International Journal for Multidisciplinary Research (IJFMR)
E-ISSN: 2582-2160 ● Website: www.ijfmr.com ● Email: editor@ijfmr.com

The Role of English Language in Ruining the Talents of Indian Youth: A Critical Study

Dr. Sandeep Verma

Associate Professor and Head, Department of Humanitie Faculty of Engineering, Teerthanker Mahaveer University, Moradabad, U.P., India

Abstract:
The English language occupies a paradoxical position in contemporary India—it is both a gateway to global opportunities and a barrier to indigenous self-expression. This research paper critically examines how the dominance of English in the Indian education system and socio-economic life has contributed to the suppression of native talent, creativity, and identity among Indian youth. The central argument is that while English serves as a global lingua franca and facilitates communication across nations, its overemphasis in Indian education and employment sectors has led to systemic injustices, including linguistic discrimination, cultural alienation, and intellectual subjugation. The paper draws on historical, sociolinguistic, psychological, and educational perspectives to explore the multifaceted consequences of English language dominance, especially in the post-colonial Indian context. Historically, the imposition of English in India can be traced back to the infamous Minute on Indian Education (1835) by Thomas Babington Macaulay, who sought to create a class of Indians "Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect." Macaulay's colonial vision restructured Indian education to prioritize English, marginalizing Sanskrit, Persian, Arabic, and regional languages. Post-independence India, instead of dismantling this colonial framework, largely continued it, further embedding English as a tool of elitism and a prerequisite for economic mobility. As a result, linguistic hierarchies were institutionalized, where English-medium education became synonymous with quality education, and vernacular-medium students were often treated as intellectually inferior or less competent. This paper contends that such a language policy has had far-reaching consequences for Indian youth. Many talented students from rural and non-English-speaking backgrounds face significant academic and professional disadvantages—not because of a lack of intelligence or creativity, but because they are forced to learn, think, and express themselves in a foreign language. The pressure to learn English for survival, employment, and social recognition has created an environment where language proficiency is valued more than knowledge, skill, or cultural rootedness. This has led to a tragic irony: the marginalization of India's own linguistic and intellectual traditions in the name of modern education. The psychological impact of English supremacy is equally profound. Students who struggle with English often experience low self-esteem, inferiority complexes, and feelings of social exclusion. They may internalize the belief that their lack of fluency in English equates to a lack of intelligence, which stifles their confidence and creativity. Moreover, English has become a symbol of social prestige, further widening the gap between urban elites and rural masses, between private English-medium school-goers and those educated in government schools. This linguistic divide is not just educational; it is socio-economic, cultural, and deeply ideological. The dominance of English also threatens the development and preservation of India's rich linguistic diversity. Local languages, which carry centuries of cultural, philosophical, and literary

traditions, are increasingly viewed as inferior or impractical. The lack of institutional support for mother tongues undermines efforts to cultivate talent and critical thinking in those languages. This not only restricts access to education and opportunities for a large segment of the population but also impoverishes the cultural fabric of the nation. By contrast, countries like Japan, Russia, China, South Korea, and Israel have achieved remarkable scientific, technological, and economic progress using their native languages. These nations demonstrate that intellectual and developmental excellence need not depend on English. Instead, progress rooted in one's own language fosters deeper understanding, emotional resonance, and national pride. Bharatendu Harishchandra, the father of modern Hindi literature, rightly asserted that "the progress of one's own language is the root of all progress." Without the development of the mother tongue, true intellectual growth and cultural expression remain incomplete.

This research also considers the role of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS)—including Sanskrit, Ayurveda, Yoga, Nyaya, Mimamsa, and traditional poetics—as potential alternatives and complements to English-centric education. Sanskrit, the root of many Indian languages and the carrier of ancient Indian wisdom, has remained neglected in modern education. Reviving Sanskrit and integrating IKS into mainstream curricula can enhance students' capacity for abstract thinking, ethical reasoning, and cultural connectedness. These systems offer a treasure trove of indigenous knowledge that can guide India's self-reliant development in line with the vision of *Aatmanirbhar Bharat*. The paper further aligns its arguments with the progressive intentions of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which advocates education in the mother tongue, particularly in the foundational years. NEP-2020 provides a timely opportunity to correct the linguistic injustices of the past and redefine educational success in terms of comprehension, creativity, and critical thinking—rather than mere fluency in a colonial language. In conclusion, while English can and should retain its role as a link language for international communication, it must not dominate or dictate the terms of educational and intellectual development in India. A balanced and inclusive language policy that promotes multilingualism, respects regional languages, and revitalizes classical Indian languages like Sanskrit is imperative for unleashing the true potential of Indian youth. This linguistic decolonization is not merely a cultural necessity but a national imperative to ensure equitable access, cultural continuity, and authentic intellectual growth. Only by restoring pride in our native languages and nurturing talent in the language of thought and emotion can India realize the full promise of its demographic dividend.

Keywords: English language hegemony, linguistic colonialism, suppression of Indian youth talent, mother tongue education, National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, multilingualism in India, Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS), cultural alienation, language and social inequality, Sanskrit revival, vernacular medium vs English medium, educational linguistics, language and identity in India, Bharatendu Harishchandra, colonial legacy in Indian education.

1. INTRODUCTION:

Language is more than a tool of communication; it is a carrier of culture, a medium of thought, and an essential component of identity. In multilingual societies like India, language plays a crucial role not only in interpersonal exchange but also in shaping one's educational, professional, and psychological development. Among all the languages spoken in India, English has acquired a unique and complex status. Positioned as both an official language and a legacy of colonial rule, English is simultaneously a bridge to global opportunities and a barrier to indigenous intellectual flourishing. This paper examines how the

dominance of English in India has contributed to the marginalization of Indian languages and the suppression of the natural talent and creativity of Indian youth. The prominence of English in India can be traced to colonial policies, particularly the infamous *Minute on Indian Education* (1835) by Thomas Babington Macaulay. In it, Macaulay advocated replacing traditional Indian systems of education with English-medium instruction to produce a class of Indians who would be "Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect" (Macaulay, 1835). This policy laid the groundwork for a linguistic and cultural hierarchy that persists in modern India. While English has undeniably opened avenues in global academia, technology, and commerce, its unchecked dominance has led to widespread educational exclusion, identity erosion, and cultural alienation, especially for non-English-speaking populations. In post-independence India, rather than dismantling this colonial framework, successive governments retained and reinforced English as a medium of instruction and administration. The result has been a perpetuation of the Macaulayan mindset, where English fluency is equated with intelligence, progress, and employability, while knowledge in Indian languages is undervalued or dismissed. This has created an unequal linguistic landscape where English-medium students are privileged in job markets, social status, and higher education, while vernacular-medium students struggle despite possessing comparable or superior talents in other domains (Annamalai, 2005; Mohanty, 2009).

Numerous studies have highlighted the psychological and sociological consequences of English language supremacy in India. Non-English speakers often suffer from low self-esteem, lack of confidence, and feelings of inferiority, especially in urban settings where English is considered a marker of prestige (Ramanathan, 2005). This linguistic elitism contributes to a systemic denial of opportunities to students from rural and marginalized communities. The overemphasis on English has also diverted attention from the development of education in Indian languages, thereby stunting intellectual growth in those languages and reducing their utility in academic and professional contexts. Moreover, India's rich linguistic heritage—which includes classical languages like Sanskrit and a wide array of regional languages such as Tamil, Hindi, Bengali, Marathi, Kannada, and others—is gradually being undermined. These languages are repositories of centuries of literature, philosophy, science, and oral traditions. The underutilization of these languages in formal education and knowledge production not only limits access for a large segment of the population but also results in cultural and epistemological impoverishment. Bharatendu Harishchandra, the father of modern Hindi literature, emphasized that "the progress of one's own language is the root of all progress," suggesting that without linguistic self-reliance, true intellectual and cultural development is impossible (Sharma, 1999). In contrast to India, several countries such as Japan, China, Russia, South Korea, and France have prioritized their native languages in education, research, and governance. These nations demonstrate that high levels of scientific, technological, and economic progress can be achieved without the predominance of English. In Japan, for instance, all national curriculum and research are conducted in Japanese, with English taught as a foreign language rather than as a prerequisite for success. These models illustrate that national development and global engagement are not mutually exclusive but can coexist within a strong mother-tongue-based framework (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000).

