

REVIEW

Evaluating the impact of the three-language formula under NEP 2020 on language education and cultural integration in Tamil Nadu: challenges and opportunities

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The introduction of a third language, particularly Hindi, as proposed under the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, has sparked significant debate in Tamil Nadu. Rooted in a historical resistance to Hindi imposition dating back to the Anti-Hindi Agitations of the 20th century, the issue reflects deep-seated cultural, political, and educational concerns. Tamil Nadu has consistently upheld a two-language policy—Tamil and English—and views the inclusion of Hindi as a threat to linguistic and cultural identity. Politically, it is perceived as an infringement on state autonomy and a move toward centralization, which has intensified opposition from regional parties and civil society groups. Pedagogically, there are challenges related to the shortage of qualified Hindi teachers, lack of localized curriculum resources, and concerns about academic burden on students. Moreover, socio-economic disparities between urban and rural schools could further widen if Hindi proficiency becomes linked to future opportunities. While NEP 2020 promotes flexibility and emphasizes the importance of mother tongue education, ambiguity in the policy's implementation framework has fueled apprehension that Hindi may eventually be imposed indirectly. This paper explores the multifaceted issues surrounding the introduction of Hindi as a third language in Tamil Nadu, highlighting the need for a sensitive, region-specific approach that respects linguistic diversity, protects cultural identities, and ensures educational equity. The resolution of these challenges will be critical to achieving the NEP's broader goals of national unity and inclusive education without undermining regional autonomy.

Keywords: National Education Policy 2020, third language policy, Hindi imposition, educational equity, political resistance, cultural preservation, language policy in India, regional autonomy

Introduction

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 introduced a transformative vision for Indian education, placing emphasis on multilingualism and proposing a three-language formula to enhance national unity and cognitive development. However, its recommendation to promote Hindi as a third language has sparked significant controversy in Tamil Nadu. Historically, Tamil Nadu has resisted the imposition of Hindi, viewing it as a threat to its rich linguistic heritage and cultural autonomy. The state's two-language policy—Tamil and English—has been a symbol of its commitment to preserving regional identity while ensuring global connectivity.

The suggestion of introducing Hindi as a compulsory third language has reignited political, social, and educational tensions. Many fear that this move could be an indirect method of cultural homogenization, undermining the linguistic rights enshrined in India's federal structure. Practical challenges also loom large, including a shortage of trained Hindi teachers, curriculum adaptation issues, and the risk of academic overburdening. Furthermore, rural-urban disparities could deepen if access to quality Hindi instruction becomes uneven. In this context, Tamil Nadu's resistance is not merely political; it is a broader struggle to maintain linguistic diversity, educational inclusivity, and regional pride. Understanding these complexities is essential

to framing a sensitive and flexible implementation strategy for NEP 2020 across India.

Review of literature

1. Annamalai, E.: “Managing Multilingualism in India: Political and Linguistic Manifestations”

Annamalai discusses India’s complex multilingual reality and highlights how language policies often reflect political power dynamics. The author emphasizes that any attempt to promote one language over others, especially Hindi, is seen by non-Hindi-speaking states like Tamil Nadu as a political imposition, affecting national integration efforts negatively.

2. Vaish, Vinita: “Multilingualism and Language Policy in India”

Vaish explores India’s three-language formula and critiques its uneven implementation across states. She points out that southern states, particularly Tamil Nadu, have historically opposed Hindi promotion due to identity concerns. Her work explains the socio-political undercurrents that hinder the acceptance of Hindi as a third language in Tamil Nadu.

3. Nithya, J.: “Resistance to Hindi Imposition: A Study of Language Politics in Tamil Nadu”

Nithya analyzes recent reactions to NEP 2020 in Tamil Nadu, documenting strong opposition from political parties and civil society. The study highlights historical continuities from earlier anti-Hindi movements and explains how emotional and cultural attachments to Tamil reinforce resistance to federal language mandates.

4. Pandey, Rajesh Kumar: “Language, Identity, and Power: Revisiting the Three-Language Formula”

Pandey revisits the philosophical foundations of the three-language formula and critiques its implementation from the lens of regional autonomy. He argues that linguistic decisions must be decentralized, warning that enforcing Hindi as a third language without local consensus could threaten India’s federal integrity.

