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Promises or Paradoxes: A Critical Study of English Language Marginalization or Prioritization in the FYUGP Model under NEP 2020.

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Abstract:

This study examines the positioning of English Language under the National Education Policy 2020 through a survey-based enquiry. The perceptions of students and teachers in higher education classes (FYUGP) are taken for the survey. The policy announces a multilingual vision, but its minimal prominence on learning hours in higher education classrooms raises concerns among students and teachers. A mixed-method survey will be conducted among 100 respondents across urban and rural institutions of Kerala, using both Likert-scale items and open-ended questions. The majority of teachers opine that FYUGP model under NEP 2020 has marginalized the importance of the English Language in the curriculum whereas the students perceive that this model gives priority to English Language as compared with the earlier UG programmes. Interrogating the breach between policy procedures and ground realities, this study concentrates on whether the language curriculum of NEP 2020 creates inequalities and destabilizes India's global competency or contributing opportunities to empower Indian students in the global ground.

Keywords: FYUGP Model**,** Destabilized Global Competence, Inequalities in Language Curriculum, Marginalization of English language, Multilingual Vision, NEP 2020, and Prioritization of English language.

Introduction:

English is viewed as a prominent language in the international job market, except in certain countries of the world. English language proficiency becomes indispensable in the fields of trade and technology. Besides, this language is emerged as a significant tool in higher education, administration, and mass media. However, English language learning for educational purposes faces many challenges in India, where cultural and linguistic diversity play a predominant role. The presence of different cultures and multiple native languages further triggers complications in the learning process. India has included English as a second

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language at various stages of schooling for nearly three centuries, as it was entered through British colonialism. Gradually it becomes the language of administration, education, and law in India.

English language is considered as a colonial legacy in many postcolonial countries, including India. In the Indian educational sector, Lord Macaulay is remembered for his *Minute on Indian Education,* through which he lifted the Indian education system from traditional forms of learning to a Westernized model. Although his legacy is often regarded as a symbol of colonial cultural imposition, he is also recognized as the architect of English education in India. His primary target was to create a class of intermediaries who were "Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect" (Macaulay, 1835). His policy has been widely criticized in India for creating a form of "psychological slavery" and for alienating Indians from their native languages and cultural inheritances. However, it is important to admit that English language learning played a significant role in India's freedom struggle and has supported the country's modern financial and overall success.

In 1968, the National Policy on Education (NPE) introduced English into the school curriculum through the Three-Language Formula. During the mid-1960s, when the NPE was being framed, Hindi was promoted as the official language of India. Resistance to the move to make Hindi, the sole official language and link language, led to severe anti-Hindi agitations in non-Hindi-speaking states, particularly in Tamil Nadu. To address these linguistic tensions, the Kothari Commission recommended the inclusion of English. Accordingly, students in Hindi-speaking states were required to learn Hindi, English, and a modern Indian language, while students in non-Hindi-speaking states were required to learn their regional language, Hindi, and English. This negotiation of the NPE 1968 not only resolved linguistic tensions but also settled the educational needs of modernization. Nevertheless Tamil Nadu rejected Hindi and followed bilingual policy consisting of Tamil and English in school education. The constant prominence of English language stems from constitutional requirements and practical needs of India, a multilingual nation. It functioned as a bonding lingua franca in India and has grown as a key mechanism for social flexibility. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 extremely promotes multilingualism as a foundational aspect of early education, disseminating the linguistic diversity of India. It recommends that the medium of instruction in the initial stages of schooling must be given through regional languages or mother tongue in order to develop cognitive thinking and strengthen learning outcomes. The intention of this policy is to ensure easy understanding and lessens obstacles in early education. It continues to accentuate the Three Language Formula with greater flexibility, guaranteeing that no language is mandatory. This policy is emphasizing two of the three languages must be native Indian languages and the third one may be another Indian language, English or any other foreign language.

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The Four-Year Undergraduate Programme (FYUGP) model of NEP 2020 emphasizes a flexible, multidisciplinary, and holistic method to higher education classes. Students can explore various subjects across disciplines along with their major papers, encouraging rational and comprehensive development. Under the FYUGP model of NEP 2020, Students are promised opportunities to engage in research, internships, skill-based learning and academic mobility. However, in this model, English seems to be given less importance compared to earlier undergraduate programmes as the number of instructional hours for English is reduced to three hours per week in the first year. English is no longer emphasized as mandatory in the second year of the course. Teachers believe that this reduced emphasis on English in the FYUGP model is likely to affect the LSRW skills of students. Students may not find sufficient time to acquire academic writing, communication skills and global competence. Thus, this model could discourage those who depend on formal education to obtain English language proficiency.