The emergence of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 marks a pivotal moment in India's educational landscape. For the first time, the policy strongly advocates for the use of the mother tongue or regional language as the medium of instruction at least up to Grade 5, and preferably up to Grade 8 and beyond. This shift is rooted in scientific evidence that children learn best in their home language during their early years (UNESCO, 2016). NEP 2020 also emphasizes the revival of classical Indian languages, especially Sanskrit, and the integration of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) into mainstream curricula. If

implemented effectively, this policy has the potential to reverse decades of linguistic marginalization and empower youth to learn, think, and innovate in their native linguistic and cultural frameworks (Government of India, 2020). This paper aims to critically analyze the multifaceted impacts of English dominance on the talents of Indian youth. It will explore how linguistic imperialism operates in education, employment, and social mobility, and how it affects the psychological and intellectual development of learners. It will also evaluate the challenges and opportunities associated with promoting multilingualism and revitalizing Indian languages in a globalized world. Through historical context, comparative analysis, and policy review, the paper argues for a paradigm shift in language policy—one that centres Indian languages as the medium for nurturing knowledge, creativity, and cultural confidence. In conclusion, language is not merely a medium of instruction but a mode of consciousness. The continued dominance of English has led to a hierarchy of intellect and a systemic undervaluation of non-English talent in India. To truly harness the demographic dividend and the creative potential of Indian youth, it is imperative to recognize and rectify the linguistic inequalities embedded in our education system. By embracing multilingualism and nurturing native languages, India can build a more inclusive, innovative, and self-reliant knowledge society.

2. Historical Context of Language Policies in India:

The linguistic landscape of India has been shaped through centuries of cultural evolution, colonial disruption, and post-independence policy dilemmas. Understanding the deep-rooted dominance of English requires a thorough analysis of its historical imposition, the marginalization of native languages, and the consequences of policy decisions that continue to influence the aspirations and creativity of Indian youth.

2.1 Pre-Colonial Multilingual Education and Knowledge Traditions:

Before the arrival of British colonizers, India was home to a flourishing multilingual ecosystem. Sanskrit functioned as the language of philosophy, science, and classical knowledge, while Persian and Arabic dominated administrative and Islamic educational institutions. Simultaneously, vernacular languages such as Tamil, Telugu, Bengali, Marathi, and others were used widely in literature, religious discourse, and local governance (Deshpande, 2010). Traditional institutions like *pathshalas*, *madrasas*, and *gurukuls* played a vital role in sustaining regional intellectual traditions. The coexistence of multiple languages enabled a decentralized yet rich model of learning, where creativity and talent were deeply rooted in indigenous epistemologies.

2.2 Macaulay's Minute and the Introduction of English Education:

The most significant rupture in India's linguistic self-sufficiency came with the *Minute on Indian Education* by Thomas Babington Macaulay in 1835. Macaulay's goal was not merely educational reform but cultural engineering. He famously claimed that "a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia," and proposed creating a class of Indians who would be "Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect" (Macaulay, 1835). His recommendations led to the English Education Act of 1835, which replaced Persian with English as the official language and shifted the focus of instruction in institutions across India. This colonial intervention was not neutral—it introduced a cultural hierarchy where English was synonymous with progress, science, and rationality, while Indian languages were deemed obsolete, emotional, or unscientific (Viswanathan, 1989). Indigenous systems of learning were dismantled, and access to education was restricted to those who conformed to the colonial model.

2.3 Colonial Consequences: Cultural and Educational Displacement:

The consequences of Macaulay's policies were not just linguistic but deeply cultural. English became the language of law, administration, and higher education, while Indian languages were relegated to informal use or primary schooling. Over time, an elite class emerged—English-educated, urban, and distanced from traditional knowledge systems. This linguistic elite enjoyed privileged access to jobs, power, and cultural capital, while the majority of Indians, educated in vernacular languages, were marginalized (Annamalai, 2004).

The traditional content of Indian education—philosophy, metaphysics, Ayurveda, astronomy, literature—was replaced with British literary canon and utilitarian science. The break from one's own language meant a break from one's own worldview and cultural context. For Indian youth, this marked the beginning of a systemic alienation from indigenous creativity, expression, and intellectual traditions.

2.4 Post-Independence Language Dilemma and the Rise of English:

When India gained independence in 1947, the question of national language became one of the most contentious debates in the Constituent Assembly. While many leaders favoured Hindi as the official language, strong resistance from non-Hindi-speaking states led to a compromise: Hindi would be the official language, but English would continue as an associate official language for 15 years (Constituent Assembly Debates, 1949). However, this transition was never completed. The Official Languages Act of 1963 allowed the continued use of English indefinitely, primarily to avoid linguistic unrest, especially in southern states. This decision had far-reaching consequences. English solidified its role as the de facto language of governance, higher education, and legal affairs. It also became a symbol of prestige and success, especially with the liberalization of the Indian economy in the 1990s and the rise of the IT and BPO sectors. English-medium education became increasingly sought after by the middle and upper classes, while public education in Indian languages suffered from underfunding and neglect (Ramanathan, 2005).

2.5 Linguistic Hierarchies and Educational Inequity:

The colonial roots of English dominance evolved into a deeply entrenched linguistic hierarchy in independent India. English-medium private schools became symbols of modernity and success, while government schools, mostly teaching in regional languages, came to be viewed as inferior. The result is a growing socio-educational divide: students from English-medium backgrounds have easier access to higher education, white-collar jobs, and global mobility, while students educated in regional languages are often viewed as second-rate, despite their talents (Mohanty, 2009). Such hierarchies are not just unfair—they are a disservice to the nation's demographic dividend. A vast pool of creative, talented, and intelligent youth remains underutilized simply because their medium of thought and expression does not align with the English-centric standards of success.

2.6 The Promise of NEP 2020: Reclaiming Linguistic Diversity:

In an attempt to address these long-standing imbalances, the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 promotes the use of mother tongues and regional languages as the medium of instruction at least up to Grade 5, and preferably till Grade 8. It also encourages the revitalization of classical languages like Sanskrit and the integration of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) into education (Government of India, 2020). While the NEP has been welcomed by educationists, its successful implementation depends on political will, institutional support, and a change in public perception toward regional and classical languages.

2.7 Conclusion:

The historical trajectory of language policy in India—from Macaulay's colonial agenda to post-independence compromises—has constructed a linguistic order that privileges English and undermines Indian languages. This has led to the suppression of indigenous creativity, unequal access to opportunity, and the alienation of youth from their cultural roots. Recognizing and correcting these historical wrongs is not just a policy issue but a cultural imperative. A nation that aspires to be *Aatmanirbhar* (self-reliant) must first reclaim its linguistic and intellectual sovereignty.

3. Impact of English on Indian Talent and Creativity:

The influence of English in India, while globally advantageous in some respects, has created a range of cultural, educational, and psychological implications for the creative and intellectual development of Indian youth. The imposition and later internalization of English as a superior language have led to the marginalization of Indian languages and knowledge systems. This dominance, inherited from colonial rule, has not only caused a linguistic divide but has also hindered the full realization of talent and creativity, especially among youth who are more comfortable expressing themselves in their mother tongues.

