Enhancing Global Competence Through English Language Proficiency: Insights From NEP 2020 And Educational Reforms

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Abstract:

The National Education Policy (NEP) of 2020 in India emphasizes a comprehensive and multilingual learning experience, marking a paradigm shift in the national educational system. This paper addresses the influence of NEP 2020 on English language proficiency, which has become essential for professional and academic achievement in today's globalized world. This study investigates the approaches and initiatives offered by NEP 2020 to improve English language proficiency among students, taking into account the socio-cultural and economic considerations. The overall approach acknowledges the value of English as a means of success while promoting multilingualism through a flexible and diverse educational framework. Apart from that, it explores the potential impact of such measures on enhancing students' global competence, preparing them for a competitive and integrated world. This study investigates how the NEP 2020 and related educational reforms intend to boost global competence through better English language abilities. The study examines policy documents, curriculum modifications, and pedagogical practices to highlight significant initiatives such as multilingual education, interpersonal skills promotion, Assessment and Evaluation Reforms and the use of technology in language learning. It investigates how these reforms affect students' abilities to engage in global representations, gain access to international resources, and effectively participate in a globalized economy. The findings indicate that while NEP 2020 is an important step toward improving English proficiency, its successful implementation will be dependent on resolving issues like teacher preparation, resource allocation, and regional disparities in society.

Key words: National Education Policy-2020, English Proficiency, language education,

Introduction:

The concept of proficiency governs both the fundamental principles and the daily activities of language learners. The formal teaching of English in different learning environments has culminated in distinct pedagogical approaches and curriculum focuses. When addressing English as a subject in schools, the phrase "English language proficiency" is rarely used because it typically suggests that students are speaking English as their first language. Rather, it is usually applied to students who already know one or more languages when they are learning English. In professional and academic settings, the phrase "language proficiency" usually implies linguistic additionality in terms of aptitude or competence. Proficiency does not exist in and of itself outside of an educational or training program or an assessment system. It corresponds to something made by authorised individuals to mark a standard for evaluation that is used to determine whether learning or schooling outcomes are met or exceeded in performance. Traditionally, designing a curriculum that incorporates learning outcome directives is used to bring about this process. According to Stenhouse (1975; also see Bourdieu and Passeron 1977), the curriculum's contents, which figure out teaching-learning strategies, should represent the selection of certain aspects from a valued culture. When considered in this context, the concept of language proficiency is essentially a construct generated by language education experts who proclaim to be practitioners in defining the subject matter of course content and the standards by which student performance is assessed.

Since independence of India, education in the English language has played a significant role in all of the country's educational initiatives. The first post-independence education policy in India, the National Policy on Education (1968), was based on a three-language formula that included English education in schools. National Policy on Education 1986 asserted the recommendations of National Policy on Education 1968 on the three-language formula and English education (NPE, 1986). Subsequently, NEP 2020 reflects a dramatic shift in how English is taught in schools. It aims to encourage learners to think and speak in both English and their local language (NEP, 2020). NEP 2020 recommends that Indian languages be taught alongside English and other foreign languages.

The goal of the NEP is to promote Indian languages through everyday use, the development of educational resources, preparation for teachers, the use of mother tongues as the primary language of instruction, creative approaches, ethical technology use, and the cultivation of an optimistic outlook on all languages and their remarkable unity. NEP also recommends teaching Indian Sign Language, including regional versions, to the hearing-impaired people in order to empower them linguistically.

What is Language Proficiency :

Language is a need for interpersonal interaction in the worldwide community. In order to communicate with others, people require language. As per Jendra (Jendra, 2010, p. 1) language is adopted solely by humans for communication. It indicates that most people require language to communicate with one another. The ability of an individual to utilise a language correctly and successfully in a variety of situations is referred to as language proficiency. It necessitates a variety of linguistic abilities, including as speaking, writing, listening, and reading. There is a broad range of proficiency, from basic communication abilities to sophisticated and subtle language use.

The simplest way for determining proficiency is using a scale that has four categories: beginner, intermediate, advanced, and occasionally further subdivided into individual levels within each category. Common frameworks to establish proficiency in language include the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and the proficiency recommendations developed by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL).

Being proficient in a language involves more than just understanding syntax and vocabulary; it also requires one to be ready to recognize idiomatic phrases, cultural nuances, and how to effectively use language in everyday contexts. A person's proficiency level influences a number of personal and professional elements of life, including social interactions, occupation, travel, and education. Many language learners strive to improve their proficiency so that they can converse more effectively with native speakers of the language and improve their ability to interact with them.