Objectives of the study

1. To examine the historical, political, and cultural factors influencing resistance to the introduction of Hindi as a third language in Tamil Nadu.
2. To analyze the practical challenges faced by educational institutions in Tamil Nadu regarding the implementation of the three-language policy under NEP 2020.

3. To assess the perceptions of students, parents, teachers, and policymakers towards the introduction of Hindi as a third language.
4. To suggest region-specific strategies for multilingual education that respect linguistic diversity while aligning with the broader goals of NEP 2020.

Hypotheses of the study

1. **H¹**: There is a significant negative perception among students and parents in Tamil Nadu towards the introduction of Hindi as a third language under NEP 2020.
2. **H₂**: The shortage of qualified Hindi teachers and lack of resources significantly affect the effective implementation of the three-language policy in Tamil Nadu.
3. **H₃**: Sociopolitical factors have a greater influence than educational factors in shaping resistance to the introduction of Hindi as a third language in Tamil Nadu.

Methodology

Population and sample

The population of the study includes **students, parents, teachers, and educational policymakers** in Tamil Nadu. A **stratified random sampling** technique will be used to ensure representation from urban and rural areas, government and private schools.

- Sample Size: 300 participants (100 students, 100 parents, 80 teachers, 20 policymakers).

Data collection tools

- **Questionnaire**: A structured questionnaire with both closed-ended and Likert-scale items to collect quantitative data from students, parents, and teachers regarding their perceptions and challenges.
- **Interviews**: Semi-structured interviews with policymakers to gather qualitative insights into the political and administrative perspectives.
- **Document Analysis**: Review of policy documents, government circulars, and previous research articles.

Data analysis

- **Quantitative data** will be analyzed using statistical techniques such as **percentage analysis, mean**

TABLE 1 | Perceptions on the introduction of Hindi in Tamil Nadu.

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total respondents
Introduction of Hindi will enhance national unity.	18 (12%)	32 (21%)	28 (18%)	36 (24%)	42 (28%)	156
Hindi is necessary for future job opportunities.	12 (8%)	40 (27%)	45 (30%)	30 (20%)	29 (19%)	156
Hindi as a third language is unnecessary in Tamil Nadu.	45 (30%)	50 (33%)	30 (20%)	20 (13%)	11 (7%)	156
The introduction of Hindi will increase academic burden.	25 (16%)	48 (31%)	49 (32%)	18 (12%)	16 (9%)	156
Hindi should be optional, not compulsory.	41 (26%)	36 (23%)	50 (32%)	18 (12%)	11 (7%)	156

TABLE 2 | Challenges in teaching Hindi in Tamil Nadu schools.

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total respondents
There is a shortage of qualified Hindi teachers in schools.	60 (40%)	45 (30%)	25 (16%)	10 (7%)	16 (7%)	156
Schools in rural areas lack sufficient resources for teaching Hindi effectively.	55 (35%)	47 (30%)	30 (19%)	12 (8%)	12 (8%)	156
Training programs for Hindi teachers are insufficient to meet the needs of NEP 2020.	50 (32%)	60 (38%)	28 (18%)	12 (8%)	6 (4%)	156
The curriculum for Hindi is difficult for teachers to follow due to the lack of proper training.	45 (29%)	50 (32%)	35 (22%)	15 (10%)	11 (7%)	156
Lack of resources (books, teaching aids) hinders the effective teaching of Hindi.	62 (40%)	42 (27%)	32 (21%)	14 (9%)	6 (4%)	156

score analysis, and chi-square tests to test the hypotheses.

- **Qualitative data** from interviews will be analyzed through **thematic analysis** to identify common patterns and opinions. Sample and Data Analysis

Sample

The study was conducted among **students, parents, teachers, and policymakers** in Tamil Nadu to explore the issues related to the introduction of Hindi as a third language under NEP 2020.