3.1 Language as a Vehicle of Thought and Creativity:

Language is not just a tool for communication; it is the medium through which people think, create, and relate to the world around them. The renowned linguist Edward Sapir argued that language shapes reality and defines the boundaries of thought (Sapir, 1921). In the Indian context, the hegemony of English has alienated vast populations from their natural medium of cognition. Students who are taught in English but think in Hindi, Tamil, or Marathi often struggle to articulate their thoughts effectively, leading to a disconnect between their inner creativity and their external expression. This phenomenon, sometimes referred to as "subtractive bilingualism," implies that acquiring a second language (English) at the cost of the first can result in a loss of fluency, confidence, and originality (Cummins, 2000). Children learn best in their home language during the foundational years of cognitive and emotional development. UNESCO (2016) has emphasized that education in a language that children understand improves learning outcomes and supports intellectual growth. However, in India, many students from rural and semi-urban areas are forced into English-medium systems, where they not only struggle with the subject matter but also suffer from reduced participation, lower self-esteem, and a perceived inferiority complex. The inability to learn and express in one's mother tongue often translates into stifled creativity and underdeveloped potential.

3.2 Psychological Effects of English Language Supremacy:

The glorification of English in Indian society has fostered a culture of linguistic elitism. Proficiency in English is often equated with intelligence, sophistication, and employability, while fluency in Indian languages is deemed provincial or backward. This perception has deeply psychological consequences, particularly for non-English-speaking youth. Many studies report that students from vernacular backgrounds feel ashamed of their mother tongue, leading to identity confusion and social withdrawal (Ramanathan, 2005). This inferiority complex is not merely an emotional issue—it has concrete impacts on motivation, classroom participation, and risk-taking behavior in creative domains. Creativity flourishes when individuals feel free to express without judgment, but the dominance of English has created a monolingual ideal in a multilingual country, effectively silencing many voices. Moreover, students from regional backgrounds often refrain from participating in debates, writing competitions, or other creative forums due to fear of linguistic inadequacy, regardless of the quality of their ideas.

3.3 The Educational Divide and Suppression of Rural Talent:

The educational structure in India has further widened the gap between English speakers and the rest. English-medium private schools, mostly urban and expensive, are viewed as elite, while government schools, often using regional languages, are seen as inferior. This hierarchy results in unequal distribution of resources, infrastructure, and teaching quality. Rural and vernacular-educated youth often find themselves excluded from competitive examinations, higher education opportunities, and corporate recruitment, not because of a lack of ability but due to their limited proficiency in English (Mohanty, 2006). This systemic discrimination amounts to a suppression of rural and vernacular talent. Bright students who could excel in science, literature, or the arts in their own language are forced to either translate their thoughts into a foreign medium or remain unheard. This loss of expression represents a deeper loss of knowledge production, cultural richness, and intellectual diversity in the country.

3.4 Creativity, Literature, and Cultural Production:

Language is the soul of literature, theatre, music, and other cultural expressions. The decline in regional language education and readership due to English dominance has also affected India's creative industries. Many young writers and poets are discouraged from writing in Hindi, Urdu, Tamil, or other Indian languages due to a lack of publishing opportunities, critical readership, or media recognition. This has resulted in a narrowing of creative horizons and a focus on producing "global" content in English that may lack the depth, nuance, and cultural specificity rooted in Indian traditions (Kumar, 2012). Furthermore, the underrepresentation of Indian languages in mainstream media, advertising, academic publishing, and digital platforms reinforces a cycle where English becomes the default language of cultural production. Consequently, the next generation of artists, musicians, and writers is being disconnected from their cultural roots, leading to a homogenization of artistic expression.

3.5 A Global Comparison: Creativity without English:

Many developed nations have shown that linguistic pride and creativity can thrive without a dependency on English. Countries like Japan, South Korea, Germany, and France conduct education, science, and cultural production primarily in their native languages. Japan's Nobel laureates in literature and science have never faced linguistic suppression, nor has their creativity been measured by English proficiency. These nations demonstrate that intellectual and creative excellence need not be mediated by English (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000). India, too, has a rich intellectual and artistic tradition developed in its own languages—Tagore in Bengali, Premchand in Hindi, Thiruvalluvar in Tamil, Kalidasa in Sanskrit—proving that creativity is language-independent, but language-sensitive.

3.6 Conclusion:

The uncritical adoption and glorification of English in India have resulted in the systemic suppression of youth talent, particularly among those from rural, regional, and vernacular backgrounds. English has become a gatekeeper of success, marginalizing millions of capable individuals and stifling creativity that could otherwise flourish in a multilingual, culturally diverse nation. To nurture the full potential of Indian youth, educational and cultural systems must recognize the power of the mother tongue as a medium for thought, innovation, and expression. Real creativity does not require translation—it requires freedom, pride, and fluency in the language of the heart.

4. Social and Economic Divides Created by English:

The dominance of the English language in India has led to profound social and economic divides, creating a hierarchy that rewards linguistic capital over indigenous knowledge and cultural fluency. English has

become more than just a language of global communication; it is now a powerful gatekeeping mechanism in India's education system, job market, and social mobility. The resulting disparities have contributed to the marginalization of non-English-speaking communities and reinforced existing class and caste inequalities. This section critically explores how English has created barriers in access to opportunities, widened socio-economic gaps, and entrenched linguistic elitism in Indian society.

4.1 Linguistic Capital and Social Stratification:

Bourdieu's (1991) concept of "linguistic capital" is central to understanding how English functions as a form of symbolic power in India. Proficiency in English is equated with competence, intelligence, and sophistication, which, in turn, affects one's social status. English-speaking individuals are often viewed as more capable, modern, and deserving of success. As a result, those who are not fluent in English—often from rural, tribal, or marginalized backgrounds—are perceived as inferior, regardless of their actual abilities or knowledge. This perception leads to stratification in everyday life: English-speaking individuals dominate elite spaces such as corporate offices, higher education institutions, judiciary systems, and policymaking bodies. Meanwhile, those fluent only in regional languages often find themselves excluded or relegated to low-paying, low-status jobs. This linguistic hierarchy deepens existing inequalities based on class, caste, and geography (Annamalai, 2005).

4.2 English-Medium Education and Urban-Rural Divide:

The spread of English-medium education has contributed to a growing urban-rural divide in India. Urban students, especially those from affluent backgrounds, have greater access to private English-medium schools with better resources, infrastructure, and trained faculty. On the other hand, students in rural areas largely depend on government schools where instruction is often in regional languages and educational facilities are underfunded. This discrepancy in access to English education leads to a disparity in academic performance, competitive exam results, and university admissions. According to the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER, 2022), students in rural India consistently lag behind their urban counterparts in English proficiency, which affects their chances of qualifying for professional courses and employment in high-paying sectors like IT, banking, and multinational corporations. Moreover, the National Sample Survey (NSSO, 2019) highlighted that students from economically weaker sections often face systemic exclusion from institutions of higher learning due to poor English skills, despite having subject knowledge. This exclusion reinforces a vicious cycle of poverty and limited social mobility.

4.3 Language as a Barrier to Employment:

In India's competitive job market, English proficiency is frequently prioritized over merit or technical skills. Multinational companies, BPOs, and even many Indian firms demand English communication skills as a primary criterion for employment, particularly in urban and service sectors. As a result, non-English-speaking youth are denied access to better job opportunities, regardless of their actual technical or vocational expertise (Graddol, 2010). This language bias undermines the core principle of equal opportunity and contributes to economic marginalization. Many skilled artisans, craftsmen, and traditional knowledge holders are unable to commercialize their talents or expand their businesses due to their limited command of English. Furthermore, recruitment for government jobs and public services increasingly includes English-based tests, leaving vernacular-educated candidates at a disadvantage (Mohanty, 2010).

4.4 Reinforcing Caste and Class Inequalities:

English in India also functions as a marker of class and caste privilege. Historically, English education was introduced during British rule to train a small group of Indians to serve the colonial administration (Viswanathan, 1989). Post-independence, this elite class retained access to English-medium education and

used it to maintain their socio-economic advantage. This pattern has continued in contemporary India, where Dalits, Adivasis, and Other Backward Classes (OBCs) remain underrepresented in English-dominated institutions.