Scholarly perspectives of this policy elaborately focus on multilingualism and its implications in Indian higher education sector. Even though NEP 2020 promises easy access, equity, flexibility and inclusivity through multilingual education, several scholars and critics strongly argue that this policy strongly supports mother tongue and regional languages in order to decolonize Indian education and resist the supremacy of English language. This sidelining of English unduly affects the first-generation learners and students from rural backgrounds, who consider higher education as their only source of gaining English proficiency. This research paper focuses on the contradictions between the egalitarian prerogatives and the ground realities of the FYUGP model.

The FYUGP model under NEP 2020 heightens the apprehensions of academicians. Bhattacharya (2020) believes that this model establishes a strong connection between English proficiency and employability, and provides guidance to worldwide knowledge systems. Tharu (2021) argues that this model damages the abilities such as critical thinking, academic writing and global competency in communication. Ramanathan (2022) believes that the FYUGP model would produce inadvertent results with regard to the status of English language. Sharma (2023) says that English is shifted from a core academic subject to Ability Enhancement Course (AEC) or Skill Enhancement Course (SEC), highlighting the functional aptitudes over literary and theoretical accomplishments. The challenges of this model demand multidimensional stratagems: proper infrastructure development, large number of subject teachers, systematic and adaptable pedagogy, and flexible policies that identify the ground realities of rural areas (Manjusha et al., 2025). Critics in India assess that English language accredited wide acclaim in the earlier educational policies and all the official messages and letters were written in English. Since it was considered as a model for superiority, authority, and prestige, the glory of Indian native languages was destroyed in Indian soil. NEP 2020 will undeniably provide opportunities among the Indian students to learn Indian languages with much more confidence (IJSREM, 2024).

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The National Education Policy 2020 has given platforms for much academic discussion on its multilingualism, structural change, and Indian ethos. Limited critical attention was given to the positioning of English language in higher education, especially within the FYUGP model. Existing studies on this topic are policy-oriented and theoretical, and fail to capture the perceptions of its stakeholders. The gap between the intention of the policy and its practical implications remain underexplored. This research paper aims to investigate ground realities across urban and rural milieus of Kerala, and seeks to address the gap through a mixed-method analysis of stakeholders' perceptions of the FYUGP model. The following objectives are measured for the survey: 1. Examining the representation and role of the English Language in NEP 2020. 2. Analyzing the perceptions of teachers and students regarding the significance of English.

Pertinent questions arise to conduct the survey. They are,

1. Does the policy clearly define the role of English in Higher Education?
2. Does NEP 2020 prioritize regional languages over English?
3. Does the policy marginalize the importance of English in the curriculum?
4. Is English essential for employability and global opportunities?
5. How do the stakeholders perceive reduced instructional hours of English?

A comprehensive survey using a five-point Likert scale was conducted among 100 stakeholders (50 students and 50 teachers) to measure their perceptions of NEP 2020's emphasis on English. Responses were scored from 1 to 5, capturing a wide range of opinions from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

1. Students generally notice the policy as providing a clear role for English in education, though not overwhelmingly. Teachers are more critical, with a larger proportion expressing disagreement and fewer showing strong support.

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The policy clearly defines the role of English in education

