

From Policy Vision to Policy Instruments: A Multidimensional Analysis of Language-in-Education in India's National Education Policy-2020

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ABSTRACT:

This study examines how India's National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020) presents its vision for language in education and the measures proposed to put that vision into practice. It uses an integrated framework drawing on Ruiz's language orientations, Fairclough's critical discourse perspective, Spolsky's language-management framework and policy-instrument theory. A framework-guided qualitative and quantitative content analysis was used to examine language-related provisions in NEP 2020. These provisions were classified into seven categories and analysed using frequency, percentage share and a study-specific Representation Index (RI). The findings show that Language as a Resource is the most prominent policy vision, accounting for 33.3% of coded references (RI= 2.33). This suggests that NEP 2020 largely views multilingualism as a cognitive, cultural, educational and socio-economic resource. Among the policy instruments, Educational and Training Initiatives receive the greatest emphasis (17.1%, RI= 1.20), while Economic Incentivization receives the least (4.3%, RI= 0.30). Overall, the policy's multilingual vision is supported mainly through pedagogical and capacity-building measures, while financial mechanisms receive less attention in the policy text. By bringing policy vision and policy instruments together, the study offers an integrated way of understanding how language-policy goals are linked to the mechanisms proposed to achieve them.

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1. Introduction

Language is not merely a medium through which educational content is transmitted; it is a central mechanism through which learners access knowledge, construct meaning, negotiate identity and participate in educational and social life. Consequently, language-in-education policy occupies a critical position at the intersection of educational quality, social inclusion, cultural sustainability and linguistic rights. This concern is particularly important in multilingual societies, where the language used for instruction may differ substantially from the language that learners understand and use in their homes and communities. UNESCO (2025) estimates that more than a quarter of a billion learners worldwide do not receive education in the language they understand best, highlighting linguistic mismatch as a continuing challenge to equitable educational participation. UNESCO therefore conceptualizes multilingual education not simply as a language issue but as an educational approach requiring coordinated attention to policy, curriculum, teachers, learning materials, assessment and implementation.

The educational significance of multilingualism is supported by a growing body of research showing that learners' existing linguistic repertoires can function as resources for comprehension, literacy development, participation and subsequent language learning when they are appropriately incorporated into educational practice (Mahapatra & Anderson, 2022; Vogelzang et al., 2025). Linguistic diversity has been associated with inequality as well particularly in contexts where there is no alignment among the learners' home languages, languages of schooling and opportunities to develop additional languages (Vogelzang et al., 2024). Similarly, Singh et al. (2024) found that teacher trainees viewed multilingual teaching as an important aspect of inclusive pedagogy, highlighting its role in responding to learners' linguistic and cultural diversity. Thus, language is not only conceived not only as a resource it is also conceived as a problem (Ruiz, 1984). Additionally, ideologies associated with language and the management of language related

problems at the ground level are a primary concern for the policy makers and implementers (Spolsky, 2004) to which the critical philosophy provides additional perspectives by raising questions and subsequent examination of the legitimization of the language related policies (Fairclough, 2003). Finally, the regulatory, organizational, capacity-building and economic mechanisms through which language related policy objectives are translated into action are important issues to be addressed while formulating language related policies in educational contexts.

These issues are especially important in the Indian context because the educational value accorded to home and regional languages coexists with practical constraints and unequal linguistic resources. The sophistication of such a relationship is well addressed to in the recent education policy in India (NEP 2020) advocating the shift from a single "medium of instruction" towards a more flexible Languages for Learning approach in which learners' multilingual repertoires can support classroom learning (Mahapatra and Anderson, 2022) that demands emphasis on support to first language along with translanguaging. NEP 2020 uses language in education as a context to address the broader challenges of inclusion and equity in education (Nag, 2024) and it simultaneously identifies linguistic barriers requiring intervention, recognizes linguistic access and choice and assigns cognitive, pedagogical, cultural and developmental value to multilingualism.

Against this background, the present study analyses the language-in-education provisions of NEP 2020 through integrated multidimensional analytical framework. The analytical framework is informed by the Ruiz's (1984) three tier orientation of language viz. language as a problem, right and resource, and the Spolsky (2004) four-category view on Policy Instruments viz. Regulatory Measures, Governance Provisions, Educational and Training Initiatives and Economic Incentivization. By connecting ideological orientation with implementation architecture, the study seeks to provide a theoretically integrated account of how NEP

2020 conceptualizes India's linguistic diversity and how it proposes to translate that vision into educational action.

2. Research Gap

Although recent studies have examined multilingual pedagogy, mother-tongue education, linguistic inclusion, translanguaging and educational outcomes under NEP 2020 (Mahapatra & Anderson, 2022; Nag, 2024; Vogelzang et al., 2024), less attention has been given to the relationship between the policy's normative understanding of language and the mechanisms proposed to operationalize it. Existing research tends to examine particular pedagogical provisions, inclusion concerns, learning outcomes or implementation challenges (Singh, 2025) rather than analysing Policy Vision and Policy Instruments within a common analytical framework. Despite these important contributions, comparatively limited attention has been given to the internal relationship between the normative vision of language articulated in NEP 2020 and the policy instruments through which that vision is intended to be operationalized. Existing studies tend to focus on particular pedagogical provisions, linguistic inclusion, learning outcomes or implementation challenges rather than systematically examining how different conceptualizations of language are connected with regulatory, governance, educational and economic mechanisms within the policy itself. Consequently, an integrated analysis is still needed to examine both how language is represented in policy discourse and how those representations translate into proposed mechanisms of policy action.