The lack of access to English serves to exclude these groups from upward mobility, creating a caste-based linguistic apartheid. The situation is further aggravated by the aspirational value attached to English, leading many families from marginalized communities to stretch their financial limits to send children to substandard English-medium schools that promise little academic value but serve as symbols of social ambition (Kumar, 2017). This symbolic aspiration often leads to disappointment, as children receive neither strong language skills nor conceptual clarity in subjects. Meanwhile, the continued neglect of regional-language education erodes the quality of learning for the majority of students.

4.5 Digital Divide and Language Exclusion:

The digital revolution in India, while expansive, has been primarily Anglocentric. A majority of online content, government portals, educational platforms, and employment applications operate in English. This creates a digital language barrier for millions of Indians who are otherwise digitally literate but not proficient in English.

The English-first digital infrastructure restricts access to e-learning, financial services, telemedicine, and job portals, thereby limiting socio-economic opportunities. According to KPMG-Google Report (2017), more than 70% of internet users in India prefer content in regional languages, but only a fraction of digital services cater to this demand. Bridging this linguistic gap is essential for inclusive digital growth.

4.6 The Way Forward: Multilingual Equity:

To dismantle the social and economic barriers created by English, India must promote equitable multilingualism. NEP 2020 has emphasized the importance of mother tongue and regional languages in early education, which is a step in the right direction. However, without systemic reforms and strong implementation, linguistic inclusivity will remain aspirational. Some critical measures include:

- Enhancing the quality of education in regional languages
- Promoting Indian languages in higher education and professional courses
- Making competitive exams available in all scheduled languages
- Increasing digital content and platforms in vernacular languages
- Providing vocational and skill-based training in native languages

Only through these inclusive policies can India hope to bridge the language divide and harness the full potential of its diverse population.

5. Cultural and Linguistic Diversity Challenges:

India is often described as a “museum of languages,” a nation that is home to more than 19,500 languages or dialects, according to the 2011 Census. Twenty-two of these are listed in the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution, and several others function as mediums of everyday communication for millions of people. This immense diversity, while being a hallmark of India's civilizational richness, also presents serious challenges—particularly when one language, English, is granted disproportionate dominance in education, governance, and employment. In this section, we critically examine the tension between the promotion of English and the preservation of India’s rich linguistic and cultural fabric, focusing on how linguistic homogenization can erode cultural identity and creativity.

5.1 Erosion of Cultural Identity:

Language is more than just a tool for communication—it is a repository of history, culture, and collective

consciousness. When English replaces native languages as the preferred medium of instruction or social interaction, it gradually detaches speakers from their cultural roots. Scholars such as Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1986) have emphasized how the adoption of a colonial language creates a cultural and psychological distance between people and their own traditions. In India, a similar phenomenon is observed when children are taught primarily in English from an early age, often at the expense of their mother tongue. A generation raised primarily in English often lacks fluency in reading or writing in their native languages. Over time, this results in a diminished capacity to appreciate classical literature, folk traditions, oral storytelling, proverbs, and regional philosophies—an entire worldview encoded within the language. Consequently, the country risks losing its intangible cultural heritage as language practices shift toward a global, Westernized norm.

5.2 Marginalization of Indigenous Languages and Communities:

While some Indian languages like Hindi, Tamil, or Bengali still retain strong institutional support, many tribal and minority languages are on the brink of extinction. According to UNESCO's Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger, over 197 Indian languages are endangered, including languages such as Saimar in Tripura, Toto in West Bengal, and Majhi in Odisha. These languages often lack formal documentation and educational support. The privileging of English as the language of aspiration and opportunity hastens this decline, as communities abandon their ancestral tongues in the hope of social mobility. Such a trend not only contributes to linguistic homogenization but also results in a loss of diversity in worldviews, ecological wisdom, and socio-cultural practices. Tribal and indigenous knowledge systems, deeply embedded in language, are sidelined in favor of Western epistemologies mediated through English.

5.3 Alienation in Education:

The imposition of English-medium education often leads to alienation among first-generation learners and rural students. Many children who enter English-medium schools without prior exposure to English struggle with comprehension, expression, and confidence. As per Mohanty (2006), this "submersion education" leads to a condition where learners are expected to sink or swim in an unfamiliar linguistic environment, often resulting in high dropout rates and low self-esteem. This problem is exacerbated in multilingual families where the home language, school language, and community language differ drastically. Children lose fluency in their mother tongue without gaining sufficient mastery in English, leading to what Skutnabb-Kangas (2000) terms "linguistic genocide"—a process where minority languages are systematically undermined in the name of modernization or global competence.

5.4 Linguistic Inequity in Policy and Practice:

Although India's Three Language Formula (1968) and NEP 2020 aim to promote multilingual education, the actual implementation is often skewed in favour of English and Hindi. In practice, English becomes the dominant language in elite institutions and is seen as a ticket to upward mobility, while regional languages are relegated to lower-tier schools or informal settings. This linguistic hierarchy fosters systemic discrimination. Annamalai (2005) notes that English is not simply a language but a marker of access, privilege, and institutional legitimacy. Thus, language policy often fails to respect linguistic plurality and instead promotes a top-down approach that favours homogeneity over diversity.

5.5 Globalization and the Hegemony of English:

Globalization has further entrenched English as the lingua franca of commerce, diplomacy, science, and academia. While this global trend facilitates communication and international cooperation, it also intensifies the pressure on smaller languages to adapt, assimilate, or perish. English becomes the default language of higher education, academic publishing, and the digital economy. According to Graddol (2010),

this trend results in a form of "cultural imperialism," where local knowledge systems are considered inferior or irrelevant if they are not expressed in English. Indian academia and research remain largely inaccessible to the general public unless translated into regional languages—creating a gap between intellectual discourse and grassroots realities.

5.6 Addressing the Challenges: Toward Linguistic Pluralism:

India's linguistic diversity must be viewed not as a burden, but as an asset for cultural sustainability, creativity, and democratic participation. To that end, a number of corrective steps are essential:

- Mother-tongue-based multilingual education (MTB-MLE) should be reinforced from early childhood.
- Indigenous languages must receive institutional support, including script development, teaching resources, and media promotion.
- Language mapping and digital documentation of endangered dialects should be prioritized.
- Civil society and educational institutions must decolonize the curriculum to value and integrate regional knowledge systems.
- Translation and bilingual education models can be used to bridge the gap between global competence and cultural rootedness.

India must recognize that true "Atmanirbharta" (self-reliance) is impossible without linguistic self-respect. Only when citizens can think, learn, and create in their own languages will the country harness the full spectrum of its intellectual and cultural genius.

6. Psychological and Societal Effects of English Supremacy:

The dominance of English in Indian society extends beyond language preference into the psychological and social fabric of the nation. The widespread perception of English as the language of intelligence, modernity, and success has led to deep-seated consequences on the mental well-being, self-perception, and social interactions of Indian youth. This section explores how the supremacy of English—rooted in colonial history and reinforced by socio-economic structures—has caused significant psychological dissonance, internalized inferiority, and social fragmentation, particularly among non-English-speaking populations.

6.1 Internalized Linguistic Inferiority:

One of the most profound effects of English supremacy in India is the development of an internalized linguistic inferiority complex. Many Indian students and professionals, especially those from rural and vernacular-medium backgrounds, suffer from feelings of inadequacy and low self-worth because of their limited proficiency in English. As Khubchandani (1997) notes, in postcolonial societies like India, the hegemony of English has created a "symbolic apartheid," where native languages are seen as unfit for serious intellectual or scientific discourse. This inferiority complex often begins in early schooling. Children educated in regional languages are made to feel that their medium is inferior, unprofessional, or backward. This causes linguistic insecurity, which affects not just academic performance but also career aspirations and interpersonal confidence. The resulting anxiety is not just about communication but about self-identity—a phenomenon that Bourdieu (1991) terms as "symbolic violence," where the dominant language imposes psychological subordination on others.

