



Mother Tongue as Cultural Collocation: Identity, Heritage, and Language Preservation

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Abstract

Language is a vital component of cultural identity, shaping and conveying a community's customs, values, and social structures. The mother tongue serves as a primary medium for expressing emotions, thoughts, and cultural nuances, while fostering individual identity and a sense of belonging. Far beyond a communication tool, language is central to cultural heritage, social cohesion, and collective memory. However, globalisation and linguistic homogenisation increasingly threaten this diversity, eroding not only cultural identity but also unique knowledge systems and indigenous worldviews embedded in regional languages. This paper argues that preserving and promoting mother tongues is essential not only for sustaining cultural and individual identities but also for safeguarding epistemological diversity in the face of global cultural flattening. The findings emphasise that preserving one's mother tongue is essential and imperative for maintaining cultural diversity and supporting individual identities. By taking concrete steps such as including regional languages in education, increasing resources, conducting awareness campaigns, and collaborating with the private sector, we can promote regional languages, arts, and culture while preserving and promoting India's rich cultural heritage



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1. Introduction

Language is more than a means of communication; it is a foundational element of human society and identity. It shapes and conveys a community's customs, values, beliefs, and social structures, forming a critical bridge between individuals and their cultural heritage. As social beings, humans rely on language to exchange ideas, emotions, and experiences—a dynamic that underscores why being human is synonymous with being social (Abbate, 2016; Psychologs, 2023). The mother tongue, often acquired in early childhood, plays an especially pivotal role in this process. It is not merely a communication tool but a repository of cultural memory and identity, influencing how individuals think, feel, and relate to their surroundings (UNESCO, 2023; Zeelenberg et al., 2024).

Mother tongues are deeply intertwined with one's sense of self, shaping cognitive development, emotional expression, and social belonging (Kramsch, 2014). As the first language a child learns, it serves as the medium through which individuals build foundational interpersonal and critical thinking skills (Singh & Imtiaz, 2022). Through the mother tongue, individuals internalize cultural values, engage with traditions, and form lasting bonds with family and community, thereby preserving the continuity of cultural heritage (Karimnia, 2012).

However, in a rapidly globalizing world dominated by linguistic homogenisation and the spread of dominant global languages, regional and indigenous languages face an existential threat. This erosion not only

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undermines cultural diversity but also endangers the unique knowledge systems, oral traditions, and worldviews embedded within these languages. Each language embodies an epistemological framework—when lost, it diminishes the global mosaic of thought and expression. As Daniel (2024) points out through the voice of MIT student Chango, technology can play a transformative role in preserving these endangered tongues.

Educational policies and societal attitudes toward mother tongues significantly shape the future of linguistic and cultural diversity. In India, a nation with remarkable linguistic wealth, policies like the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 emphasize the importance of using the mother tongue or regional languages as the medium of instruction at least until Grade 5, as doing so strengthens cognitive abilities and enhances comprehension (Porecha, 2025; Hasnain & Sarkar, 2025). Even earlier, the Right to Education Act of 2009 advocated for mother tongue-based instruction in early education. Reinforcing this stance, Union Home Minister Amit Shah (Press Trust of India, 2022) emphasized that students taught in their mother tongue exhibit stronger reasoning, analytical skills, and research capabilities. He added that empowering students through linguistic familiarity is essential for India's aspiration to become a global leader.

Moreover, as the post-COVID era shifts education into digital and hybrid spaces, there is a growing need to ensure that students retain a strong connection to their linguistic roots. Encouraging multilingual practices and leveraging technology to support home languages in schools can enrich students' communication skills, digital competence, and sense of identity (Singh & Imtiaz, 2022). The interdependence between language, culture, and identity is increasingly central in academic discussions, particularly within the ethnography of communication, where language is seen as both shaped by and shaping the human experience (May, 2005; Zeydanlıoğlu, 2012).

In this context, this paper argues that preserving and promoting regional languages, particularly the mother tongue, is not only essential for sustaining cultural and individual identities but is also a necessary strategy for protecting epistemological diversity in the face of globalisation. It further examines how language policies, educational practices, and technological innovations can work together to safeguard India's rich linguistic heritage while promoting inclusive, culturally rooted development.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Language, Identity, and Cultural Continuity

Language plays a fundamental role in shaping cultural identity and preserving the collective memory of communities. Language plays a fundamental role in shaping cultural identity and preserving the collective memory of communities. It is not merely a means of communication but a vital repository of a community's heritage, values, and worldview (Prasad, 2023). Language carries within it the historical experiences, spiritual beliefs, artistic expressions, and everyday practices that define a culture. Through language, societies articulate their unique ways of knowing, being, and relating to the world, thus ensuring the continuity of cultural traditions across generations.

The mother tongue, in particular, acts as the first channel through which individuals form emotional and cognitive connections with their culture and society (UNESCO, 2023). It is through one's first language that values are internalized, customs are understood, and familial and social bonds are strengthened. The intimacy of the mother tongue creates a sense of rootedness and belonging that is difficult to replicate in a second language.

Research suggests that native language acquisition in early childhood strongly influences the development of self-perception, interpersonal communication, and cognitive skills such as critical thinking and reasoning (Singh & Imtiaz, 2022). These early linguistic experiences shape how individuals see themselves and their place within their communities. When children learn in their mother tongue, they are more likely to perform better academically, retain cultural knowledge, and engage more meaningfully in their social environments.

Furthermore, the use of the mother tongue in education and public life helps preserve endangered languages and the knowledge systems embedded within them. Indigenous languages, for instance, often encode ecological knowledge, oral histories, medicinal practices, and spiritual traditions that are not easily translatable. Their loss would not only mean the disappearance of words but the erosion of entire worldviews.