The present study addresses this gap by integrating Ruíz's (1984) orientations of language with Fairclough's (2003) critical discourse perspective, and Spolsky's (2004) language-management framework and using the framework to examine the ideological construction of linguistic diversity and the implementation architecture designed to operationalize it. In doing so, the study moves beyond examining individual multilingual

provisions to investigate the broader vision–instrument relationship underlying NEP 2020's language-in-education policy.

3. Purpose of the Study

This study systematically examines how India's National Education Policy 2020 conceptualizes language as a problem, right, and resource, and how these normative orientations are operationalized through regulatory, governance, educational, and economic instruments. By evaluating the relative emphasis across these dimensions, the study identifies alignments and imbalances between the policy's normative aspirations and its proposed operational architecture. To guide this inquiry, the research addresses the following question:

How are Policy Vision and Policy Instruments related to language-in-education represented in India's National Education Policy 2020?

4. Theoretical and Analytical Framework

This study employs an integrated, multidimensional framework to analyse language-in-education policy. Language policy is not treated merely as a set of formal statements concerning the selection or use of languages; rather, it is understood as an intersection of ideological orientations, institutional arrangements, educational practices and governmental mechanisms through which particular linguistic priorities are legitimised and operationalised. This broader understanding aligns with contemporary thinking on multilingual education, which emphasises that effective language-in-education policy requires connections between policy commitments and their implementation through curricula, teachers, learning materials, assessment, institutional capacity, and educational planning (UNESCO, 2025). For analytical purposes, an integrated framework was used that interrelated two distinct but interrelated dimensions of policy, viz. policy vision and policy instruments.

4.1 Policy Vision

The Policy Vision dimension relates to the normative and ideological lens through which

one views language issues in an educational context. According to Ruiz (1984), people perceive language in education in three ways: as a problem, as a right, and as a resource. Within the language-as-problem orientation, linguistic circumstances are represented as difficulties requiring policy intervention. The language-as-problem orientation frames linguistic diversity or non-dominant language use as a barrier to learning or social integration that requires policy intervention. The language-as-right orientation, in contrast, directs analytical attention towards linguistic access, learner choice, equity, non-discrimination, mother-tongue or home-language education and linguistic inclusion. It asserts that access to education in one's home language or mother tongue is a fundamental human and civil right, emphasising non-discrimination and linguistic justice. Finally, the language-as-resource orientation conceptualizes linguistic diversity as a valuable cognitive, social, and cultural asset that enhances learning and promotes broader societal cohesion. These three orientations provide one particular analytical lens to examine any language-in-education policy in general and for that matter NEP 2020 in particular.

Fairclough's (2003) critical discourse perspective provides an interpretive dimension that deepens Ruiz's (1984) language orientations. While Ruiz's framework categorises policy statements into language as a problem, right, or resource, critical discourse analysis examines how these orientations are discursively constructed within the policy text. Specifically, it reveals how framing language in a particular way legitimises specific social structures, shapes institutional identities, and reproduces or challenges underlying power relations. By examining text as a social practice, critical discourse analysis shows how policy language normalises particular linguistic hierarchies and ideological priorities, providing a more nuanced understanding of the social and structural assumptions embedded in each orientation.

4.2 Policy Instruments: Translating Vision into Action

The second analytical lens identified in this study was the lens of policy instruments. Policy instruments concern the mechanisms through which policy intentions are expected to be translated into institutional and educational action. Spolsky's (2004) distinction among language practices, language beliefs or ideologies, and language management is quite relevant in this context. Within this view, Policy Vision maps onto language beliefs and ideologies, reflecting the core values and priorities that shape policy goals. Language management serves as the explicit operational mechanism—encompassing regulations, governance, educational programs, and incentives—designed to steer actual language practices. Thus, policy instruments act as the vital bridge that translates underlying ideological beliefs into structured management efforts aimed at transforming day-to-day educational practices. Spolsky's framework underscores that language policies do not operate in a vacuum; rather, explicit language management serves as the active mechanism designed to align real-world language practices with underlying language beliefs. This distinction provides a crucial supporting link to the Policy Vision as the normative orientations. To move these beliefs beyond mere ideology, policy instruments function as deliberate language management efforts that seek to structure and transform educational language practices on the ground.

However, it should be noted that the policy-design scholarship defines policy instruments as tools through which governments seek to achieve policy objectives and stresses that policies normally operate through combinations of instruments rather than through a single mechanism (Howlett, 2019, 2024). Recent work further emphasizes that policy mixes need coherence and the capacity to adapt if policy goals are to remain implementable under changing circumstances (Howlett & Ramesh, 2023). Informed by the Spolsky's framework and the cautionary notes from different scholars, the policy instruments are operationalized into four categories: Regulatory Measures, Governance

Provisions, Educational and Training Initiatives and Economic Incentivization. Regulatory Measures encompass directives, standards, formal rules and requirements governing language use and educational provision. Governance Provisions refer to administrative arrangements, institutional structures, inter-agency coordination and specialized organizations responsible for policy implementation. Educational and Training Initiatives include curriculum reform, teacher preparation, bilingual or multilingual pedagogy, teaching-learning materials, professional development and related capacity-building measures. Economic Incentivization captures financial mechanisms such as funding, scholarships, grants, recruitment incentives, subsidies and other resource allocations intended to facilitate implementation. This classification is consistent with the broader policy-design literature's recognition of regulatory/authority-based, organizational, financial and capacity- or information-oriented governmental tools, while being adapted specifically to the language-in-education context examined in this study.