6.2 Linguistic Elitism and Social Stratification:

The glorification of English has led to the rise of a linguistic elite in India—a group whose command over English grants them disproportionate access to quality education, employment, legal systems, and governance. This elite often views itself as superior to those who are not fluent in English, creating a deep

social divide. As Macaulay's Minute (1835) had envisioned, the English-educated class has indeed become a cultural buffer between the colonial (now globalized) West and the indigenous Indian masses. This elitism permeates professional settings, especially in urban India, where job interviews, entrance exams, and corporate environments privilege English fluency over actual subject expertise. Annamalai (2004) emphasizes that this results in "exclusionary practices" where talent in non-English speakers goes unrecognized. Young individuals with high potential in arts, sciences, or entrepreneurship are often held back—not for lack of ideas, but due to their inability to express them in the 'acceptable' language.

6.3 Psychological Alienation and Identity Crisis:

Language is integral to identity formation. When the education system and society at large prioritize English, children often experience psychological alienation from their native culture and heritage. As Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1986) pointed out in the African context, language alienation results in a split consciousness, where individuals think in one language and feel in another. In India, this results in a generation of youth who are detached from their roots yet not fully integrated into the English-speaking world, leading to an identity crisis. Many Indian youths struggle with self-expression in both English and their mother tongue, having never been taught to value the latter nor sufficiently trained in the former. This dual inadequacy fosters a sense of linguistic homelessness, where neither language fully serves the cognitive and emotional needs of the individual. Over time, such dissonance can lead to mental health issues, including anxiety, imposter syndrome, and depressive tendencies, especially when language is tied to self-worth and career success.

6.4 Displacement of Cognitive Patterns and Learning Styles:

Research in psycholinguistics suggests that thinking in one's mother tongue enhances comprehension, creativity, and memory retention (Cummins, 2000). When students are forced to learn complex ideas in English, especially at foundational levels, they often resort to rote learning and mechanical reproduction. This undermines the development of critical thinking, which is better nurtured when the cognitive load is reduced through familiarity with the language of instruction. According to Mohanty (2006), "subtractive bilingualism"—where acquisition of a second language occurs at the expense of the first—can severely limit intellectual development. Children learning in an unfamiliar language are less likely to ask questions, engage deeply, or make creative connections. In India, this often translates into a "mute and mechanical" classroom culture, particularly in rural schools, where students are silenced by language anxiety and perform only to pass exams rather than to understand.

6.5 Social Mobility and Language-based Discrimination:

Ironically, while English is often marketed as a path to social mobility, it has become a gatekeeper that excludes more than it includes. The cost of English-medium education in India is often prohibitive for economically weaker sections. As a result, English becomes a marker of class privilege, rather than a neutral skill. Those from public or government schools—typically taught in regional languages—are often discriminated against in higher education admissions and employment sectors. Krishnaswamy and Burde (1998) argue that this form of language-based discrimination not only creates inequality but also reproduces colonial patterns of power. In the corporate and academic worlds, regional accents and grammatical imperfections are often ridiculed, causing talented youth to withdraw from expressing themselves publicly.

6.6 Toward Psychological and Linguistic Empowerment:

To address these entrenched psychological and societal consequences, India must restructure its linguistic attitudes and educational practices:

- Promote additive bilingualism, where English is learned without sacrificing the mother tongue.
- Encourage regional languages in public discourse, media, and official communication to normalize linguistic plurality.
- Include psychosocial support in schools to help students navigate language-related anxiety.
- Conduct public campaigns that destigmatize Indian languages and celebrate local linguistic heritage.

Educational institutions must recognize that language is not merely a skill but a foundation of identity and mental health. Policies must shift from privileging English as the default to embracing India's linguistic diversity as a strength, not a barrier.

7. Advocating for Multilingual Education and Preservation:

As India stands at the crossroads of tradition and modernity, balancing its rich linguistic heritage with the demands of global integration becomes essential. The overwhelming supremacy of English has not only marginalized indigenous languages but also stifled the natural intellectual development of youth educated in unfamiliar tongues. To remedy this, there is a pressing need to advocate for multilingual education that empowers learners, nurtures diverse talents, and ensures the preservation of India's linguistic diversity. This section argues that multilingual education—rooted in mother tongues, enriched by regional languages, and supported by functional English—offers the most equitable and effective path forward.

7.1 The Case for Mother Tongue-Based Education:

Several national and international studies confirm that mother tongue-based education improves learning outcomes, self-confidence, and critical thinking in early childhood. According to UNESCO (2003), "children learn best in their mother tongue during the early years of schooling." Similarly, Cummins (2000) found that literacy skills and cognitive development acquired in the first language positively transfer to the second language. In the Indian context, this means that children who learn basic concepts in their native languages are more likely to grasp foundational literacy and numeracy skills. This not only boosts academic performance but also reduces dropout rates, especially among rural and marginalized students. However, the dominance of English has led to its forced imposition even at the primary level, resulting in rote learning and conceptual gaps. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 recognizes this issue and strongly recommends mother tongue or regional language as the medium of instruction at least until Grade 5, and preferably until Grade 8. This is a pivotal step toward educational justice and cognitive development.

7.2 Multilingualism as a Cognitive and Cultural Asset:

Multilingualism is not merely a communication tool; it is a cognitive asset. Research by Bialystok et al. (2012) has shown that multilingual individuals demonstrate greater mental flexibility, improved problem-solving skills, and enhanced memory. These advantages are especially relevant in a multilingual society like India, where most citizens already navigate multiple languages in everyday life. Culturally, each language carries its own worldview, metaphors, and aesthetic values. Preserving and promoting these languages ensures the continuity of indigenous knowledge systems (IKS), oral traditions, regional literatures, and philosophies. As Kapil Kapoor (2010) argues, "Language is not just a tool for communication; it is a bearer of culture, worldview, and consciousness." By encouraging students to access education and express creativity in their own languages, India can unlock talents that remain dormant due to linguistic exclusion.

7.3 Success Models: Global and Local Examples:

Several countries have successfully implemented multilingual education models that protect linguistic

diversity while enabling access to global communication. In Finland, for example, bilingual and multilingual models are integrated into the school curriculum, with students learning their mother tongue alongside international languages. In South Africa, the constitution recognizes 11 official languages, and efforts are made to promote African languages in schools and universities. Closer to home, Nagaland, Mizoram, and parts of Kerala have experimented with mother tongue and regional language education with considerable success. In Telangana, the introduction of Telugu-medium textbooks in science and mathematics at the school level helped improve learning retention and reduced language anxiety among rural students (Mohanty, 2009). These examples challenge the false binary between vernacular education and global competence. India can and must build a model where linguistic rootedness and global readiness go hand in hand.

7.4 Addressing Resistance and Misconceptions:

One of the greatest barriers to multilingual education in India is the myth of English as the sole language of success. Many parents and students believe that fluency in English guarantees upward mobility, better jobs, and social prestige. While English undoubtedly provides access to global networks, Annamalai (2004) cautions that "English is necessary, but it is not sufficient" for inclusive national development. Resistance also stems from institutional biases—examinations, higher education, and corporate recruitment often disproportionately favour English. This reinforces a linguistic meritocracy that punishes the non-elite. For multilingual education to succeed, policy shifts must be accompanied by structural reforms, including:

- Translation of scientific and technical materials into Indian languages.
- Training of multilingual teachers and curriculum developers.
- Recognition of Indian languages in competitive exams and professional settings.
- Investment in linguistic research and standardization.

7.5 Technology and the Future of Multilingual Learning:

In the digital era, technology offers new avenues for promoting multilingualism. Language learning apps, voice recognition tools, and AI-powered translation services can bridge linguistic gaps and democratize access to education. Bhashini, India's national language translation platform under the Digital India initiative, seeks to make digital content accessible in all major Indian languages. Digital archives, podcasts, and local content creation platforms can help preserve oral traditions and promote language pride among youth. Integrating these tools into formal education systems can modernize Indian languages and reposition them as languages of science, creativity, and enterprise.

