Revitalizing Indigenous Languages: Analyzing Key Factors and Strategies in the Context of NEP 2020

Sheetal Sharma

Research Scholar, Department of Educational Studies, Central University of Jammu.

Dr. Yad Ram

Assistant Professor, Department of Educational Studies, Central University of Jammu

Abstract:

Particularly given the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 in India, the preservation and promotion of indigenous languages have received much emphasis. Drawing on recent reviews and studies, this article thoroughly examines forces influencing native languages. Recognizing their cultural and educational value, NEP 2020 emphasizes the need for multilingual instruction and mother tongue use in early education. Still, putting these measures in place runs into issues, including regional differences, limited resources, and societal views. The most important elements affecting indigenous languages are discussed in this study, along with suggestions for their renovation. Carrying for centuries the knowledge and customs of societies, indigenous languages are necessary for preserving identity and cultural heritage. Still, modernization, dominant languages, and globalization pose growing challenges. NEP 2020 notes that to promote social cohesion and cultural diversity, indigenous languages have to be preserved and encouraged. For the vitality of indigenous languages, social factors, including intergenerational transmission, social mobility, and community attitudes, are vital. Their survival depends in part on educational aspects, including multilingual learning based on first language. Problems to solve include appropriate curricula, trained teachers, and a lack of resources. NEP 2020 offers a structure for capacity building, community involvement, and inclusive language policies. Although there are challenges, such as scarce resources and opposition to change, chances for cooperation and creativity will help to drive the revival of indigenous languages. By attending to historical, social, and educational variables and using chances found in current studies, one can help to give a ground for bringing indigenous languages back to life.

Keywords: Indigenous languages, NEP 2020, Multilingual education, Language preservation, Cultural heritage.

Introduction

By stressing the conservation and promotion of indigenous languages, the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 has set a landmark for the educational scene of India. These tongues are vital for maintaining identity and culture since they convey the information and traditions of communities. Still, their survival is seriously threatened by modernization, major languages, and globalization. This study seeks to investigate the most significant factors influencing indigenous languages and proposes ideas for their revival in the framework of NEP 2020. Particularly during their early years, the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 stresses instruction in children's mother tongue or local language. This strategy seeks to improve

educational, cognitive, and emotional growth and deepen their knowledge of their cultural background. Knowledge in a known language enhances understanding, communication, and identity.For countless generations, the vibrant cultural heritage of India has been deeply rooted in its indigenous languages. These native tongues have been much more than just a means of communication—they have been the lifeblood of tradition, knowledge, and shared values, passed lovingly from one generation to the next. They have acted as a bridge, connecting the present to a rich past.

The multilingual education focus in NEP 2020 bridges the gap between regional languages and academics, fostering inclusivity, cultural preservation, and linguistic proficiency. This approach empowers students with strong foundations in their mother tongues while preparing them for global success.**(Satish Dhokare, 2023).**The TEK-nology pilot project showcases how Indigenous communities used digital platforms to create language learning videos during COVID-19. This initiative highlights the power of community-led, immersive approaches to promote equitable multilingual education practices.**(Paul J. Meighan,2022).**The policy emphasizes increasing public education spending to 6% of GDP to achieve educational excellence and economic growth. It aims to ensure inclusive, high-quality education by supporting access, safety, and opportunities for underprivileged children.**(Davinder Kour, 2022).**Language revival efforts in India highlight the resilience of communities and the cultural value of linguistic diversity. By embracing education, technology, and policy support, indigenous languages are being preserved and celebrated as vital aspects of India's heritage and identity.**(Biswajit Chakraborty, 2023).**

However, the tides of history haven't been kind to many of these languages. The colonial era, followed by the relentless wave of globalization, pushed numerous indigenous languages to the sidelines, leaving them struggling for survival. Many are now teetering on the edge of extinction. But this isn't just India's story; it's a global crisis. According to UNESCO, nearly 3,000 languages worldwide are at risk of fading away, with Nigerian languages among the most vulnerable. The loss of a language is not just the disappearance of words—it's the erosion of identity, culture, and collective memory.