4.3 The Analytical Framework

The two analytical lenses—Policy Vision and Policy Instruments—are distinct yet complementary. The two lenses are unified into an analytical framework designed to examine the language-in-education provisions of NEP 2020, with a holistic approach to language policy as a coherent and coordinated phenomenon among the ideology, curriculum, teacher capacity, assessment etc. (UNESCO, 2025). The primary strength of this framework is in connecting normative policy aspirations (what the policy values) with implementation mechanisms (how it proposes to translate those values into practice). Rather than treating ideological discourse and operational tools as isolated domains, the framework views them as part of a continuum of policy design.

The framework operationalises seven core analytical categories across these two dimensions: the first three represent the three normative orientations of Policy Vision (Ruíz, 1984), while the next four represent the categories of Policy Instruments (Spolsky, 2004; Howlett, 2019).

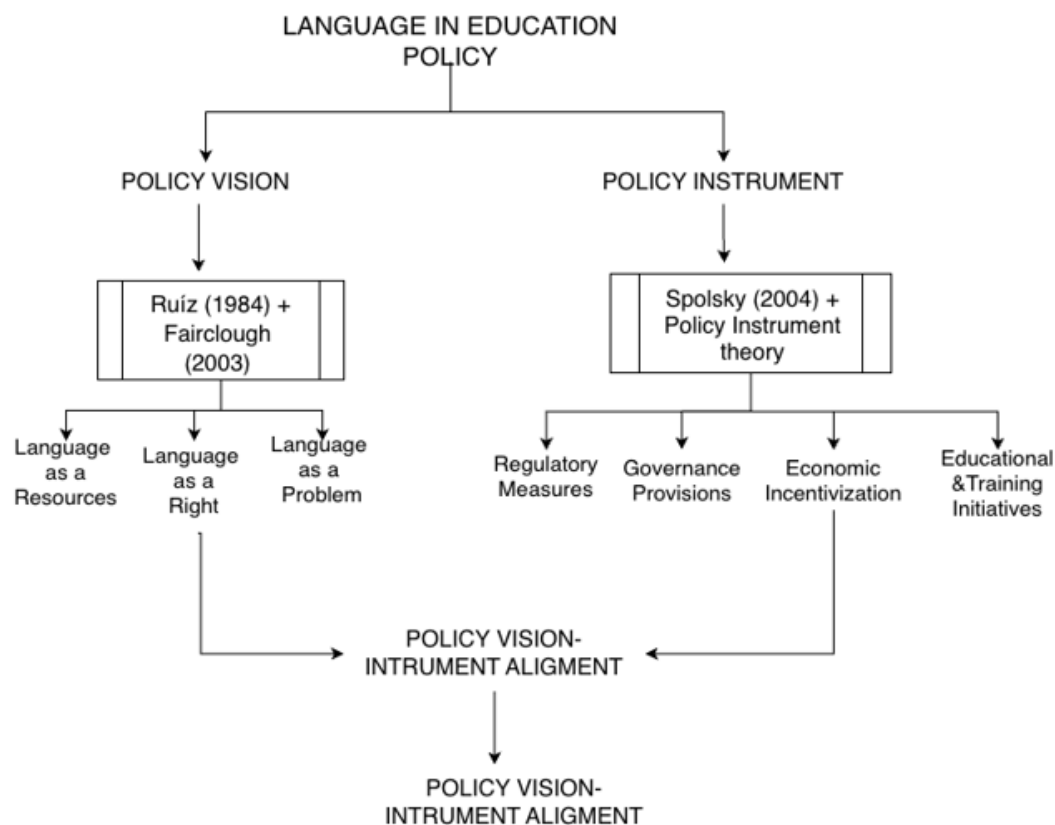


Figure 1. Integrated Analytical Framework for Language-in-Education Policy

Figure note. *Policy Vision is operationalized through Ruiz's (1984) three language orientations, with Fairclough (2003) providing a critical discourse lens. Policy instruments are study-specific analytical categories informed by Spolsky's (2004) language-management framework and policy-design/instrument theory (Howlett, 2019, 2024). UNESCO's multilingual-education perspective provides a broader normative context.*

This framework allowed the researchers to evaluate not only the standalone frequency of ideological or operational categories, but also the specific alignment (or misalignment) between particular vision orientations and their corresponding implementation mechanisms. By

5. Methodology

5.1 Research Design

This study used a content analysis approach to answer the research questions. (Krippendorff, 2018) conceptualises content analysis as an approach to interpreting texts in relation to their contexts involving systematic unitization, coding, measurement, reliability and transparent reporting (Neuendorf, 2017). Content analysis is appropriate for systematically examining policy documents because it enables textual material to be organised into theoretically meaningful categories while retaining attention to the context in which meanings are produced (Krippendorff, 2018).

A framework-based content analysis approach was followed in this study. The framework-based analysis allowed data to be systematically organised and compared through an analytical matrix while retaining sufficient flexibility for contextual interpretation (Gale et al., 2013; Mayring, 2021). The analysis created quantitative data in terms of relative textual representation of the various categories of the matrix that were qualitatively interpreted taking into contextual considerations.

5.2 Data Source and Corpus

The principal data source was the official *National Education Policy 2020*, published by the Ministry of Education (MoE), Government of India. NEP 2020 served as the primary documentary corpus because the study aimed to analyse how the policy represents and operationalises language-in-education. The study examined all four parts of NEP 2020 to avoid restricting the analysis to specific language-related subsections.

combining the ideological framing and implementation architecture, this framework serves as the primary analytical tool for evaluating the structural coherence and operational feasibility of NEP 2020's language-in-education provisions.