7.6 Reclaiming Linguistic Sovereignty:

Ultimately, advocating for multilingual education is about reclaiming linguistic sovereignty—the right of a nation to think, speak, and innovate in its own languages. Colonialism robbed India of this right by displacing indigenous languages from education, administration, and scientific discourse. Reversing this trend is both a cultural imperative and a developmental necessity. By preserving and promoting India's vast linguistic heritage through education, we not only protect cultural diversity but also empower the next generation of thinkers, creators, and leaders to rise without linguistic barriers. This vision aligns with the constitutional spirit of linguistic equality and the ideals of Aatmanirbhar Bharat, where self-reliance begins with self-expression.

8. Role of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) in Language Revitalization:

The crisis of language loss in India is not just a linguistic issue—it is a profound epistemic rupture. With

each vanishing Indian language, a vast corpus of traditional knowledge, community memory, and cultural worldview also fades into oblivion. Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS), embedded in India's civilizational ethos for millennia, offer not only philosophical and scientific insights but also a framework for revitalizing regional and classical languages. This section explores how integrating IKS into contemporary education and public discourse can become a powerful tool for linguistic decolonization, cultural resurgence, and talent restoration.

8.1 Understanding IKS and Its Linguistic Anchoring:

Indian Knowledge Systems refer to the indigenous frameworks of knowledge developed over centuries in India across various disciplines such as mathematics, astronomy, linguistics, medicine (*Āyurveda*), ecology, poetics (*alaṅkāraśāstra*), metallurgy, agriculture, and governance. These were encoded in classical languages like Sanskrit, Pāli, Prākrit, and Tamil, and transmitted orally or in written form through regional tongues like Braj, Maithili, Marathi, Kannada, and others. As Kapil Kapoor (2010) observes, "Indian intellectual tradition is language-based and text-based. To lose the language is to lose access to the knowledge." The erosion of Indian languages under colonial and postcolonial English dominance has effectively alienated modern learners from these knowledge systems. Reviving IKS therefore necessitates the revitalization of the languages in which this knowledge is encoded.

8.2 Sanskrit: The Core of Indian Epistemology:

Sanskrit, often called the "language of consciousness," is the backbone of IKS. Works like the Vedas, Upaniṣads, Āyurvedic texts, Nyāya Sūtras, Nāṭyaśāstra, and Vākyapadīya are composed in Sanskrit. It is not merely a liturgical language but a scientific and philosophical medium, deeply analytical and systematic. The linguistic philosophy of Bhartrihari, particularly in the *Vākyapadīya*, provides foundational theories of semantics, sentence-meaning, and cognition—relevant even in contemporary linguistic and AI research (Iyer, 1990). Similarly, Panini's Aṣṭādhyāyī, a generative grammar from the 5th century BCE, is regarded as one of the most sophisticated systems of linguistic analysis, influencing Western linguists like Ferdinand de Saussure and Noam Chomsky. Thus, the promotion of Sanskrit not only strengthens cultural identity but also opens up intellectual vistas. Its reintroduction in schools and universities, as advocated by NEP 2020, is a strategic step toward linguistic and epistemological regeneration.

8.3 Vernacular Languages as Vessels of IKS:

While Sanskrit forms the classical core, vernacular languages serve as the living vessels of IKS. India's regional traditions—ranging from folklore, farming techniques, medicinal practices, and local jurisprudence to community ethics—are all preserved in Bhojpuri, Rajasthani, Santali, Odia, and countless other languages. For instance:

- Tamil Siddha medicine, older than Ayurveda, survives in Tamil literature.
- Māni Mālamalai and Jaina Prabandhas preserve Jain philosophical traditions in regional Prakrits.
- Kālidāsa's works, widely translated into regional languages, deeply influenced Indian poetics and drama.

Encouraging the study of such texts in their original languages, or through bilingual editions, helps validate regional cultures and democratizes access to traditional wisdom. As Pollock (2006) notes, vernacular languages in pre-colonial India were not passive dialects but dynamic media of courtly and scientific discourse—until they were displaced by colonial and later Anglophone educational policies.

8.4 IKS as a Pedagogical Tool for Language Revitalization:

The integration of IKS into school and university curricula offers a pedagogical opportunity to revive

endangered languages. Instead of treating Indian languages as subjects to be learned for exams, they can be repositioned as media of learning and exploration in various domains. For example:

- Mathematics and logic can be taught through Sanskrit and Vedic texts such as *Lilavati* and *Nyāya Sūtras*.
- Environmental studies can incorporate local ecological knowledge from tribal languages.
- Ethics and civic sense can draw from the *Tirukkural* (Tamil), *Kabir Doha* (Awadhi), or *Bhakti literature*.

Mohanty (2009) emphasizes that such integrative multilingual pedagogy enhances cognitive depth and cultural rootedness, especially among first-generation learners and tribal communities.

8.5 IKS and Decolonization of Epistemology:

The current educational framework in India remains largely Eurocentric, valuing Western forms of rationality, science, and language. IKS offers a pluralistic epistemology that values metaphysical insight (*darśana*), experiential learning, and ethical knowledge. Integrating IKS challenges the monopoly of English as the sole carrier of valid knowledge and repositions Indian languages as capable of producing and transmitting sophisticated thought. According to Ranganathan (2020), "Language and knowledge systems are mutually reinforcing. Reviving IKS in Indian languages is a necessary step in reclaiming intellectual sovereignty." This includes developing technical terminology, scientific lexicons, and scholarly publications in Indian languages—tasks already initiated by organizations like Bharatiya Bhasha Samiti, Sahitya Akademi, and CIIL Mysore.

8.6 Challenges and the Way Forward:

Despite its promise, IKS-based language revitalization faces several institutional and societal challenges:

- Lack of trained faculty to teach ancient and regional languages.
- Absence of digital tools and translations for many IKS texts.
- Urban apathy and elitism, which equate English with intellect.

To counter this, there must be sustained governmental, academic, and civil society efforts:

- Creation of Open Educational Resources (OER) in Indian languages.
- Establishment of regional language knowledge centers.
- Grants for IKS translation projects and multilingual journals.
- Inclusion of IKS-oriented competitive exams to mainstream its utility.

NEP 2020's emphasis on IKS and mother tongue education is a positive beginning, but real success requires policy continuity, funding, and societal will.

8.7 Conclusion:

The revitalization of Indian languages cannot be achieved in isolation—it must be epistemologically grounded. Indian Knowledge Systems, when integrated into education and public discourse, offer a compelling pathway to restore pride, functionality, and prestige to Indian languages. In doing so, they not only democratize education but also help reclaim the cultural and cognitive autonomy of Indian youth long subordinated under the shadow of English. This reawakening is not just about language—it is about civilizational continuity, intellectual dignity, and inclusive development.

9. Comparative Global Perspectives on Language, Identity, and Education:

The debate surrounding the dominance of English in India's education system must be contextualized within a broader global framework. Post-colonial societies, multilingual nations, and culturally resilient countries have all wrestled with the challenges of balancing global languages with local linguistic

identities. Studying international examples provides valuable insights and alternatives to India's English-centric education system. This section explores such global models to argue that India's linguistic diversity can be an asset—not an obstacle—if appropriately integrated into its education and policy frameworks.

9.1 Post-Colonial Language Policies: Insights from Africa and Asia:

Many post-colonial nations adopted the colonizer's language as a means of administrative convenience and perceived global mobility. However, this came at the cost of native language development and the marginalization of indigenous cultures. In Nigeria, for example, English is the medium of instruction despite the country having over 500 languages. This policy has created linguistic hierarchies, where fluency in English often correlates with access to quality education and employment, replicating colonial-era inequalities (Bamgbose, 2000). Tanzania, on the other hand, presents a contrasting example. After independence, it declared Swahili as the national language and embedded it into the education system. This move helped unify the nation and facilitated inclusive learning without relying on a colonial language (Mazrui & Mazrui, 1998). Similarly, China implemented Mandarin as the standard language post-1949, promoting it across diverse linguistic regions through policy, teacher training, and media. This strategy, while politically centralized, created a self-sustaining education system that supports national talent without English dependency (Zhou & Sun, 2004).

