

Attitudes Toward English as a Global Language in India: Ideologies, Aspirations, and Educational Implications

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Abstract - English plays a special role in India as an international language that is linked to economic mobility, social status, and international connectivity, and at the same time, raises issues related to the linguistic inequality, culture marginalization, and education stratification. English is both a language and also a resource in the multilingual and postcolonial context of India where it serves as a regulating means of communication as well as being a strong, social, and symbolic tool. This paper is an analysis of the attitude of using English language as a global language in India by incorporating perceptions of sociolinguistics, language policy and educational research. The study uses a mixed-methods approach to conduct research using both quantitative survey and qualitative approaches to semi-structured interviews and national policy documents that are considered relevant to this field of research. In such a manner, the English perception is explored in a subtle way in terms of various social, regional, and educational settings. According to the quantitative results, the instrumental orientation towards English is evident as the respondents only demonstrated a high level of connection of the English proficiency with the employability, academic achievement, and international engagement. Meanwhile, qualitative evidence also points to the presence of ambivalent attitudes, such as the fears of the marginalization of indigenous and regional languages, disproportional access to good education in English, and the tension with identity. As the results reveal, attitudes toward English in India are marked with a simultaneous impression of inspiration and anxiety as it is a representation of greater contradiction existing in globalization and multilingual societies. In as much as English is the language of opportunity, its supremacy upholds social inequalities and language dominances. At the end of the study, it is concluded that there is a need to implement language policies and pedagogical strategies that would strike the right balance between English learning and significant emphasis on multilingual education that would allow promoting equity, inclusivity, and linguistic justice in India.

Keywords - English as a global language, language attitudes, India, multilingualism, language ideology.

I Introduction

The English language has become the lingua franca of the world and it influences communication in fields of international business, higher education, scientific research and digital media. Its leadership in the world is also significantly tied to historical events including the process of colonialism, economic globalization, and the technological progress (Crystal, 2003; Graddol, 2006). The proliferation of English in post-colonial countries such as India is not only a linguistic process but a very social and political one, which lies in the legacies of the British colonial rule, nation-building after independence, and a more recent desire to become a part of the global world. In contrast to most situations where English is used as the only foreign language, India is a multifaceted sociolinguistic ecology where English is used as an associate official

language, medium of education, and indicator of socioeconomic status (Kachru, 1986; Mohanty, 2015).

The English role in India is not restricted to the communicative aspects of power but encompassed the symbolic and material facets of power as well. Most people tend to believe that English proficiency equates to modernity, intelligence and professional competence especially in urban and corporate environments. Because of this, English is commonly viewed as a prerequisite to employability and higher education, as well as the ability to work in the global labor market (Vaish, 2008; Proctor, 2014). English is a ladder of social mobility and economic safety to a lot of students and parents, mostly those belonging to the marginalized or lower-middle-income group. This strategic inclination towards English resulted in the high admiration of English-value system of education even at the areas where native language is the most commonly spoken language (Ramanathan, 2005; NCERT, 2006).

Meanwhile, not every attitude towards English in India is even positively-minded. Opponents of this trend suggest that the supremacy of English language supports already existing social inequities since good quality English education is obtained by elite groups at an early age and over a prolonged period (Phillipson, 1992; Pennycook, 1994). The growth of the English-language schooling has frequently been notorious at the cost of the regional languages, and it has led to the issue of the linguistic marginalization and loss of cultural identity (Mohanty, 2015). Furthermore, disparity in access to English by rural-urban, class, and caste groups has also created what some researchers have termed lingual stratification, in which English serves as a restrictive tool in education and jobs (Bernaisch, 2016).

The resultant competing perceptions create ambivalent attitudes towards English by the Indian learners. Although English has been praised in terms of its practical advantages, it also creates anxiety associated with loss of identity, discrimination of accent, and not belonging to the elite physical rules. Other studies of the Indian English language have also found that speakers tend to internalize hierarchical ideologies that favor the native-speaker forms of the language and as a result they feel insecure regarding the locally nativised forms of the language (Kachru, 1986; Chand, 2009). It is this aspect of global languages that make India a particularly important place to analyze the negotiation of global languages in multilingual communities.

It is on this background that the current study aims at unraveling the attitudes toward English as a global language among Indian learners. In particular, it will answer three questions of the research: (1) What are the prevalent attitudes toward English as a global language among Indian learners? (2) What influence do instrumental, identity-related and ideological factors have on these attitudes and (3) what ramifications do these attitudes have on language education policy and practice in India? Through these questions, the research will help in adding to the current arguments on globalization, language inequality, and multilingual education in postcolonials.