5.3 Unit of Analysis

Defining units explicitly matters in content analysis because the unit determines what is identified, coded, compared, and ultimately reported (Krippendorff, 2018; Neuendorf, 2017). The policy document, as the data source, is a 66 pages document divided into four parts, Part I: School Education, Part II: Higher Education, Part III: Other Key Areas of Focus, and Part IV: Making It Happen, including a total of 27 sections in the all four parts. Each section was further divided into a different number of subsections. The numbered subsection of NEP 2020 was treated as the primary contextual unit of analysis.

This distinction allowed individual language-related provisions to be coded while retaining their location and policy context. To ensure traceability, each relevant statement was recorded according to its location in the original document using the format [Part: Page Number: Section Subsection]. This procedure created an audit trail between each coded provision and the original NEP 2020 text.

5.4 Coding Procedure

The coding was carried out by the researchers in the following sequential stages:

- The researchers read the full text of NEP 2020 to identify provisions substantively related to language, multilingualism, medium of instruction, mother tongue/home language, bilingual education, language teachers, translation, Indian Sign Language, linguistic inclusion, language preservation, and related institutional or financial mechanisms. Every relevant statement located during this reading

was cited using the format Page: Section: Subsection and entered into a master chart along with its location reference.

- Each identified excerpt was then reread by the researchers alongside the preceding and following subsections so that the surrounding context could be noted and the risk of decontextualized classification reduced.
- At this stage, generative AI (ChatGPT) was used by the researchers as a supportive tool during coding, rather than as an independent or autonomous coder. The researchers used AI assistance to help organize the master chart, cross-check excerpts against the codebook categories, and flag possible category assignments for review. Every AI-suggested placement was examined by the researchers against the original NEP 2020 text and the predefined coding framework, and the researchers made the final decision on category assignment in each case. This distinction matters methodologically, since large language models have been shown to be able to assist qualitative coding while also raising concerns around consistency, contextual sensitivity, and reproducibility (Morgan, 2023). Morgan's empirical study of generative AI's ability to reproduce themes from previously analyzed qualitative datasets illustrates both the promise of such assistance and the need to scrutinize it carefully.
- The use of AI in this manner is consistent with emerging guidance on the responsible use of generative AI in qualitative research, which emphasises that AI-assisted coding is acceptable and increasingly common when it is applied transparently, with the researcher retaining interpretive authority and final accountability for coding decisions (Jones, 2025; Morgan, 2023, 2025). This guidance calls for AI-curated codes to remain traceable back to the original data, for researchers to document how AI was used at each stage, and for the researchers themselves to remain the ultimate arbiters of meaning rather than deferring interpretive judgement to the tool. In line with this, the researchers treated AI output strictly as provisional and cross-checked it against the

source text and codebook before any inclusion in the final dataset, keeping an auditable link between each coded reference and its location in NEP 2020.

- Accordingly, all AI-generated suggestions were treated by the researchers as provisional analytical input and were verified against the original NEP 2020 text and the predefined coding framework before being accepted into the final dataset. The study therefore followed a human-in-the-loop approach, in which the researchers coded the data and retained full interpretive responsibility throughout, using AI only to support and not replace that process.

5.5 Qualitative Interpretation Procedure

The matrix data were next interpreted by considering the context in which each statement appears in the document, its substantive meaning, and its policy function, rather than keyword occurrence alone (Krippendorff, 2018; Mayring, 2021). The analysis then compared coded provisions within each category to identify recurring patterns and relationships between the policy's normative orientations and its proposed implementation mechanisms, consistent with the systematic comparative logic of framework-based qualitative analysis (Gale et al., 2013).

Frequencies were converted into percentage

$$P_i = \frac{f_i}{N} \times 100$$

shares to permit comparison of the relative textual representation. Next a study-specific Representation Index (RI) was calculated to compare the observed representation of each category with a uniform theoretical benchmark. With 117 coded references distributed across seven analytical categories, the expected frequency under an equal-distribution benchmark was:

$$E = \frac{N}{K} = \frac{117}{7} = 16.71$$

where E is the expected frequency under the equal-distribution benchmark, N is the total number of coded references, and K is the number of analytical categories.

The Representation Index was calculated as:

$$RI_i = \frac{f_i}{E}$$

An RI of 1.00 indicates representation equivalent to the theoretical equal-distribution benchmark; values above 1.00 indicate greater relative textual representation, while values below 1.00 indicate lower relative textual representation.

The RI is an original descriptive device used in this study and not an established inferential statistic. Consequently, it does not indicate statistical significance, policy effectiveness, implementation success, financial adequacy or the substantive importance of a policy category. Moreover, the equal-distribution benchmark does not assume that NEP 2020 *should* devote equal attention to all seven categories. It functions solely as a transparent comparative reference point for describing variation in textual representation.

5.6 Analytical Rigor and Transparency

Methodological rigor was addressed through the use of a theory-informed coding framework,

6. Results

Coding of all four parts of NEP 2020 produced 117 language-related references, each assigned to one of seven categories under the two dimensions of the framework (Table 1). Language as a Resource was the most frequent category overall (39 references; 33.3%) and Educational and Training Initiatives was the most frequent instrument category (20 references; 17.1%). Economic Incentivization was the least represented (5 references; 4.3%). Percentages and the Representation Index (RI; Section 6.8) describe relative textual emphasis within the policy document and do not measure policy importance or implementation. Section 7.1 reports the distribution, Sections 7.2 and 7.3 interpret the provisions within each dimension, and Section 7.4 relates the two.