Languages in School Education

- India's linguistic variety requires diversity in schools as well.
- Schools in India are crucial to the preservation of multilingualism.
- It is unnecessary to explain why the New Education Policy (NEP) gives languages in schools such a high priority.
- The promotion of all Indian languages and mother tongues, regardless of their status, has been effectively targeted by NEP 2020.
- For the same reason, NEP suggests that four-year integrated B.Ed. Programmes be used to train qualified teachers.

NEP 2020 emphasizes on

- Developing teaching abilities and using technology to increase learning outcomes and pleasure.
- The preservation of the three-language formula in educational institutions, as well as the implementation of bilingual and trilingual teaching and learning methods.
- Impart knowledge and study classical languages such as Odia, Malayalam, Kannada, Tamil, Telugu, and Sanskrit.

- Efforts to provide foreign language courses and prepare excellent bilingual text books in Indian languages.

- Established innovative pedagogical resources and launched online language courses at various proficiency levels.

- Use translation and technology to improve the language learning experience.

Important recommendation of NEP 2020 for English language:

- In order to encourage understanding of global culture and heritage, education in English will be provided at the secondary level.

- NEP 2020 encourages the constructivist approach of English language learning. The students will therefore be prepared to think and speak in English.

- It is expected of learners to develop holistically, which includes learning English in a variety of contexts.

- Schools will get financial help to strengthen English, Hindi, regional languages, Social Science, Science, and Mathematics curriculum.

- Furthermore, there is a need to enhance teaching of the English language by prioritizing conversational and interactive abilities.

- It is necessary to elevate English grammar, literature, and vocabulary.

- NEP 2020 places a strong emphasis on multilingualism in addition to English.

- A multidisciplinary approach is incorporated. Equal emphasis is placed on social science, science, math, language, art, and sports.

- Online education will provide learners with assistance during epidemic situations. English is prioritized for promotion in necessary and practical contexts since it is commonly used as a teaching medium in online education.

- English language learning emphasizes inquiry-based and project-based approaches.

Implications of NEP 2020 on English Language Proficiency:

1. Emphasis on Multilingualism:

Multilingualism is defined as the ability to communicate in more than two languages (Chaer and Agustine, 2004: 85). In certain ways, multilingual communities include English-language learners. A community that speaks and communicates in more than two languages is said to be multilingual. Holmes (2013:76) defines multilingualism as the ability to communicate in more than one language for a specific purpose. NEP 2020 encourages a multilingual approach in education as a means of preserving and enhancing India's rich language diversity. Even while this approach encourages the use of regional languages in early education, questions are raised about how it may affect English language proficiency.

2. Early Language Exposure:

With the primary focus on early childhood care and education, the policy promotes a flexible and interdisciplinary approach to education. Studies might look at the long-term effects of early exposure to several languages, including English, on language acquisition as well as proficiency.

3. Assessment and Evaluation Reforms:

NEP 2020 proposes changing the assessment and evaluation system to prioritize critical thinking and creative thinking. Studies may look into how these changes affect English language assessments and whether they contribute to a more comprehensive evaluation of language proficiency.

4. Integration of Technology:

The policy places a high priority on incorporating technology into the classroom. Studies might look into the effects of internet-based and technology-assisted educational materials on English language proficiency and teaching. Especially in locations where traditional resources may be limited. The most effective way to learn English is through technological advancement, which includes computer use, e-learning materials, technical support for student activities, and ICT integration (Laxmankumar, 2022).

5. Teacher Training and Professional Development:

The need of continuous professional development and teacher training is made explicit in NEP 2020. Research may look into how well-equipped teachers are to teach English and whether professional development programmes have a beneficial effect on the standard of the teaching of English.

6. Globalisation and Communication Skills:

In daily interactions, people have the option of which language to use to speak with each other. Grosjean (1982:127) asserts that people's everyday language use varies continually with their interactions with others. People require a specific language to communicate with one another because not everyone understands them. As a result, many people settle to converse in a particular language in order to ensure that the other person understands what they are saying. Because of how interconnected the globe has become, speaking English well is often connected with improved communication abilities. Studies might investigate if the NEP 2020 adaptations help students become more proficient communicators in English and get ready for opportunities around the globe.

7. Implications for Higher Education:

The policy proposes modifications to higher education, such as a more adaptable undergraduate curriculum. Researchers may look into whether these changes effectively prepare students for the global job market and how they improve English language proficiency at the higher education level. It's important to remember that these possible effects are hypothetical and that the actual results may differ depending on how the policy is implemented and other external variables. Researchers as well as educators would need to undertake empirical research and accumulate data in order to draw more precise conclusions on the implications of NEP 2020 on English Language Proficiency.

