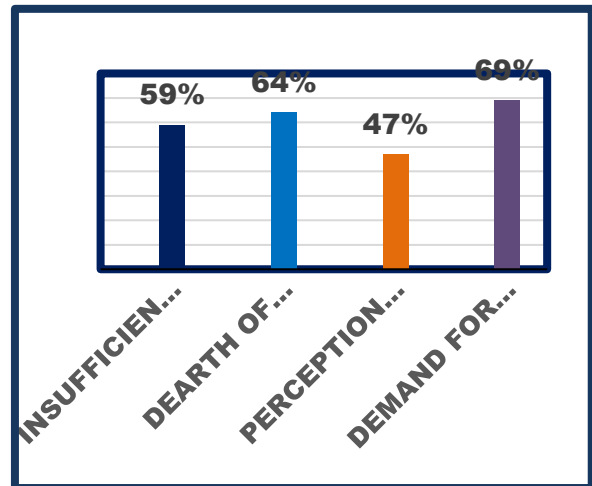
Multilingualism can be a problem at Higher Education Level in India due to lack of Common National Language. Prominence given to Hindi is opposed by non-Hindi speakers. There is a dearth of Scientific and Technological Educational Resources in Regional Languages. Learners with education in Regional Languages will not be able work in any other state or country. Children of parents with transferable jobs will have difficult time coping with different regional language medium schools. Job opportunities in MNCs will be difficult for Graduates with Regional Language Education.

The choice to encourage regional language in Higher Education will restrict the hiring decisions of the Leading

Institutes. They will be obligated to contemplate language expertise as a main condition as opposed to subject matter proficiency. They will have to stop employing candidates from the international talent pool for teaching. Moreover, a regional language focus would not be effective in Leading Institutes like IIT or IIM where learners from across the country apply.

**Reasons For Not Implementing Teaching In Regional Languages In Higher Educational Institutes.**

**FIGURE 3**



**CONCLUSION**

There is a popular misunderstanding that young children can acquire a second or additional language faster than older children. Experts say learning a new language is not, as easy as it seems, one might need a lot of efforts and time to do so. Therefore, the assumption that some basic training for learning a second language is enough for a young child to be proficient, is incorrect. Such youngsters may be better equipped for school education, but definitely need continuing sustenance to attain appropriate skill in First as well as Second language.

Quite a number of parents, educationalists and bureaucrats wrongly believe that if a youngster is motivated to study a second or supplementary languages then their first language learning will be hampered. The study reveals that some youngsters can learn multiple languages in their childhood, which can provide them a lot of opportunities and advantages. These youngsters develop various kinds of reasoning skills at a younger age compared to the kids with only one language skills.

India is a multilingual country with various caste and clans living together. The idea is not to remove variety and make the whole system a homogeneous one. The status of importance given to the link languages like English cannot be ignored. Language after all is a medium of interaction and this purpose has to be served. Therefore, learning these languages is

important. But when a child first steps into a school, education should not be presented like an alien object delivered in an alien language, then the desire to listen and learn disappears at the very outset. Therefore, familiarization is very important.

The NEP 2020 strongly advocates Multilingualism and the power of teaching in regional languages in educational institutions. Today, an individual can learn a foreign language in just a span of three months but have never probably written an alphabet in his/her own mother tongue. This is not desired. Most Indians are gifted as they can be multilingual. Most Indians are multilingual first through contact and then through education. Education therefore should help retain the multiplicity rather than erasing it.

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