II. Literature Review

English as a Global Language

The internationalization of English has been considered as a factor looked into extensively due to the interconnecting historical, economical, political and technological

forces. The growth of the British Empire established the first prerequisites to the English being a transnational language, and the economic, scientific and cultural powers of the United States of the post-World War II, continued to strengthen globalisation (Crystal, 2003). The modern world has ensured increased speed of communication in figures of global interaction by the use of English as the prime language of global interaction in every business, higher education, science and media (Graddol, 2006).

When magnified in terms of functionality, English is a global resource, which makes transnational networks of knowledge, trade, and communication available. The mastery of English has eased the geometric entry to the world of labor, international mobility of academicians, and digital economies, thereby making it one of the types of linguistic capitals in an ever-globalized world. Nevertheless, the hegemony of English in the world is not so innocent according to the scholars. According to the critical approaches, English is a reproduction of unequal power relations due to its favourity of the specific knowledge systems, epistemologies, and communicative norms that have their roots in the Global North (Phillipson, 1992; Pennycook, 1994).

The linguistic imperialism notion points out to the fact that English can reduce the other languages through its attempts to make itself be the default language of progress, modernity and success. This usually leads to undermining of local languages and the use of knowledge, especially in the postcolonial world. Therefore, English is both a means and a mode of symbolic domination. Correspondingly, to understand the attitudes to the English language it is necessary to consider not only the practical advantages but also focus on the ideological aspects and the structure implications.

Indian English and Language Ideologies

India takes a unique place in the distribution of English all around the world. The English in India has become a nativized and institutionalised form with its own phonological, lexical, and pragmatic characteristic influenced both by the native languages as well as by the social and cultural atmosphere. The study in the World Englishes paradigm highlights the fact that Indian English is a knowledgeable specimen and not a misguided attempt to don the British or American standards (Kachru, 1986). This view criticises the deficit models of the evaluation of language and proposes pluralistic norms, which represent linguistic diversity.

The ideologies of language users and agencies tend to accept privileges of the so-called native varieties despite the scholarly acknowledgement of Indian English. Attitudinal data indicates that hierarchical ideologies of language of prestige, correctness and authority are internalized by many Indian English users in British or American accents (Bernaisch, 2016). Consequently, Indian English speakers might end up feeling insecure in language, unsure of themselves and facing discrimination because of their accent and pronunciations especially in the higher schools and work places.

Such ideologies are backed up by the media representations, schooling procedures and the recruitment mechanisms that implicitly or directly support norms of native speakers. These processes form part of maintaining linguistic hierarchies even to a given environment where English has been localized over generations. As a result, the influence of attitudes towards English in India is not just influenced by its usefulness at the global level by internalized attitudes toward the language legitimacy and correctness as well as social value.

Attitudes Toward English in Education

One of the largest spheres where the attitudes towards the English language are shaped and replicated in India is the field of education. Literature available shows that parents and students are substantially inclined to study in English, especially the economically disadvantaged and middle-class families that consider English to be a way to improve their socioeconomic status (Ramanathan, 2005; Vaish, 2008). English-mediated schooling is commonly regarded as equivalent of quality education, improved chances of getting a job, and social prestige which has resulted in a quick spread in both the private and government sectors.

Such instrumental orientation towards English has significant consequences to the choice and policy of education. Families whose command of English is weak might still choose English-speaking schools because by having children exposed at a young age they are likely to compete better in the job market. Nevertheless, researchers warn that English-based instruction without proper pedagogical facilitation might have adverse outcome of learning particularly during the elementary level of schooling where students are not well grounded in their primary language and thus they lack literacy in the second language (NCERT, 2006). Studies indicate that early exposure to English could impair conceptual learning, involvement and academic self-belief.

Besides, the prevalence of English in education questions the equity and inclusion. Rural students and those in linguistically marginalized communities tend to struggle tremendously with the English-only classes, making the achievement gap much bigger. Therefore, although the attitude towards the English language in education is mostly positive at the aspirational level, such attitudes exist with structural restrictions that prevent through which the aspirations can be actualized in the case of many learners.