6.1 Distribution of Policy Vision and Policy Instrument Categories

Table 1 presents the distribution of the 117 coded references across the seven categories. Among the Policy Vision categories, Language as a

clearly specified units of analysis, traceable documentary references, explicit category definitions, contextual reading of coded statements and researcher verification of AI-assisted outputs. These procedures are consistent with the broader emphasis in content-analysis methodology on transparent unitization, coding, reliability, validity and reproducibility (Krippendorff, 2018; Neuendorf, 2017).

Coding consistency was supported through explicit category definitions, contextual review of coded statements, documentary traceability, and researcher verification of AI-assisted outputs. Because coding was conducted by the researcher and no independent second-coder procedure was used, intercoder reliability was not calculated. The study therefore relies on transparent coding procedures, an auditable link between coded provisions and the original policy text, and researcher verification as safeguards for analytical consistency. The absence of independent intercoder reliability is acknowledged as a methodological limitation.

Resource was the most strongly represented, with 39 references (33.3%; RI = 2.33), followed by Language as a Right with 13 references (11.1%; RI = 0.78) and Language as a Problem with 11 references (9.4%; RI = 0.66). Among the policy instruments, Educational and Training Initiatives received the greatest textual representation, with 20 references (17.1%; RI = 1.20), followed by regulatory measures with 16 references (13.7%; RI = 0.96), Governance Provisions with 13 references (11.1%; RI = 0.78), and economic incentivization with 5 references (4.3%; RI = 0.30).

The distribution indicates that NEP 2020 gives comparatively greater textual emphasis to a resource-oriented understanding of language at the level of policy vision and to educational and capacity-building mechanisms at the level of policy instruments. In contrast, explicit economic mechanisms receive comparatively limited textual representation. These differences represent textual emphasis within the analysed policy document and should not be interpreted as direct measures of policy importance, implementation

effectiveness, financial adequacy, or actual resource allocation.

Table 1: Distribution of Policy Vision and Policy Instrument Categories in NEP 2020: Frequency, Percentage Share, and Representation Index (RI)

Policy Orientation/ Instrument Category	No. of References	Percentage Share (%)	Representation Index (Count/16.71)	Relative Representation
Language as a Resource	39	33.3%	2.33	Higher relative textual representation
Language as a Right	13	11.1%	0.78	Lower relative textual representation
Language as a Problem	11	9.4%	0.66	Lower relative textual representation
Regulatory Measures	16	13.7%	0.96	Near the equal-distribution benchmark
Governance Provisions	13	11.1%	0.78	Lower relative textual representation
Educational & Training Initiatives	20	17.1%	1.20	Higher relative textual representation
Economic Incentivization	5	4.3%	0.30	Lower relative textual representation
Total / Baseline	117	100.0%	1.00	

Note: RI values above 1.00 indicate greater relative textual representation than the equal-distribution benchmark, whereas values below 1.00 indicate lower relative textual representation. RI is a study-specific descriptive index and does not measure policy importance, implementation effectiveness, financial adequacy, or statistical significance.

6.2 Policy Vision in NEP 2020

The qualitative analysis shows that NEP 2020 represents language through all three orientations identified by Ruiz (1984): language as a resource, language as a right and language as a problem—but with different degrees of textual emphasis. These orientations are not mutually exclusive; rather, they represent different ways in which linguistic diversity and language-related educational issues are constructed within particular policy provisions.

6.2.1 Language as a Resource

Language as a Resource emerged as the most prominent policy vision category, accounting for 39 references, 33.3% of the total coded references, and an RI of 2.33. The qualitative analysis reveals that this orientation operates

primarily across three interrelated dimensions: cognitive and pedagogical development, cultural and knowledge preservation, and educational inclusion.

At the cognitive and pedagogical level, NEP 2020 emphasizes the educational value of learners' home or mother tongue, particularly during the foundational years. The policy recommends the use of the home/mother tongue, local language, or regional language as the medium of instruction wherever possible during the early stages of schooling and supports bilingual textbooks and multilingual teaching-learning materials. It also emphasizes early exposure to multiple languages and flexible implementation of multilingual learning [Introduction: 5: Principles; [I:13:4.11; I:14:4.12–4.14]. Thus, learners' existing linguistic repertoires are largely represented as resources

that can facilitate conceptual understanding and classroom participation. The coded provisions also connect this orientation with investment in language teachers and the development of multilingual competence.

A second dimension concerns the role of language as a cultural and knowledge resource. NEP 2020 connects Indian languages with cultural continuity, knowledge preservation, literature, translation, and intellectual development. The policy supports the preservation and promotion of classical, regional, tribal, and other Indian languages through curriculum development, translation, language academies, and institutions devoted to translation and interpretation [I:14–15:4.15–4.21; III:53–56:22.4, 22.6–22.19].

The resource orientation also intersects with equity and inclusion. Provisions concerning locally familiar teachers, regional-language learning materials, Indian Sign Language, and linguistic support for diverse learner groups position language as a means of widening educational access and participation [I:9:2.3; I:11:3.5; I:15:4.22; I:27:6.11]. Overall, the high relative representation of this category indicates that NEP 2020 predominantly constructs multilingualism and linguistic diversity as educational, cognitive, cultural, and developmental assets.

6.2.2 Language as a Right

Language as a right accounted for 13 references (11.1%; RI = 0.78). Although its textual representation is lower than the equal-distribution benchmark, the qualitative analysis identifies important provisions concerning linguistic access, learner choice, non-imposition, and inclusion.