The Importance of Education in a Child's First Language

➤ Enhanced Learning and Comprehension: When children are taught in their mother tongue, they are able to grasp complex concepts more effectively. This familiarity with the language creates a strong foundation for their academic journey, as it allows them to process and retain information more easily. By using their first language for instruction, children feel a sense of comfort and security that encourages active participation and deeper understanding, paving the way for long-term educational success.

➤ Promoting Cognitive Growth: Learning in a language that children are already comfortable with significantly aids in the development of their cognitive skills. From critical thinking and problem-solving to fostering creativity, education in their mother tongue empowers children to express themselves more fluently. This approach nurtures their intellectual growth, helping them become more adept at analysing situations and generating innovative ideas.

➢ Strengthening Communication Skills: Using a child's first language as the medium of instruction plays a vital role in building their overall communication abilities. It enhances their proficiency in both spoken and written forms of the language, boosting their self-confidence and aiding in their holistic development. Confident communication, in turn, prepares them to interact effectively within their communities and beyond.

➢ Fostering a Connection to Cultural Roots: Educating children in their parents' language helps them develop a strong sense of pride in their cultural heritage. This connection to their roots not only allows them to preserve traditions but also instills a sense of belonging and identity. By embracing their linguistic and cultural heritage, children gain a deeper appreciation for their ancestry, which strengthens their self-esteem and cultural awareness. Although boosting indigenous languages is recognized, little is known about AI's part in preserving minority languages. To maintain dying languages and improve society development and digital communication, this chapter supports ethical AI integration.**Suman, A. K. (2025)**described that the Calcutta Sanskrit College, established during the colonial era in India, embodies both the strength and fragility of native education under colonial rule.

➢ The institution's function in balancing forced colonial knowledge systems with traditional Sanskrit learning is discussed in this article, which shows a complicated story of resistance and adaptation. Although there was pressure to support Western education, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar's life showcases his remarkable resilience and adaptability. Despite numerous challenges, he persevered and left a lasting legacy of strength and inspiration. The path of the College brings out the subtle interaction among cooperation, opposition, and adjustment, therefore changing Bengal's mental scene in the nineteenth century.

Social Factors Influencing Indigenous Languages

The survival and growth of indigenous languages rely heavily on key social factors such as intergenerational transmission, community attitudes, and the opportunities for social mobility they provide. Recognizing this, the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 emphasizes the importance of preserving and promoting native languages as a means to foster social unity and celebrate cultural diversity.

Research by **Hassan K. M. (2025)** delves into the impact of native languages on the academic performance of North-Eastern Nigerian Federal Polytechnic students, particularly in English-related studies. The study, involving National Diploma students, employs a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches to gather insights. It finds that while native languages provide cultural depth, their prominence can negatively affect students' performance in English. To address this, the research advocates for interactive English teaching methods that enhance engagement and support Stephen Krashen's theory of effective input being crucial for language acquisition. This study has meaningful implications for educators, students, curriculum designers, and language researchers.Meanwhile, **Emodi B. C. (2025)** explores language preferences among students and finds that English remains the most favoured language in schools, with Nigerian indigenous languages following suit. However, the role of native languages at home remains significant. Parents who encourage the use of indigenous

languages at home and advocate for their inclusion as school subjects believe this not only benefits their children's cultural and intellectual growth but also enhances their communication skills and future career prospects. Indigenous languages are seen as an anchor for cultural pride and a bridge to stronger cognitive development.The findings underline an essential truthwhile English dominates academic settings, indigenous languages hold an irreplaceable place in shaping identity, fostering intellectual growth, and preserving cultural heritage. A delicate balance between global and local languages could ensure that neither is lost but instead coexist to enrich communities.