Strongly Disagree: Student 4, Teacher 6
Disagree: Student 7, Teacher 15
Neither disagree nor agree: Student 7, Teacher 9
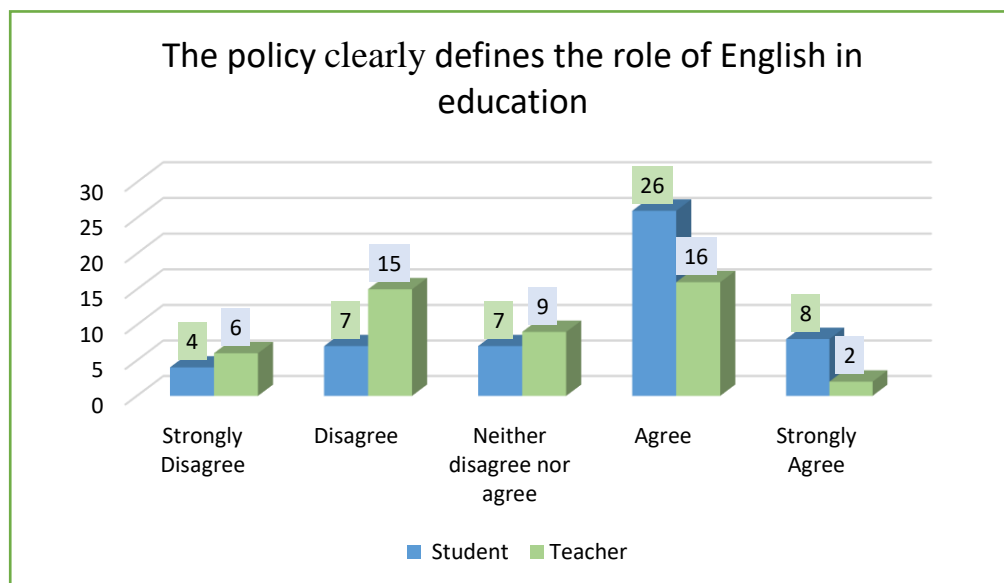Agree: Student 26, Teacher 16
Strongly Agree: Student 8, Teacher 2

Fig: 1

2. Students largely perceive NEP 2020 as favouring regional languages over English, indicating a strong alignment with the policy's multilingual emphasis. Teachers, while generally supportive, exhibit more suspicion and incongruity, with higher rates of disagreement and neutrality.

NEP 2020 prioritises regional languages over English

Strongly Disagree: Student 5, Teacher 2
Disagree: Student 1, Teacher 8
Neither disagree nor agree: Student 6, Teacher 11
Agree: Student 32, Teacher 21
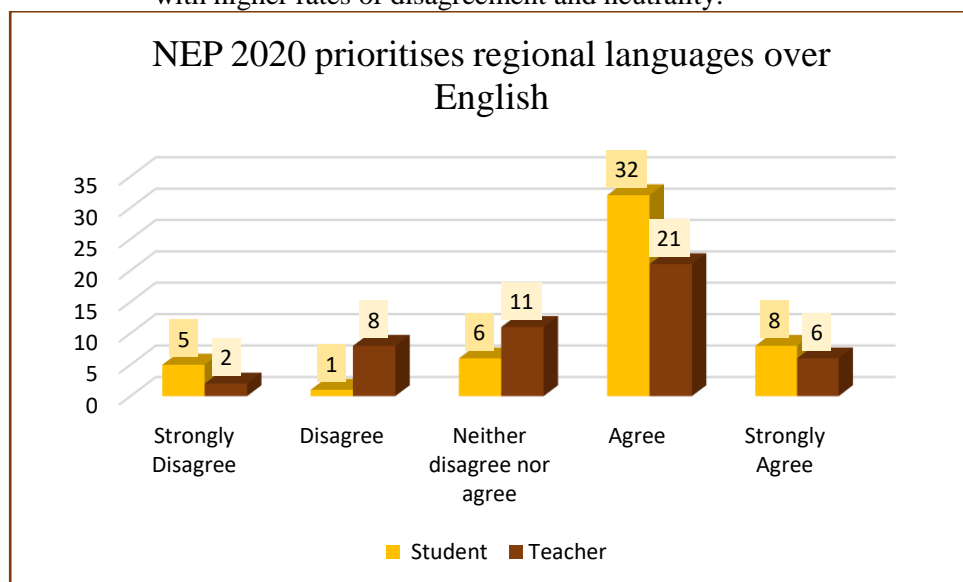Strongly Agree: Student 8, Teacher 6