One important dimension concerns access to education through familiar languages. NEP 2020 recommends that, wherever possible, the medium of instruction should be the home language/mother tongue/local language/regional language until at least Grade 5 and preferably until Grade 8 and beyond [I:13:4.11]. Bilingual learning materials and pedagogical support are also encouraged where

learners' home languages differ from the language used for instruction.

A second-dimension concerns linguistic choice and non-imposition. Within the Three-Language Formula, the policy emphasizes flexibility and states that no language will be imposed on any State [I:14:4.13]. Learners are also provided opportunities to study Indian and classical languages and, at the secondary level, foreign languages [I:14–15:4.15–4.16]. The standardization of Indian Sign Language and development of relevant curriculum materials further extend the policy's concern with linguistic accessibility [I:15:4.22]. These provisions were identified in the original analysis as the principal components of the rights-oriented category.

Taken together, the category suggests that the rights-oriented dimension of NEP 2020 is expressed primarily through access, flexibility, choice, non-imposition, and linguistic inclusion. The RI of 0.78 indicates lower relative textual representation than the analytical benchmark; it does not imply that linguistic rights are of lesser substantive importance.

6.2.3 Language as a Problem

Language as a Problem accounted for 11 references (9.4%; RI = 0.66). Rather than consistently representing linguistic diversity itself as problematic, the coded provisions primarily identify structural and educational conditions that can transform linguistic differences into barriers to learning and participation.

A recurring concern is the mismatch between learners' familiar languages and languages used in educational settings. The policy also identifies shortages of appropriate learning materials in Indian languages and the need for teachers capable of supporting multilingual and bilingual learning. These challenges can affect learners' comprehension and participation, particularly where adequate linguistic support is unavailable.

The problem orientation further encompasses concerns about the declining use and vulnerability of some Indian languages, inadequate documentation and preservation, limited development of contemporary and

technical terminology, and barriers affecting learners requiring specialized language support.

Thus, the qualitative pattern suggests that NEP 2020 tends to locate the "problem" less in multilingualism itself and more in linguistic mismatch, inadequate educational resources, institutional capacity constraints, and language endangerment. Its comparatively low RI indicates lower textual representation relative to the equal-distribution benchmark rather than low policy significance.

6.3 Policy Instruments in NEP 2020

The policy instrument dimension examined the mechanisms through which NEP 2020 proposes to translate its language-related orientations into educational and institutional action. Four study-specific categories were identified: regulatory measures, governance provisions, educational and training initiatives, and economic incentivization. As established in the theoretical framework, these categories are informed by Spolsky's (2004) language-management perspective and broader policy-instrument theory rather than being treated as "Spolsky's four instruments."

6.3.1 Regulatory Measures

Regulatory measures accounted for 16 references (13.7%; RI = 0.96), placing this category close to the equal-distribution benchmark. The qualitative analysis identifies formal policy expectations, standards, recommendations, and proposed arrangements relating to the medium of instruction, multilingual education, the Three-Language Formula, Indian Sign Language, language options, and Indian-language educational provision.

At the school level, these provisions include the preference for using the home/mother tongue, local language, or regional language as the medium of instruction wherever possible until at least Grade 5 and preferably beyond; flexibility in the Three-Language Formula; and provisions for multilingual learning. Other provisions concern the standardization of Indian Sign Language and the expansion of language-related educational opportunities. At higher levels of education, the

policy encourages increased educational provision through Indian languages and institutional development supporting translation and language preservation.

The RI of 0.96 indicates that regulatory provisions are represented at approximately the equal-distribution benchmark. However, the category should be interpreted as reflecting the formal policy architecture articulated in the document, rather than assuming that every provision constitutes a legally binding regulation.

6.3.2 Governance Provisions

Governance provisions comprised 13 references (11.1%; RI = 0.78). This category captures the institutional and administrative arrangements through which language-related provisions are expected to be coordinated and supported.

The coded provisions identify roles for educational bodies and institutions at national and state levels, including mechanisms involving the Ministry of Education, NCERT, SCERTs, educational institutions, and other responsible agencies. They also include institutional arrangements associated with multilingual learning resources, teacher-related coordination, curriculum implementation, Indian Sign Language, and language preservation.

A particularly visible governance mechanism is the development of specialized institutional capacity, including the Indian Institute of Translation and Interpretation (IITI) and language-related academies and organizations. The policy also links institutional governance with the expansion of Indian languages into higher, professional, and technical education.

Thus, governance provisions demonstrate that the language-policy vision is accompanied by proposed institutional structures and administrative responsibilities. Their RI of 0.78 nevertheless indicates comparatively lower textual representation relative to the equal-distribution benchmark.

6.3.3 Educational and Training Initiatives

Educational and training initiatives emerged as the most strongly represented policy instrument

category, comprising 20 references (17.1%; RI = 1.20). The qualitative analysis reveals a substantial emphasis on teacher preparation, pedagogical development, multilingual teaching-learning materials, curriculum provision, and professional capacity-building.

The policy promotes bilingual approaches where learners' home languages differ from the medium of instruction and supports the development of multilingual and bilingual educational materials. Teacher-related provisions include the recruitment of educators familiar with local languages and the development of pedagogical capacity for bilingual teaching. The policy also gives attention to Indian Sign Language and to educational provision for classical, Indian, and other languages.