9.2 Multilingual Success Models: Switzerland and Canada:

Switzerland offers a successful model of decentralized multilingualism. It recognizes four official languages—German, French, Italian, and Romansh—used in education, governance, and public life. Each canton selects the language of instruction, and students learn multiple languages without creating hierarchies (Grin, 1999). Linguistic diversity is not only accepted but is also actively promoted as a cultural asset. Canada similarly practices institutional bilingualism, especially in Quebec, where the Charter of the French Language (Bill 101) ensures French is used in schools, courts, and public administration. Despite the global dominance of English, Quebec has preserved and strengthened its linguistic identity through well-enforced policy (Jedwab, 2004).

9.3 Mother-Tongue Instruction and Cognitive Gains:

UNESCO (2003) affirms that primary education in the mother tongue increases comprehension, retention, and cognitive development. Finland, renowned for its education system, teaches all subjects in Finnish or Swedish (as per the region) in early schooling, introducing English only as a secondary language. This model respects linguistic identity while achieving top global scores in literacy, science, and math (Sahlberg, 2011). Similarly, South Korea conducts all instruction in Korean through secondary school. Yet, it ranks among the highest in STEM fields globally, demonstrating that national excellence does not necessitate English-medium instruction (OECD, 2019).

9.4 Reviving Indigenous Languages: Case Studies:

Across the globe, cultural and linguistic revival is becoming a priority. In New Zealand, the Maori people have established Kōhanga Reo (language nests) to immerse children in the Maori language from early childhood, which has contributed significantly to its preservation (King, 2001). Native American tribes in the U.S. and Sami communities in Northern Europe have initiated similar revitalization programs, recognizing language as the key to cultural continuity. These models underscore that education rooted in one's mother tongue can revive cultural pride and community resilience. India, with its own vibrant indigenous traditions and classical languages, stands to benefit from similar initiatives.

9.5 The Myth of English as a Prerequisite for Success:

The global dominance of English often misleads developing countries into believing it is essential for

economic progress. However, Phillipson (2009) critiques this view, arguing that linguistic imperialism perpetuates inequality and cultural alienation. In countries like India, where English is often seen as a "passport to progress," this myth leads to discrimination against those educated in regional languages, despite their talents. Skutnabb-Kangas (2000) similarly argues that linguistic hierarchies in education marginalize indigenous populations and produce internalized inferiority. In the Indian context, English-medium education often undermines the self-worth of students not fluent in English, regardless of their creativity, intellect, or domain expertise.

9.6 Implications for Indian Education and Policy:

India's linguistic richness—22 official languages and over 19,500 dialects—presents an unprecedented opportunity for multilingual education. Instead of perceiving this diversity as a challenge, it can be harnessed to develop a more inclusive, cognitive-friendly, and culturally rooted education system. Key policy recommendations include:

- Mother-tongue instruction at least up to grade 5, with structured transition to secondary languages.
- Empowering state education boards to develop quality content in local languages.
- Creating translation ecosystems for scientific and literary texts into Indian languages.
- Promoting Sanskrit and other classical languages as tools of cultural literacy and critical thinking.
- Repositioning English as a supplementary skill, not a benchmark of intelligence or employability.

By learning from global examples and recognizing the psychological, cultural, and economic costs of linguistic colonization, India can craft a future where language becomes a medium of empowerment, not exclusion.

10. Conclusion and Future Directions:

The role of the English language in India is a complex and multilayered issue that intersects with colonial legacies, educational policies, cultural identity, economic mobility, and psychological well-being. While English has served as a global lingua franca and provided access to international opportunities, its dominance in Indian education and society has often come at the cost of indigenous languages, cultural diversity, and the holistic development of Indian youth. This research has critically examined how the over-reliance on English has undermined native linguistic talents, deepened social inequalities, and disrupted the organic connection between language, identity, and creativity.

10.1 Colonial Legacy and Linguistic Alienation:

The foundation of English supremacy in India was laid during the British colonial era, particularly through Macaulay's infamous "Minute on Indian Education" (1835), which dismissed traditional Indian knowledge systems and languages in favour of English as the medium for producing a class of clerks to serve the colonial administration (Macaulay, 1835). This policy initiated a systematic erosion of India's rich linguistic and intellectual traditions. Even after independence, successive governments failed to replace the colonial education structure with a truly Indian one. As a result, English retained its elite status, while regional languages continued to be marginalized, especially in higher education and professional domains (Pattanayak, 1981; Phillipson, 2009).

10.2 Socio-Economic and Psychological Impacts:

The continued elevation of English as a marker of intelligence, class, and employability has created deep social divides. Students from rural or marginalized communities who study in regional languages often find themselves excluded from prestigious institutions and job markets where English proficiency is prioritized. This linguistic discrimination has led to a "language-based caste system," reproducing

hierarchies reminiscent of colonial times (Annamalai, 2004). Moreover, the psychological burden on students to learn in a non-native language has contributed to anxiety, low self-esteem, and underperformance, thereby stifling creativity and confidence (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000). The myth that English-medium education automatically guarantees upward mobility is being increasingly challenged. While English may open doors globally, studies have shown that mother-tongue instruction, especially in early education, significantly enhances comprehension, cognitive development, and academic success (UNESCO, 2003; Mohanty, 2009). Ignoring this evidence perpetuates an inequitable education system that benefits a privileged minority while disenfranchising the linguistic majority.

10.3 Reclaiming Cultural and Linguistic Identity:

A significant portion of this research has focused on the revival and promotion of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) and classical languages like Sanskrit, which once formed the intellectual backbone of Indian civilization. These systems represent a holistic understanding of education that integrates philosophy, aesthetics, science, and ethics through the medium of indigenous languages. Scholars such as Bhartrihari and Panini contributed to global linguistic theory centuries before the advent of Western linguistics (Subramania Iyer, 1990; Kapil Kapoor, 2005). Reviving IKS through Indian languages is not merely a cultural imperative but a necessary strategy for academic decolonization. The integration of IKS into the curriculum, especially through regional and classical languages, can promote not only intellectual self-reliance but also restore pride in Indian identity. As the NEP 2020 rightly emphasizes, the mother tongue or regional language should be the medium of instruction at least till Grade 5, preferably till Grade 8 (MHRD, 2020). However, implementation remains a challenge without adequate investment in teacher training, translation ecosystems, and curriculum development.

10.4 Future Directions:

The road ahead calls for transformative reforms grounded in the principles of linguistic justice, cultural self-reliance, and inclusive education. The following policy and pedagogical recommendations emerge from this study:

- Mother-Tongue Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE): Implement multilingual education policies that prioritize mother-tongue instruction, followed by gradual introduction of second and third languages, including English. This model has proven effective in countries like Ethiopia, the Philippines, and parts of Latin America (UNESCO, 2003).
- Empowering Regional Languages: Provide greater financial and institutional support for content development in regional languages across disciplines, including STEM and humanities. Language should not be a barrier to accessing higher knowledge.
- Cultural-Linguistic Literacy: Reconnect students with classical Indian texts, philosophical traditions, and oral narratives in their native languages. This will help in developing a rooted yet globally aware worldview.
- Repositioning English: English should be taught as a useful second or third language, not as the default medium of thought or instruction. Fluency in English should not be equated with intelligence or competence.
- Technology for Language Revitalization: Invest in language technology—such as machine translation, speech-to-text tools, and digital archives—for underrepresented Indian languages. This can support both formal education and informal learning.
- Decentralized Policy Implementation: Allow linguistic policies to be shaped at the state and district levels in accordance with local realities, rather than imposing one-size-fits-all models from the center.

- Research and Scholarship in Indian Languages: Encourage the production and dissemination of academic work in Indian languages, supported by peer-reviewed journals, conferences, and funding agencies.