Educational Considerations for Preserving Indigenous Languages

Education plays a pivotal role in ensuring the survival of indigenous languages. Particularly during early childhood, the use of first languages in education has been recognized as essential. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 emphasizes a multilingual approach to learning, which incorporates native languages to establish a strong foundation. However, this vision requires the availability of trained teachers, adequate resources, and well-designed curricula to make it a reality.**Aisha Kakembo et al. (2024)** argue that preserving indigenous languages is critical for maintaining cultural diversity and safeguarding distinct perspectives of the world. Community-driven efforts, educational initiatives, and advancements in digital technology have greatly contributed to language revival projects. Collaborative efforts involving community members, linguists, businesses, and innovative digital tools—such as mobile apps and social media—have had a profound impact. By integrating traditional methods with modern technology, these initiatives have successfully strengthened language learning and documentation, ensuring the voices of marginalized communities contribute to the global cultural heritage.The story of Kokborok, the language of the Borok people, beautifully illustrates this balance. As Dr. Pritilata **Debbarma (2024**) highlights, Kokborok remains a cornerstone of the Borok heritage despite the challenges posed by urbanization and globalization. The community has embraced innovative approaches, utilizing digital platforms, social media, and bilingual education to preserve and promote their language. This blend of traditional values with modern tools ensures that Kokborok continues to thrive, carrying its cultural significance into future generations.**Horna-Saldaña (2025)** sheds light on the role of artificial intelligence in creating digital tools that enrich the experiences of native-speaking communities. The preservation of endangered languages benefits greatly from interdisciplinary collaborations involving journalists, anthropologists, translators, and technologists. AI-powered multilingual models provide new opportunities to document and revitalize these languages, offering improved access to education and digital inclusion while honouring the cultural context of native populations.Similarly, **Salas P. E. R. et al. (2025)** underscore the importance of incorporating native languages in communication strategies. During Mexico's 2018–2024 administration, a communication campaign was launched using infographics in analog and digital formats to engage indigenous communities. A review of 82 infographics revealed that around 45% were translated into regional native languages, with most addressing critical public health topics like SARS-CoV-2. Thisresearch highlights how effective

communication in native languages plays a crucial role in empowering indigenous communities and ensuring they remain informed and protected.

The collective insights from these studies emphasize a clear lesson: education, when rooted in indigenous languages, is not only a tool for preserving linguistic heritage but also a bridge to cultural empowerment and resilience. By leveraging both traditional and modern methods, we can ensure that indigenous languages continue to thrive in an ever-evolving world.

Challenges in Revitalizing Indigenous Languages under NEP 2020

Lack of Trained Educators

One of the primary challenges is the shortage of skilled teachers proficient in indigenous languages. Training educators to teach complex subjects in these languages requires significant investment, which many regions may lack. Without such efforts, the quality of education in indigenous languages can suffer.

Insufficient Resources and Infrastructure

The development of learning materials such as textbooks, teaching aids, and digital resources in indigenous languages is often limited. Many indigenous languages lack standardized scripts or written records, making curriculum design and resource development even more complicated.

Language Diversity

India's linguistic diversity, with thousands of indigenous languages and dialects, poses a major challenge. Selecting languages to prioritize for revitalization and creating a standardized educational framework can lead to difficulties, particularly when some communities feel overlooked or marginalized.

Social Stigma and Parental Preferences

English continues to dominate as the language associated with upward social mobility and career opportunities. Many parents prefer their children to learn in English rather than in their native language, believing it provides better prospects. This attitude often undermines efforts to promote indigenous languages in education.

Urbanization and Globalization

The rapid pace of urbanization and globalization has led to the diminishing use of indigenous languages, especially among younger generations. Digital platforms and mainstream media predominantly operate in dominant languages, further reducing the visibility of native tongues.

Balancing Tradition with Innovation

While digital tools and AI-powered platforms offer potential solutions, integrating these technologies with traditional methods of language learning remains a complex task. Ensuring that these tools respect cultural nuances and are accessible to rural and underprivileged communities is another significant challenge.

Community Engagement and Awareness

For language revitalization to succeed, active involvement of communities is essential. However, lack of awareness about the importance of preserving their linguistic heritage can lead to apathy. Encouraging communities to take ownership of these efforts requires persistent outreach and engagement.