These initiatives extend into higher and professional education through expanded opportunities for Indian-language instruction and translation and interpretation capacity. Consequently, educational and training initiatives constitute the most visible operational mechanism within the instrument dimension. The RI of 1.20 indicates greater textual representation than the equal-distribution benchmark and suggests that NEP 2020 articulates its multilingual aspirations particularly strongly through pedagogical and capacity-building mechanisms.

6.3.4 Economic Incentivization

Economic incentivization was the least represented policy instrument category, accounting for 5 references (4.3%; RI = 0.30). The relevant coded provisions concern financial or resource-support mechanisms associated with language teachers, institutional development, research, scholarships, language preservation, and related educational provision.

The policy includes references to investment in teachers proficient in regional and local languages and identifies resource support associated with language development and educational expansion. Other coded provisions relate to support for translation and interpretation, language-related research, preservation activities, and opportunities associated with Indian-

language education. Together, these provisions account for the five references classified under Economic Incentivization.

The RI of 0.30 indicates low relative textual representation of explicit economic mechanisms within the analysed corpus. This finding should be interpreted cautiously. It does not establish inadequate actual expenditure, ineffective financing, or an operational "bottleneck." Rather, it indicates that explicit financial and incentive-based mechanisms occupy comparatively less textual space than the other instrument categories in the coded provisions.

6.4 Policy Vision–Instrument Alignment

When the two dimensions are considered together, a clear pattern emerges: the resource-oriented vision is most visibly accompanied by educational and capacity-building provisions, while explicit economic mechanisms receive comparatively less textual attention.

Qualitatively, the resource-oriented vision is accompanied most visibly by provisions concerning teacher preparation, bilingual and multilingual pedagogy, curriculum and learning materials, language development, and institutional capacity-building. Regulatory measures provide formal policy expectations, while governance provisions establish administrative and institutional mechanisms. Economic mechanisms are also present but receive comparatively limited textual representation.

The findings therefore indicate uneven textual correspondence between the Policy Vision and Policy Instruments categories. A strongly articulated resource orientation is accompanied by substantial pedagogical and capacity-building provisions, but the four types of implementation instruments are not represented equally. This pattern is consistent with the integrated framework, which conceptualizes policy vision and policy instruments as related but analytically distinct dimensions of language-in-education policy. Importantly, this uneven textual distribution should not be interpreted as direct evidence of implementation failure or financial inadequacy. The present analysis examines what

implementation architecture is articulated in NEP 2020 and how prominently its different components are represented in the policy text. Actual implementation, expenditure, institutional capacity, and educational outcomes require separate empirical investigation.

7. Discussion

The present study reveals that NEP 2020 represents a substantive discursive shift in Indian language-in-education policy: linguistic diversity is framed predominantly as an educational, cognitive, cultural, and socio-economic resource rather than principally as a problem to be managed. At the same time, the policy attempts to translate this normative orientation into regulatory, governance, pedagogical, and financial instruments. The quantitative content analysis strengthens this interpretation. “Language as a Resource” constitutes the most strongly represented vision category, whereas educational and training initiatives constitute the most prominent implementation instrument. By contrast, economic incentivization is markedly less represented. These patterns suggest that NEP 2020 is comparatively strong in articulating the educational value of multilingualism and specifying pedagogical mechanisms but less explicit about the sustained fiscal architecture required to institutionalize those commitments.

This resource-oriented construction is theoretically significant when interpreted through Ruíz’s (1984) orientations to language planning. Rather than positioning multilingualism primarily as an obstacle to national integration or educational efficiency, NEP 2020 constructs home, regional, classical, tribal, and other Indian languages as forms of cognitive and cultural capital. The policy links home-language instruction with conceptual learning, bilingual materials with pedagogical accessibility, and preservation of Indian languages with cultural continuity. This finding is consistent with Mahapatra and Anderson’s (2022) argument that Indian language-in-education policy should move beyond a reductive, monolingually conceived “medium of instruction” model towards a flexible multilingual “Languages for Learning”

framework. Their emphasis on first-language support, cognitive independence, equity, and translanguaging reinforces the present study’s interpretation of multilingualism as an instructional repertoire rather than a set of competing monolingual codes. Recent empirical evidence adds nuance to this argument. Vogelzang et al. (2024), studying 1272 Indian primary-school children from low-socioeconomic-status backgrounds, found disadvantages for minority-language children who lacked mother-tongue education in majority-language literacy, while multilingual home environments were positively associated with English performance. Thus, the resource orientation identified in the policy has empirical plausibility, although the relationship between language of schooling and outcomes is more context-dependent than policy discourse alone can capture.

The simultaneous presence of “language as right” and “language as problem” demonstrates that the three Ruízian orientations are not mutually exclusive. NEP 2020 associates’ linguistic rights with mother-tongue access, flexibility, and non-imposition under the Three-Language Formula, access to classical and foreign languages, and Indian Sign Language, while locating “problems” largely in structural conditions such as teacher shortages, inadequate materials, linguistic mismatch, and language endangerment rather than in multilingualism itself. This distinction becomes particularly important through Fairclough’s (2003) critical discourse perspective: policy discourse does not merely describe linguistic reality but legitimates particular understandings of what counts as a problem and what forms of intervention appear appropriate. Nag’s (2024) critical examination similarly identifies linguistic inclusion and multilingualism as central to NEP 2020’s equity agenda. Yet Nathan’s (2023) analysis of Indian migrant children demonstrates why a rights discourse cannot automatically be equated with experienced linguistic justice: migrant learners may simultaneously value their linguistic resources and seek English-medium education because of its perceived socio-economic

mobility. The present findings therefore extend previous scholarship by showing that NEP's resource orientation coexists with unresolved power relations surrounding language status, mobility, and educational opportunity.