English, Social Mobility, and Inequality

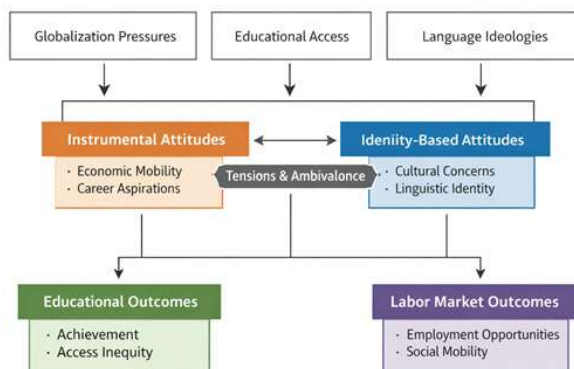
The mastery of English as a culture and symbolic capital in Indian labor market has an impact on not only the hiring, wages, and career paths, but also the cultures. Ensuring English language fluency is often linked to professionalism, competence, and readiness in the world by employers in the information technology sector, the services industry and in the tertiary sector of education. In case people become highly fluent in English, it may become the gateway to higher social status and entry to elite institutional locations.

Nevertheless the quality provision of English education in India is very skewed. Class, caste, region, and urban-rural boundaries play a huge role in defining the acquirers of English proficiency and in what circumstances. Mohanty (2015) presents the opposing view that English is an opportunity and a barrier at the same time: on the one hand, it has made the opportunities available to part of the population, and, on the other hand, it is systemic and prevents people who do not succeed in accessing beneficial conditions of learning. The result of this dualism form of role plays out in what has been termed linguistic stratification with language proficiency being a primary source of social inequality.

Such views on English are thus full of contradiction. English is popular and longed after, but it is also related to the exclusion, anxiety, and cultural loss. Students can be both instrumental and opposed to the English language dominant position at the same time as they can feel an identity concern and unfairness. These introverted sentiments

depict general conflicts between globalization and linguistic justice within multilingual communities such as India.

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of Attitudes Toward English in India



III. Methodology

Research Design

Adopting a mixed-methods research design to investigate the issue of attitudes towards the English as a global language in India, the current study combines the quantitative overview of the situation (surveys) with the qualitative interviewing technique and analysing the documents as the secondary approach. The mixed-method is especially suitable in sociolinguistic studies since the attitudes to language are multifaceted phenomena, which are influenced by some objective tendencies and significant hidden meanings (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2018). Quantitative approaches allow identifying the prevailing patterns and trends on a bigger sample, whereas qualitative approaches can help understand beliefs and experiences of the learners as well as their ideological orientations towards English.

The design will be convergent parallel model, where quantitative and qualitative data would be collected in the same phase of study, analysed separately and at the interpretation phase, they would be combined. Triangulation is also possible through this strategy, enhancing the depth of validity and strength of the findings as a result of cross-validation of the findings using multiple data sources (Dörnyei, 2007). When it comes to English in India, the attitudes of people are influenced by historical, educational, and socioeconomic factors, and thus, triangulation is used to obtain both instrumental and ideological aspects of language perception.

Besides the survey and the interview, the analysis of policy documents was also introduced to put the individual attitudes within the wider institutional and policy contexts. Authoritative documents on education express dominant ideologies of the language advances by the state and, therefore, give an interesting contextual dimension in interpreting participant responses (Hornberger and Johnson, 2007). These approaches allow detracting a holistic picture of the perception of English at the individual, institutional, and societal levels.

Sample and Data Collection

The use of quantitative elements of the research was based on the survey data of 300 undergraduate students at three Indian states that represent the linguistic areas. In this study, the sampling was done in stratified way with the convenience sampling so as to get the samples representative in terms of academic discipline, gender, and medium of previous schooling (English- medium and regional-language- medium). The selection of undergraduates was based on the fact that they are currently at an important transitory phase in their lives when linguistic competence plays an important role in their academic achievement, job-seeking power, and self-identity development.

Students in urban and both urban and semi-urban institutions were included in the sample to obtain diversity in exposure to English. Mohanty (2015) notes that the location and the type of institutions provide strong effects on determining access to English and other consonant attitudes towards English. The involvement was voluntary and the informed consent was obtained by all the respondents. Ethical principles of research were adhered to by ensuring anonymity and secrecy.

In the qualitative part, the semi-structured interviews were held with 30 undergraduate students, who were selected as members of the survey sample, and 10 teachers, who teach English or content courses in higher schools. Student interviewees were not chosen haphazardly, but to generalize the different backgrounds in regard to gender, socio-economic status and medium of schooling. Educationists (teachers) were involved in order to obtain institutional insights in regards to student attitudes, classroom activities and challenges (as they felt) as pertained to English-medium instruction.