Approaches and initiatives offered by NEP 2020 to improve English Language Proficiency:

Early Language Learning:

NEP 2020 encourages the implementation of a flexible, multilingual strategy at the basic level. Up to at least Grade 5, it is expected that children would learn in their mother tongue or a regional language. In order to encourage better language skill development, there is a focus on teaching a second language, such as English, from an early age. Kour (2022) critically explores the relationship between language education in India and the NEP 2020. He discussed the importance that language plays in curriculum and pedagogy within the context of NEP 2020.

The Three Language Formula and Multilingualism:

According to the policy, students should learn three languages: their mother tongue or native speech, a second language (which may include English), and a third language. This method seeks to facilitate English proficiency while fostering multilingualism and cross-cultural understanding. Sharma (2021) pointed out India's multilingualism and linguistic challenges, as well as how the NEP 2020 was essential to the holistic development of children from elementary school to higher education. Ray (2021) explored the various aspects of multilingualism. She assessed the impact of the Multilingual Approach on Indian education and the education of young people. She has gone into more detail about the advantages and disadvantages of multilingualism.

Emphasis on Communication Ability:

NEP 2020 emphasizes the improvement of communication abilities in a variety of languages, including English. The main goal is to ensure that students can express themselves comfortably and effectively in both written and spoken English. Varghese and Devi (2022) looked into the equation of three languages to examine how language fulfils the three functions of humans: determining one's personality, validating societal unity, and enhancing regulatory proficiency.

Integration of Technology:

The policy encourages the use of technology in the classroom. This involves taking advantage of internet resources and digital tools to improve language acquisition, possibly giving students access to a range of interactive learning activities and English language content.

Professional Development for Teachers:

NEP 2020 acknowledges the value of continuous professional development and training for teachers. It promotes the development of curriculum that give teachers the resources they need to effectively teach languages, including English. This could contribute to improving English language proficiency in education. In the classroom, the teacher employs technology to some extent. It brings about improvements. Additionally, it aids students in developing their knowledge and comprehending the subject with enthusiasm. In order to increase language abilities for English language proficiency, National Education Policy 2020 supports using ICT resources in addition to mother tongue, local language, or regional language as the medium of teaching.

Curriculum and Technology Flexibility:

The policy advocates curriculum and pedagogy to be more adaptable and focused on the needs of the learner. Because of this flexibility, teachers may be able to modify language instruction—including English language teaching—to fit the needs and skill levels of specific students. Kukreti (2020) drew attention to the language learning approach in the NEP 2020. The study evaluated the role of NEP 2020 and the importance of English in the teaching and learning system. Although NEP 2020 focuses a major emphasis on encouraging multilingualism and the nation's indigenous languages, it appears to fall short of addressing the need for a bridging language that may produce more employable youth.

English Integration in Higher Education:

NEP 2020 will bring about changes in higher education, including a shift toward a more interdisciplinary and holistic approach. The strategy aims to ensure that universities provide students with opportunities to enhance their language proficiency, as it is widely believed that proficiency in English is a prerequisite for success in both academic and professional settings.

Programmes for Study Abroad and Global Exposure:

The policy encourages students' exposure to the globe, including study abroad options. As students immerse themselves in the language, it is anticipated that this exposure will improve their English language proficiency.

Conclusion:

English continues to be the language of prestige. People who see Hindi or other regional languages as a means of upward mobility, as well as those who know English well and whose privileged position requires mastery of it, reject efforts to switch. Foreign students, particularly those from non-English speaking countries, may struggle to participate in and understand lectures due to their inadequate command of the language (Ramsay, Barker, & Jones, 1999; Selvadurai, 1998). The advancement of technology and economy depends on a broad understanding of English. The percentage of people who are fully fluent in English is just about 3%. Many members of tribes speak two languages. Bilingual people from rural to urban areas usually speak both their local dialect and the regional standard language. Diverse languages are frequently associated with distinct traditions, attire, cuisine, and modes of cultural expression including music and dance. Regional languages including Telugu, Bengali, Punjabi, and Marathi have grown largely standardised from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and are now administered for the majority of administrative, economic, and social interactions within their respective states. Among the Free Websites for Learning English are MOOCS, SWAYAM, and NAPTEL. India's NEP 2020 seeks to improve the country's educational sector as a whole. Its influence on English language proficiency can differ despite its emphasis on a multidisciplinary and holistic approach. The development of curriculum, training of teachers, and implications will all be significant factors in the results of language acquisition.

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