The analysis of policy instruments further demonstrates that normative recognition is only one dimension of effective language policy. Through Spolsky's (2004) distinction between language beliefs, practices, and management, the findings indicate that NEP 2020 attempts to intervene actively in linguistic practice through regulation, institutional governance, teacher preparation, bilingual materials, translation, and curriculum reform. Educational and training initiatives emerge as the most visible operational mechanism, including bilingual B.Ed. preparation, experiential language pedagogy, multilingual resources, and local-language teacher capacity building. This orientation is supported by Jha and Dalal's (2024) study of 177 university participants, which found broadly positive attitudes towards selective translanguaging, particularly for comprehension, inclusion, and cultural exchange. In this sense, NEP 2020 moves beyond symbolic recognition by attempting to reshape professional and classroom practices.

Nevertheless, the lower textual representation of economic instruments points to an uneven pattern in the policy's stated implementation architecture. Although NEP identifies teacher recruitment, research funding, scholarships, translation infrastructure, and language-related employment pathways, these fiscal mechanisms occupy considerably less policy space than pedagogical and regulatory instruments. This finding converges strongly with Singh's (2025) conclusion that implementation of multilingual education under NEP 2020 remains uneven because of logistical constraints, resource limitations, and continuing societal demand for English-medium education. It is also consistent with contemporary policy-design theory: policy effectiveness depends not simply on the existence of individual instruments but on the coherence, calibration, and adaptability of the instrument mix (Howlett & Ramesh, 2023; Howlett, 2024).

Consequently, the lower representation of fiscal instruments should not be interpreted as evidence of insufficient expenditure. Rather, it indicates an uneven textual distribution within the proposed instrument portfolio that warrants further investigation against actual budgets and implementation outcomes.

The principal theoretical contribution of this study therefore lies in integrating analytical traditions that are often applied separately. UNESCO provides the broader normative context for multilingual education; Ruíz (1984) identifies the three language orientations; Fairclough (2003) supports critical interpretation of policy discourse; and Spolsky (2004) provides a language-management perspective; and policy-instrument theory informs the analysis of mechanisms through which policy intentions are translated into action. This combined framework bridges the conventional divide between language-policy discourse and policy implementation. Importantly, contemporary UNESCO guidance similarly conceptualizes multilingualism as both a fundamental human characteristic and an educational approach requiring coordinated transformation from policy design to classroom practice. The present study adds to this literature by demonstrating analytically that a resource-oriented multilingual vision can coexist with an uneven instrument portfolio.

The findings also have implications for the implementation of multilingual education. Greater attention may be needed to the financial and institutional support required for multilingual teacher preparation, bilingual and multilingual learning materials, translation and terminology development, Indian Sign Language resources, and language preservation. Curriculum developers and teacher-education institutions can support this process by treating learners' linguistic repertoires as resources for learning rather than as separate curricular compartments. More broadly, language planning needs to be considered alongside teacher capacity, learning materials, assessment, institutional support, and other conditions that shape multilingual education in practice. These priorities are

consistent with UNESCO's (2025) emphasis on coordinated policy, teacher capacity, materials, assessment, and implementation support for multilingual education.

8. Conclusion

This study examined how NEP 2020 connects its vision for language-in-education with the policy instruments proposed to put that vision into practice. The analysis shows that linguistic diversity is framed primarily as a resource for learning, cognitive development, cultural continuity, and inclusion. At the level of policy instruments, the strongest textual emphasis falls on educational and capacity-building measures, while explicit economic mechanisms receive comparatively less attention.

These findings show that policy vision and policy instruments are related but not equally represented within the policy text. The study therefore highlights the value of examining not only what a language policy seeks to achieve but also the mechanisms through which those goals are expected to be pursued. Translating NEP 2020's multilingual vision into practice will require further empirical examination of how linguistic rights, institutional capacity, teacher preparation, pedagogical resources, and financial support interact across different educational settings.

9. Limitations of the Study

This study has several limitations. First, it is based on an analysis of NEP 2020 and therefore examines how language-in-education is represented in the policy rather than how its provisions are implemented across states, institutions, and classrooms. The findings reflect textual emphasis and proposed implementation mechanisms, not implementation effectiveness or educational outcomes. Second, the four policy

instrument categories were developed specifically for this study by drawing on Spolsky's (2004) language-management perspective and policy-instrument theory. Other analytical frameworks may therefore produce different interpretations. Third, the Representation Index (RI) is a study-specific descriptive measure based on an equal-distribution benchmark and should not be interpreted as a measure of policy importance, effectiveness, or actual financial commitment. Fourth, the use of AI as an analytical support tool may raise concerns related to interpretive consistency and reproducibility, although final coding and interpretation remained under researcher control. The study also did not include primary evidence from policymakers, teachers, students, or administrators, nor did it examine state-level implementation, budget allocations, or classroom practices.

10. Future Research Directions

As the present study focuses on the policy text of NEP 2020, future research should examine how its language-related provisions are implemented across schools, higher education institutions, and different Indian states. Studies involving teachers, students, administrators, and policymakers could provide evidence on the implementation of mother-tongue education, multilingual teaching, and the Three-Language Formula. Further research could also examine economic incentivization by comparing policy provisions with actual funding, teacher recruitment, multilingual learning materials, and institutional support. The integrated framework developed in this study may also be applied to state-level language policies or policies in other national contexts to examine how policy vision relates to policy instruments across different educational settings.

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