Along with the main data, major policy documents were reviewed to put into perspective the findings. They were the National Education Policy 2020 and documents related to the curriculum issued by government bodies in education. The policy texts were regarded as artifacts of ideology, expression of the official views on the English, multilingualism, and education reform (NCERT, 2006; Ministry of Education, 2020). An examination of these papers assisted in the correlation of individual attitudes to larger policy discourses.

Figure 2. Research Design and Data Collection Flowchart

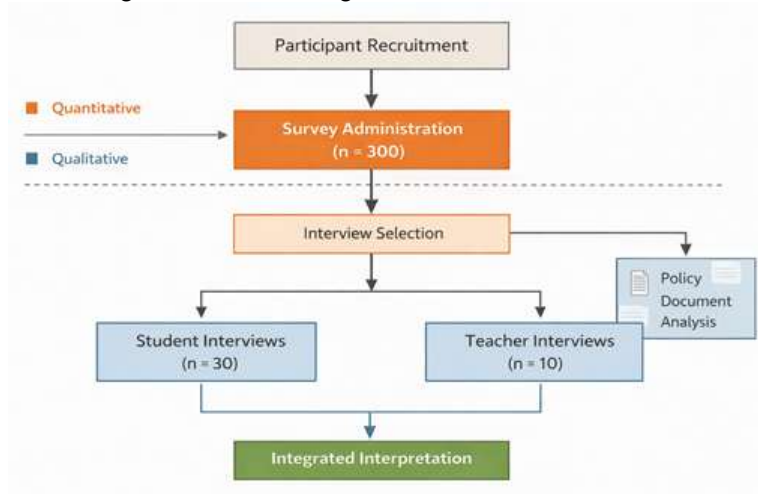


Table 1. Demographic Profile of Survey Participants

| Variable | Category | Percentage |
|---------------------|-------------------|------------|
| Gender | Male | 52 |
| | Female | 48 |
| Medium of Schooling | English | 61 |
| | Regional Language | 39 |
| Location | Urban | 58 |
| | Rural | 42 |

Instruments and Analysis

The main quantitative measure was a survey questionnaire which contained four parts: demographic variables, instrumental motivation to English, attitude regarding identity, and perception to inequality that comes along with English. The attitudinal items were measured based on a five point Likert scale between strongly disagree and strongly agree. They were modified and based on the past language attitude and motivation research to guarantee conceptual validity (Dörnyei, 2007; Bernaisch, 2016). The instrumental motivation scales concentrated on the views about using English as a means of getting a job, tertiary education, and international mobility. The identity-related items focused on a sense of confidence, belonging, and linguistic self-worth that were related to the use of English. Items that measure inequality measured the perceptions of access to, privilege, and disadvantage based on proficiency in English.

A pilot set of the questionnaire was done on a small sample of students to verify the clarity, reliability and relevance of the questionnaire. There were minor revisions that were made depending on the feedback. Cronbach alpha was used to test internal consistency of the attitudinal scales, and the levels of reliability were found to be acceptable in all major constructs.

Descriptive statistics were applied on quantitative data i.e. frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviation. These analyses gave an indication of the prevailing community views on English and put to light the trends among the population groups. Since the research was exploratory in nature, the emphasis it gave was on emerging patterns as opposed to causal relationships.

Thematic analysis was used to analyze qualitative data obtained through interviews which were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim and analyzed. The inductive coding was used, which did not dictate the usage of pre-designated themes but the emergence of themes based on the data (Braun, and Clarke, 2006). Codes were initially created by close reading of transcripts and then coded into higher themes i.e. English as opportunity, identity tension, accent anxiety, and perceived inequality. The interviews with teachers were contrasted with the stories of students to determine areas of agreement and disagreement in the views.

Qualitative content analysis was used to analyze policy documents, with regards to dispensations of English, multilingualism, and equity. Important policy statements were given some coding on the assumptions and ideological orientations to language education. Results of document analysis were then combined with those of surveys and interviews to obtain a compound interpretation.

This methodological approach provides a holistic and context-sensitive explanation of English as a global language attitudes in India because it integrates both quantitative trends and qualitative narratives and policy analysis.

Results

The results of the research indicate that the instrumental orientation to English in the cases of Indian undergraduate learners is, mostly, positive, with significant ambivalence with the question of equity, identity, and language diversity issues. According to quantitative survey data, English is vastly considered as a key to socioeconomic development. Over 85 per cent of the respondents had agreed or strongly agreed that one needs English to find employment in modern India. This understanding suggests the powerful correlation between English and employability reported by previous studies especially in those areas which have been linked with globalization including information technology, services and higher education (Graddol, 2006; Mohanty, 2015).