Funding and Political Will

Reviving indigenous languages often requires substantial funding for teacher training, material development, and technological initiatives. Securing consistent government support and maintaining political will in the face of competing priorities can be a significant hurdle.

While NEP 2020 lays a strong foundation for preserving linguistic diversity, addressing these challenges will require a collective effort. Governments, educators, linguists, technology developers, and communities must work together to create an environment where indigenous languages thrive, ensuring that future generations remain connected to their cultural roots.

Strategies for Overcoming Challenges in Revitalizing Indigenous Languages

Empowering Educators

To overcome the shortage of trained teachers, we can prioritize capacity-building programs for educators. These programs should focus on equipping teachers with the skills to effectively teach in indigenous languages. Offering incentives such as scholarships for teacher training in native languages can inspire more individuals to take up this critical role.

Creating Accessible Learning Resources

Developing textbooks, storybooks, and digital resources in indigenous languages is key. Collaborations with linguists, educators, and community members can ensure these materials are culturally appropriate and relevant. Incorporating local folklore, traditions, and stories into the curriculum adds authenticity and keeps the language alive in young minds.

Embracing Linguistic Diversity

Instead of prioritizing a few languages, efforts must be inclusive. Governments can implement region-specific strategies that cater to the linguistic diversity of each area. Community consultations and participation can ensure no language feels left behind.

Changing Attitudes and Raising Awareness

Public awareness campaigns can highlight the importance of preserving indigenous languages for cultural identity and intellectual growth. Schools can organize cultural events, debates, and storytelling sessions in native tongues to make these languages more appealing to students and parents. Celebrating bilingualism as a strength rather than a disadvantage can shift attitudes.

Leveraging Digital Technology

Modern tools like language-learning apps, online dictionaries, and AI-powered platforms can play a massive role in reviving endangered languages. Social media campaigns in indigenous languages and gamified learning experiences can make language learning more engaging for younger generations.

Encouraging Community Participation

Involving local communities is essential for sustainable language revival. Storytelling sessions by elders, cultural workshops, and community-based language classes can foster a sense of ownership. When families and communities unite to speak and celebrate their languages, the chances of revival increase manifold.

Integrating Indigenous Languages into Mainstream Education

Making indigenous languages a mandatory subject in early education can help children learn their heritage alongside other subjects. Schools can promote multilingualism by offering courses that balance indigenous languages with globally dominant languages like English.

Policy Support and Funding

Governments must allocate dedicated funds to language preservation initiatives. This includes funding for teacher training, developing resources, and promoting technology-driven solutions. Long-term policy commitments that prioritize linguistic diversity can provide the foundation needed for sustained efforts.

Blending Tradition with Innovation

Using modern tools while respecting traditional teaching methods ensures a balanced approach. For example, elders can share oral traditions while younger members document and share them digitally, ensuring a lasting legacy.

Recognizing Language as Heritage

Framing indigenous languages as a national treasure can inspire pride and responsibility. When people see these languages as a source of cultural richness and uniqueness, they are more likely to invest in preserving them.

By combining these strategies with empathy and collaboration, we can create a world where indigenous languages thrive, connecting us to our past while enriching our present and future.

Conclusion

Preserving and promoting indigenous languages is crucial for maintaining cultural diversity and fostering social harmony. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 provides a solid foundation to achieve these objectives. However, its success relies on addressing cultural attitudes, regional differences, and resource limitations. By capitalizing on opportunities identified in current research and considering historical, social, and educational aspects, we can support the revival of local languages in India.Encouraging communities to embrace their linguistic heritage and providing resources for language education will ensure that these languages thrive for future generations. Additionally, creating platforms for indigenous languages in media, literature, and digital content can further strengthen their presence in modern society. Embracing and preserving our linguistic heritage not only enriches our cultural tapestry but also empowers communities to connect with their roots and take pride in their identity. Through collective efforts, we can ensure that the beauty and wisdom embedded in these languages continue to flourish.

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