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Fig: 2

3. Both students and teachers show incongruity about whether NEP 2020 marginalizes English, with neutral responses dominating. However, a notable minority in both groups perceives a marginalization of English, suggesting that the policy's emphasis on regional languages may be interpreted by some as a shift away from English.
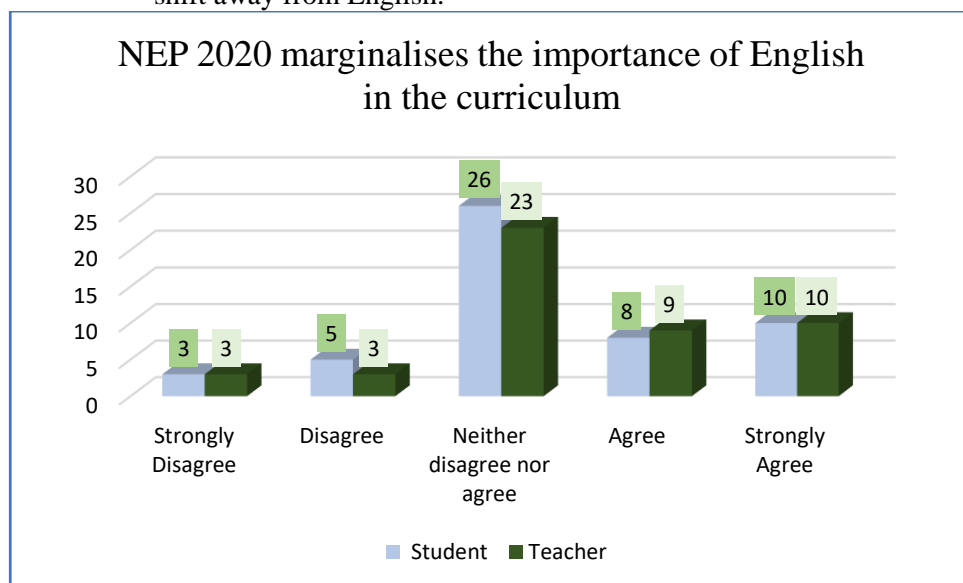

Fig: 3

4. There is strong consensus among both students and teachers that English plays a critical role in career readiness and global flexibility. This shared belief underscores the importance of maintaining English proficiency within the curriculum, even as NEP 2020 promotes multilingualism and regional language inclusion.
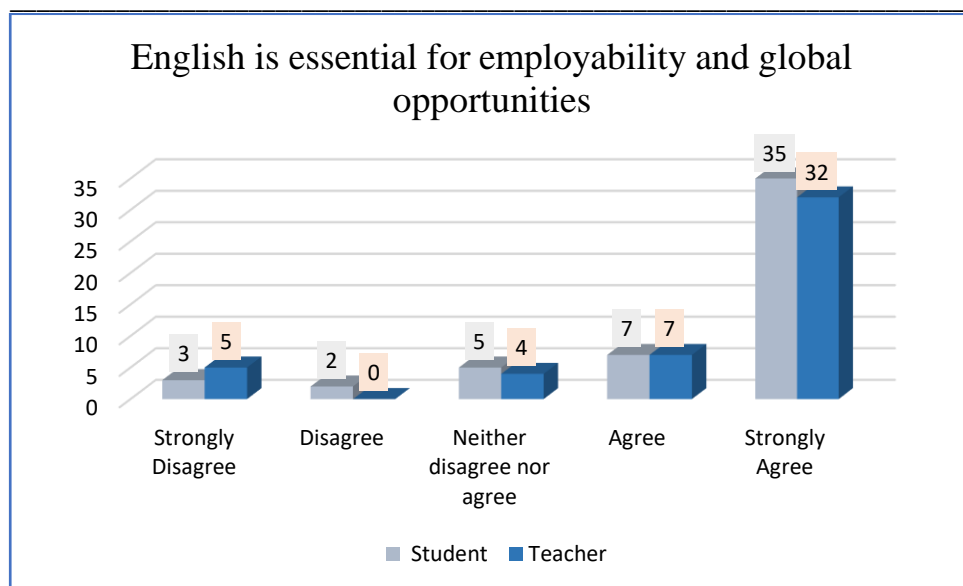
Fig: 4