Besides the benefits associated with employment, 78% of participants stated that English proficiency helps them develop confidence, social respect and professional credibility. The key qualities mostly identified as English by the respondents included intelligence, modernity and competence, which implies that English is a symbolic capital in social and academic relationship. The results will be consistent with those of former researchers that suggest that English in India has both functional and symbolic importance by defining self-image and social status (Vaish, 2008; Ramanathan, 2005). The extensive support of the English language is evidenced by the multiple disciplines and demographics, which support the fact that it is indispensable in the academic and professional paths of students.

Nonetheless, the survey does not leave much to be desired in terms of awareness regarding inequality with regards to English. About 62 percent of the participants responded that English is skewed towards urban and elite students who have more access to the quality English-medium education. This perception brings out the awareness of students regarding structural variations in language access in terms of class, region and institutional type. These results can be discussed within the framework of the existing literature according to which English involvement in India is described as both mobilizing and marginalizing (Mohanty, 2015; Phillipson, 1992). Aspiration and criticism coexist, which implies that the positive attitude to English is countered with the consideration of justice and fairness.

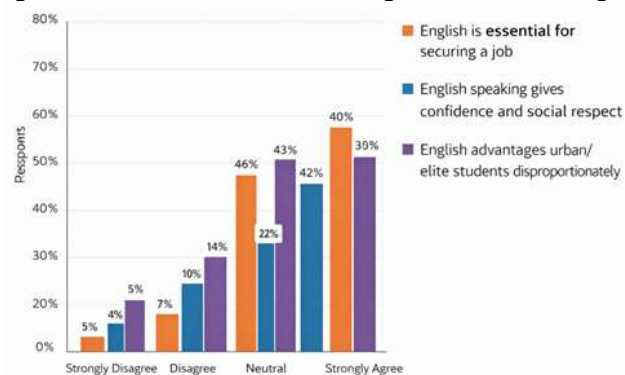
The data of qualitative interviews also sheds more light on this ambivalence. The interviews with students showed that the usefulness of English is recognized as the most useful aspect of the language, but many respondents were afraid that they may lose their fluency and confidence in their native languages. Some of the students explained how they gradually began to experience a dominion of the English language in their learning and social environments and this prevented them from speaking their native

languages. This perceived linguistic displacement was part of cultural lack of connect- edness and tension of identity, which also found its reflection in the literature on the language shift and marginalization in languages (Pennycook, 1994; Mohanty, 2015).

The interviews with teachers supported these results through emphasizing on institu- tional pressures concerning the English-medium instruction. Educators also noted that they were supposed to uphold the use of English in classrooms despite the students not having a base of even the first or second language literacy skills. Pedagogical flexibil- ity and chances to employ translanguaging or bilingual support were usually limited, according to the participants, by this pressure. These observations can be validated by policy criticisms stating that in the process of implementing English-mediated educa- tion without sufficient scaffolds, the process is likely to impact negative comprehen- sion and learning (NCERT, 2006).

In general, the findings reveal that aspirational, pragmatic, and concern attitudes are billed to define the nature of attitudes towards the English language amongst Indian learners. English is common language with many adherents as a platform of oppor- tunity and worldwide integration, but its lopsided dispersion and influence on linguis- tic character give rise to conflicting and even self-contradicting replies. The premise of these findings is that positive attitudes toward English should be viewed in the con- text of their larger social and educational contexts where they are not seen as unques- tioning affirmation.

Figure 3. Student Attitudes Toward English as a Global Language



Discussion

The results of this paper depict a prevalent instrumental focus on English in among Indian students that can be well disposed of as being in line with human capital theory, the conceptualization of language proficiency as an investment with economic and social payoffs. English is understood as an instrument rather than an identity relating mainly to employability, educational and educational progress and a tool to open the world of global opportunities. It is in line with previous studies that show that the role of English in India is that of linguistic capital, especially in globalized labor market and higher education systems (Graddol, 2006; Vaish, 2008).

Simultaneously, such instrumentalism exists alongside massive panic of language erosion and inequality in access. Although students are aware of positive effects associated with the English language, the majority are also concerned about dwindling use and status of local languages, and the inequality that is experienced by students with rural and socioeconomically marginalized background. These issues represent larger ascriptions that underscore the reproduction of existing social disparities through the advantages offered by early and continued access to English-medium education to people (Mohanty, 2015; Phillipson, 1992).