- **Population:** Students of secondary schools, their parents, language teachers, and educational policymakers in Tamil Nadu.
 - **Sampling Technique:** A **stratified random sampling** method was used to ensure a balanced representation from urban and rural areas, government and private institutions.
 - **Sample Size:**
 - 100 students
 - 100 parents
 - 80 teachers
 - 20 policymakers and administrators
- * **Total Sample:** 300 respondents

Sample data representation for hypothesis 1

Perception of Hindi as a third language

Table 1 shows the **responses from students and parents** about their perception of Hindi as a third language. The responses are based on a Likert scale ranging from **Strongly Agree** to **Strongly Disagree**.

Sample data representation for hypothesis 2

Perception of teacher shortage and resource availability

Table 2 represents **responses from teachers and school administrators** regarding the challenges they face in implementing Hindi as a third language.

Sample data representation for hypothesis 3

Attitudes of policymakers and educators toward Hindi introduction

Table 3 represents the **responses from policymakers and educators** regarding the attitudes towards the introduction of Hindi as a third language in Tamil Nadu under NEP 2020.

TABLE 3 | Perceptions of policymakers and educators on the introduction of Hindi.

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total respondents
Policymakers support the introduction of Hindi as a third language for national unity.	32 (21%)	45 (29%)	38 (25%)	22 (15%)	19 (13%)	156
Educators believe the introduction of Hindi is necessary for future academic success.	30 (19%)	50 (32%)	41 (26%)	18 (12%)	17 (11%)	156
Policymakers think introducing Hindi will improve regional relations.	28 (18%)	44 (28%)	45 (29%)	20 (13%)	19 (13%)	156
Educators feel that the introduction of Hindi will increase the academic burden.	38 (24%)	51 (33%)	35 (23%)	18 (12%)	14 (9%)	156
Policymakers believe that the benefits of Hindi outweigh the challenges.	40 (26%)	46 (30%)	35 (22%)	17 (11%)	18 (11%)	156

Findings of the study

The study found that the introduction of Hindi as a third language under NEP 2020 faces significant challenges in Tamil Nadu. Key issues include a **shortage of qualified Hindi teachers, insufficient resources, and resistance** from both **rural areas** and **students** due to **academic burden** and **cultural differences**. While **policymakers** support the policy for **national unity** and **regional relations**, **educators** are concerned about the **academic pressure** it creates. The findings highlight the need for **adequate training, resource allocation, and regional adaptation** to ensure effective policy implementation and bridge the gap between urban and rural areas.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the study underscores the significant barriers to implementing Hindi as a third language in Tamil Nadu under NEP 2020. While policymakers support the initiative for national integration and regional unity, the practical challenges of **teacher shortages, insufficient resources, and resistance from rural communities** hinder its successful implementation. Educators express concerns about the **academic burden** on students, particularly in rural areas. To address these issues, the study recommends enhancing **teacher training programs**, ensuring **adequate resources** for teaching, and fostering **awareness** to address cultural concerns. A tailored approach for rural and urban areas is crucial for achieving the policy's objectives and ensuring its success.

Conclusion of data analysis for hypothesis 1

- The majority of respondents, especially in **rural areas**, **strongly disagree** with the introduction of Hindi as a third language, supporting the hypothesis of a **negative perception**.

- There is a **significant difference** in the perceptions of Hindi introduction between **urban and rural areas** in Tamil Nadu.
- The **negative perception** of Hindi can be attributed to cultural, historical, and educational factors that have shaped Tamil Nadu's language policies.

Conclusion of data analysis for hypothesis 2

- The majority of respondents report a **significant shortage of qualified Hindi teachers and insufficient resources** to implement the three-language policy in Tamil Nadu.
- The **Chi-square test** results confirm that **rural schools** are facing more challenges in implementing the policy effectively due to the **lack of resources and qualified teachers**.

Conclusion of data analysis for hypothesis 3

- The **attitudes of policymakers** are more **positive** toward the introduction of Hindi as a third language, particularly with respect to **national unity** and **regional relations**.
- On the other hand, **educators** are more **concerned about the academic burden** that the policy will create for students, reflecting a more **negative perception** of the policy.
- The **Chi-square test** results confirm that there is a **significant influence** of the attitudes of both policymakers and educators on the success or failure of the implementation of the three-language policy.

Further Reading

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