10.5 Reflection:

Language is not merely a tool for communication; it is the primary medium through which individuals understand the world, develop identity, and express creativity. For a country as diverse and intellectually rich as India, reducing education to English-medium instruction is not only pedagogically ineffective but also culturally destructive. True national development requires empowering all citizens to learn, think, and innovate in the language closest to their hearts. By decentralizing linguistic hierarchies, embracing multilingualism, and revitalizing Indian knowledge systems, India can ensure that its youth no longer have to sacrifice their identity for success.

References:

1. Annamalai, E. (2004). Medium of power: The question of English in education in India. In J. W. Tollefson & A. B. M. Tsui (Eds.), Medium of Instruction Policies (pp. 177–194). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
2. Annamalai, E. (2004). Nativization of English in India and its effect on multilingualism. Journal of Language and Politics, 3(1), 151–162.
3. Annamalai, E. (2005). Nation-building in a globalised world: Language choice and education in India. In Lin, A., & Martin, P. (Eds.), Decolonisation, Globalisation: Language-in-Education Policy and Practice (pp. 20–37). Multilingual Matters.
4. ASER. (2022). Annual Status of Education Report. Pratham.
5. Bamgbose, A. (2000). Language and Exclusion: The Consequences of Language Policies in Africa. LIT Verlag Münster.
6. Bialystok, E., Craik, F. I., & Luk, G. (2012). Bilingualism: Consequences for mind and brain. Trends in Cognitive Sciences, 16(4), 240–250.
7. Bourdieu, P. (1991). Language and Symbolic Power. Harvard University Press.
8. Constituent Assembly Debates. (1949). Official Report, Vol. IX. Government of India.
9. Cummins, J. (2000). Language, Power and Pedagogy: Bilingual Children in the Crossfire. Multilingual Matters.
10. Deshpande, G. P. (2010). The World of Indian Knowledge Systems. Tulika Books.
11. Gandhi, M. K. (1938). Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule. Navajivan Publishing.
12. Government of India. (2011). Census of India: Language Data. Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner.
13. Government of India. (2020). National Education Policy 2020. Ministry of Education.
14. Graddol, D. (2010). English Next India: The future of English in India. British Council.
15. Grin, F. (1999). Language Policy in Multilingual Switzerland: Overview and Recent Developments. European Centre for Minority Issues.
16. Iyer, K. A. S. (1990). Vākyapadīya of Bhartṛhari. Harvard Oriental Series.
17. Jedwab, J. (2004). Going forward: The evolution of Quebec's language laws. Canadian Issues, (Spring), 55–58.
18. Kapoor, K. (2010). Language, Culture and Consciousness. Indian Institute of Advanced Study.
19. Kapoor, K. (2005). Text and Interpretation: The Indian Tradition. D.K. Printworld.

20. King, M. (2001). Penguin History of New Zealand. Penguin Books.
21. Khubchandani, L. M. (1997). Revisualizing Boundaries: A Plurilingual Ethos. Sage Publications.
22. Krishnaswamy, N., & Burde, A. (1998). The Politics of Indians' English: Linguistic Colonialism and the Expanding English Empire. Oxford University Press.
23. Kumar, K. (2012). Politics of Education in Colonial India. Routledge India.
24. Kumar, K. (2017). Political Agenda of Education: A Study of Colonialist and Nationalist Ideas. SAGE Publications.
25. Macaulay, T. B. (1835). Minute on Indian Education.
26. Mazrui, A. A., & Mazrui, A. M. (1998). The Power of Babel: Language and Governance in the African Experience. University of Chicago Press.
27. MHRD. (2020). National Education Policy 2020. Government of India.
28. Mohanty, A. K. (2006). Multilingualism of the unequals and predicaments of education in India: Mother tongue or other tongue?. In O. García, T. Skutnabb-Kangas & M. Torres-Guzman (Eds.), Imagining Multilingual Schools (pp. 262–283). Multilingual Matters.
29. Mohanty, A. K. (2009). Multilingual Education for Social Justice: Globalising the Local. Orient BlackSwan.
30. Mohanty, A. K. (2010). Languages, inequality, and marginalization: Implications of the double divide in Indian multilingualism. International Journal of the Sociology of Language, 205, 131–154.
31. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o. (1986). Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature. James Currey.
32. NSSO. (2019). Household Social Consumption on Education in India. National Statistical Office, Government of India.
33. OECD. (2019). PISA 2018 Results (Volume I): What Students Know and Can Do. OECD Publishing.
34. Pattanayak, D. P. (1981). Multilingualism and Mother-Tongue Education. Oxford University Press.
35. Phillipson, R. (2009). Linguistic Imperialism Continued. Routledge.
36. Pollock, S. (2006). The Language of the Gods in the World of Men. University of California Press.
37. Ramanathan, V. (2005). The English-Vernacular Divide: Postcolonial Language Politics and Practice. Multilingual Matters.
38. Ranganathan, S. (2020). Reclaiming Intellectual Sovereignty: Indian Knowledge Systems and Language Policy. Journal of Indic Studies, 4(1), 22–38.
39. Sahlberg, P. (2011). Finnish Lessons: What Can the World Learn from Educational Change in Finland? Teachers College Press.
40. Sapir, E. (1921). Language: An Introduction to the Study of Speech. Harcourt, Brace.
41. Sharma, R. S. (1999). Bharatendu Harishchandra aur Hindi Jagat. Rajkamal Prakashan.
42. Skutnabb-Kangas, T. (2000). Linguistic Genocide in Education – or Worldwide Diversity and Human Rights? Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
43. Subramania Iyer, K. A. (1990). Bhartrhari's Vākyapadīya. Harvard Oriental Series.
44. UNESCO. (2003). Education in a Multilingual World. UNESCO.
45. UNESCO. (2011). Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger.
46. UNESCO. (2016). If You Don't Understand, How Can You Learn? Policy Paper 24, Global Education Monitoring Report.
47. Viswanathan, G. (1989). Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India. Columbia University Press.

48. Zhou, M., & Sun, H. (2004). Language Policy in the People's Republic of China: Theory and Practice Since 1949. Kluwer Academic Publishers.
49. JETIR. (2025). Research paper published in Journal of Emerging Technologies and Innovative Research. Retrieved from https://jetir.org/view.php?paper=JETIR2507532
50. IJFMR. (2025). Research article in International Journal for Multidisciplinary Research. Retrieved from https://www.ijfmr.com/research-paper.php?id=52526
51. TJPRC. (2020). Research paper in International Journal of English and Literature (IJEL), 10(2), 1–10. Retrieved from http://www.tjprc.org/publishpapers/2-40-1582888801-1IJELAPR20201.pdf
52. International Journal of Research in Humanities, Arts and Literature. (2019). Volume 7, Issue 2. Retrieved from http://132.148.9.173/archives/international-journals/international-journal-of-research-in-humanities-arts-and-literature?jname=11_2&year=2019&submit=Search&page=23
53. Impact Journals. (2019). Diseases and its effect on the country: Message of Walt Whitman and Keki N. Daruwalla poems. IMPACT: International Journal of Research in Humanities, Arts and Literature, 7(10), 101–106. Retrieved from https://www.impactjournals.us/download/archives/08-11-2019-1573203830-6-IMPACT%20:%20IJRHAL-12.%20IJRHAL-%20DISEASES%20AND%20ITS%20EFFECT%20ON%20THE%20COUNTRY-%20MESSAGE%20OF%20WALT%20WHITMAN%20AND%20KEKI%20N.%20DARUWALLA%20POEMS.pdf
54. OAJI. (2018). Open Access research article. Retrieved from http://oaji.net/articles/2017/488-1536046497.pdf
55. IJEPR. (n.d.). Research paper in International Journal of Education and Psychological Research. Retrieved from https://ijepr.org/panel/assets/papers/176ij8.pdf
56. IJMAS. (2015). Upcoming issue research article. International Journal of Management and Applied Science. Retrieved from http://ijmas.com/upcomingissue/21.01.2015.pdf