Positive attitudes toward English are, therefore, not blind but they are accompanied by the realization of the exclusionary ability.

The findings are in line with the previous studies that show that English in India serves both as a source of empowerment and an exclusion mechanism. Aspirations of English medium education even in marginalized groups are present pointing to the symbolic strength of English as a medium which signifies modernity, mobility and legitimacy in the world of publicity (Ramanathan, 2005).

This symbolic meaning prevails over the performance of pedagogy and linguistic fairness, which to imprint the English centrality in education and social imagination. Combined, these results reflect the conflicting nature of the position of English in India: it has become a source of opportunity in multiple ways, and, at the same time, it is also involved in inequality and linguistic oppression. To solve this paradox, it is necessary to resort to policy and pedagogical strategies that would allow balancing between acquiring English and maintaining multilingualism and equal opportunities of obtaining a quality education.

Table 2. Summary of Key Themes from Qualitative Interviews

| Theme | Description |
|------------------|------------------------------|
| Instrumentality | English as gateway to jobs |
| Identity tension | Fear of losing mother tongue |
| Inequality | Urban-rural divide in access |

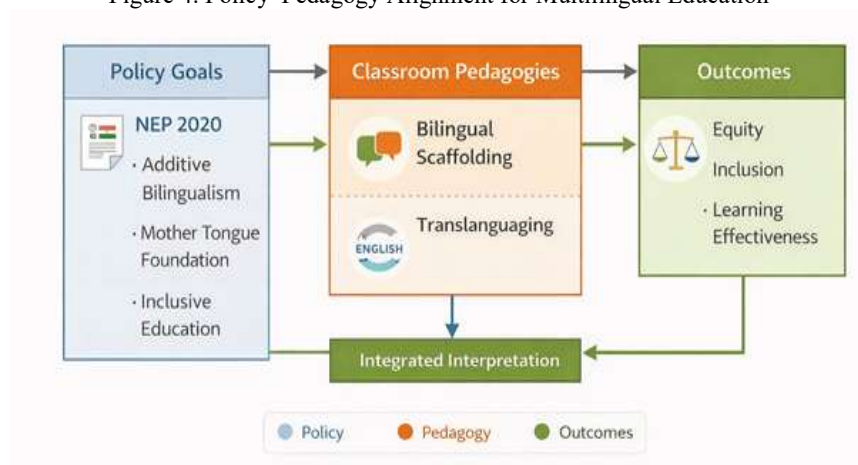
IV. Conclusion

The ambitions, pragmatism, and inequality have a dynamic interaction to create attitudes to English as a global language in India. The results of the current research prove that English is strongly accepted as a key to educational empowerment and employability, and a means to be involved in the global economy. To a great number of learners, English is perceived as opportunity, mobility and entry, to social and professional spheres otherwise closed to entry. This high instrumentalization is a general pattern of the rest of the world where English is used as an important source of linguistic and even human capital (Graddol, 2006; Vaish, 2008).

Simultaneously, the positive attitudes towards the English language co-exist with a consistent perception of unfairness, inaccessibility, and language diversity. Students and pedagogs have acknowledged that an unbalanced access to quality education in the English language only supports class, geographic, and institutional differences. Additionally, the growing popularity of English in education and the life in general creates the concern regarding the exclusion of regional languages and the loss of linguistic identities. These issues correspond to the critical views of the teaching of English in postcolonial and multilingual societies, which underscore exclusiveness of control (Mohanty, 2015).

With such feverish concerns, language policy and pedagogy in India needs to transcend the English-only orientations to other inclusive and balanced ways. Instead of presenting English acquisition as mutually exclusive with multilingualism, the policies should make additive bilingualism, where English is acquired together, and not instead of the first languages of learners, a priority.

Figure 4. Policy–Pedagogy Alignment for Multilingual Education



The studies indicate that a good foundation literacy in the first language contributes to better acquisition of the second language and general increases in learning (NCERT, 2006). Such pedagogical interventions as translanguaging and bilingual scaffolding may additionally play the role of bridging linguistic gap and supporting linguistic identity of the students.

To sum up, in order to reconcile the world involvement with linguistic justice, the importance and boundary of English should be acknowledged. India can take advantage of the advantages of using English as a global language and maintain the linguistic diversity and enhance social inclusion by promoting multilingual education and equal access to the best quality of English instruction.

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