5. Both students and teachers recognize that reducing English focus may disadvantage rural and low-income students, though the concern is more pronounced among teachers. The high proportion of neutral responses of shareholders suggests that they are uncertain about the real-world impact, possibly due to limited exposure to implementation outcomes or lack of clarity in policy messaging.
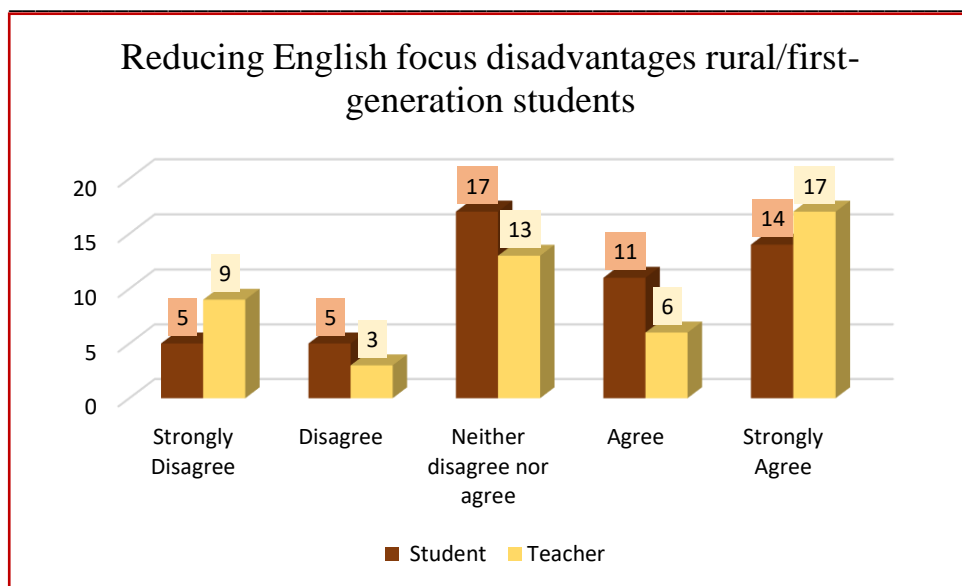
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Fig: 5

Interpretations:
The total score of the 5 questions for all 100 respondents is found out, based on which we calculate the mean % score of perceptions of English Language Prioritization in NEP 2020 $\left[MPS = \frac{MeanScore \times 100}{Maximum possible score} \right]$. This score is classified into one of the four groups as poor or low if the mean % score is less than 35%, average if the mean % score is between 35 to 50 per cent, good or medium if the mean % score lies in the interval 50 to 75% and excellent or high if the mean % score is above 75%. A one sample Z test is carried out to test the significance. The following table gives the Mean, SD, Mean % Score and Z value of the variable considered. (Loyd B. H. and Abidin R. R., 1985).

Objective 1: Examining the representation and role of English Language in NEP 2020.

Variable	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean % score	CV	z	p value
Perceptions of NEP 2020	100	16.69	3.65	66.76	21.86	11.486	<0.001

Table 1

The mean percentage score of the level of perceptions of English Language Prioritization in NEP 2020 is 66.76% which indicates that the level of perceptions of English Language Prioritization in NEP 2020 is good or medium. The CV indicates that this score is not as stable as the value is more than 20%. To test whether the sample information exists in the population or to verify that the level of perceptions of English Language Prioritization in NEP 2020 is good or not, we use one sample Z test and the result is exhibited in Table 1.

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From the table the p-value is less than 0.05 and Z value is positive, which indicates that the test is significant. So we conclude that the level of perceptions of English Language Prioritization in NEP 2020 is more than 5

Objective 2: Analyzing the perceptions of teachers and students regarding the significance of English.

Variable	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean % score	CV	z	p value
Perceptions regarding the significance of English	100	18.08	3.53	72.32	19.51	15.822	<0.001

Table 2

The mean percentage score of the level of perceptions of teachers and students regarding the significance of English is 72.32% which indicates that the level of perceptions of teachers and students regarding the significance of English is good or medium. The CV indicates that this score is stable as the value is less than 20%. To test whether the sample information that we observe exists in the population or to verify that the level of perceptions of teachers and students regarding the significance of English is good or not, we use one sample Z test and the result is exhibited in Table 2. From the table the p-value is less than 0.05 and Z value is positive, which indicates that the test is significant. So we conclude that the level of perceptions of teachers and students regarding the significance of English is more than 50% i.e. good.

Even if the survey highlights English Language Prioritization in FYUGP model, the policymakers need to monitor its operations frequently in order to avoid speculations. Policy declaration, strategy, and procedure under NEP 2020 must work together to make a clear and fair language structure. The role of English should be obviously clarified in official documents while educators should be regularly accessed to reveal classroom realities. Teachers need perfect guidance on how English and native Indian languages can be used together in daily teaching, curriculum support, and practical means so that multilingual classrooms develop students. The goal should be an integrated language approach that builds multilingual skills along with employability. Special care must be given to rural and first-generation learners through bridge courses, digital resources, targeted teacher training, and careful observation in order to ensure that multilingual policies promote enclosure without restraining global opportunities. Syllabi should balance the use of English across subjects with the promotion of regional languages. Equity to multilingual learning materials and digital tools across regions is essential, with support personalized to native needs. Quality circles are much needed among educators, students, and institutions to close gaps between policy and practice and ensure fair, practical and sustainable language implementation.

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