In immigrant communities, maintaining the mother tongue is crucial for preserving cultural identity and heritage. However, societal pressures to adopt the dominant language can result in the erosion of the mother tongue and, with it, a loss of cultural connection. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 in India advocates for the use of the mother tongue in education to strengthen cultural identity and enhance learning (Porecha, 2025). Research supports that children taught in their native language perform better academically and develop stronger cultural pride (Hasnain & Sarkar, 2025). This highlights the irreplaceable role of mother tongues in nurturing identity, promoting social belonging, and transferring indigenous knowledge systems. By preserving and

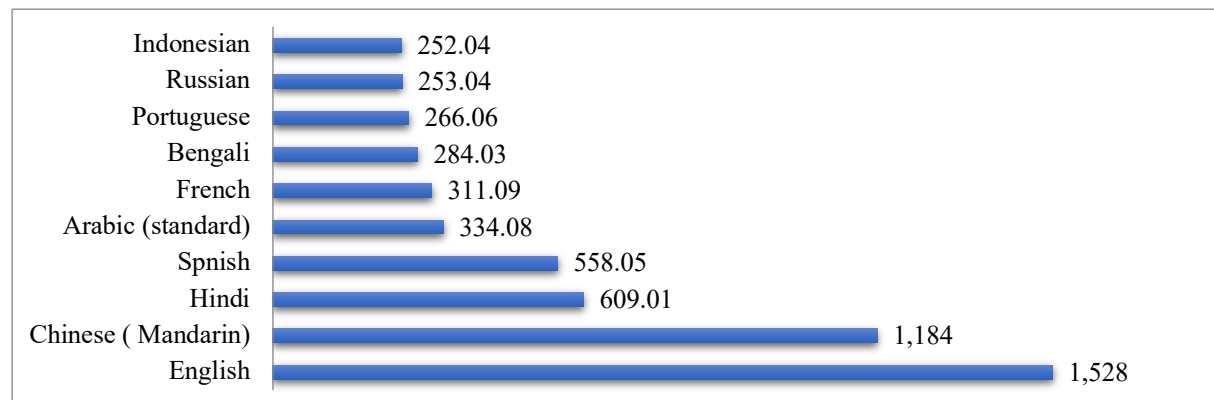
revitalizing these languages, we not only protect cultural diversity but also uphold the dignity and identity of the communities who speak them.

2.2. Globalization and Linguistic Homogenization

Globalization, while fostering unprecedented levels of interconnectivity, economic integration, and cultural exchange, has also contributed significantly to the erosion of linguistic diversity. As global languages—particularly English, Mandarin, and Spanish—gain dominance in education, media, and business, indigenous and regional languages are increasingly pushed to the margins. This process of linguistic homogenization threatens not only the survival of less widely spoken languages but also the cultural diversity and knowledge systems embedded within them. The following graph illustrates the number of speakers in the top ten spoken languages worldwide in 2025 (by speakers in millions):

Figure-1:

Top ten spoken languages worldwide in 2025 (speakers in millions),

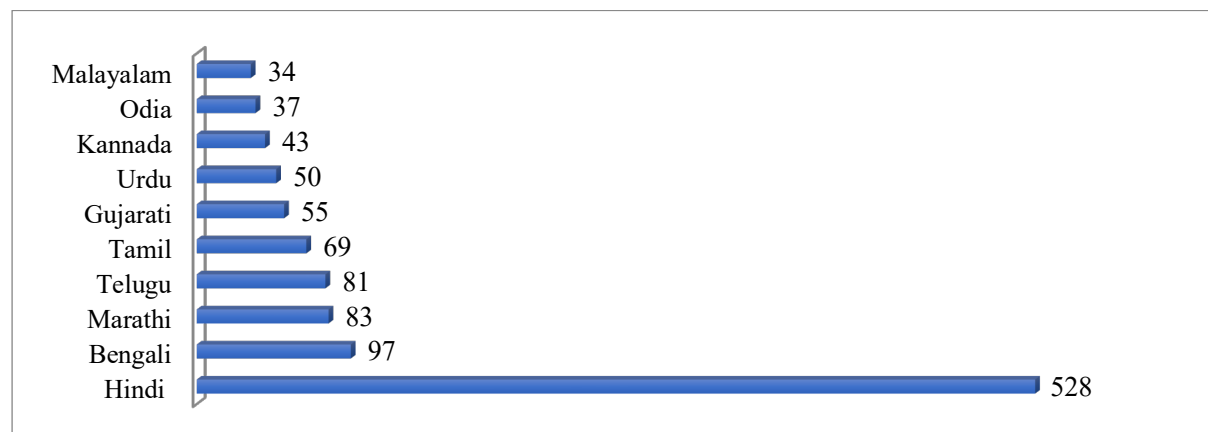


Source: www.statista.com

Though the 2021 Census of India has been conducted, yet the most recent data has not come on the public platform so far as of April 2025. India's linguistic landscape displayed in the following graph is based on the 2011 Census of India which shows the estimated number of first-language speakers across India (millions).

Figure-2:

Top ten native languages in India as per the 2011 Census of India (speakers in millions)



Linguistic homogenization often results in the gradual abandonment of native languages, especially among younger generations who may perceive global languages as more economically or socially advantageous. The symbolic and practical value of indigenous languages diminishes when they are excluded from formal education, digital spaces, and public discourse. This creates a generational disconnect where younger individuals may no longer be able to communicate with elders in their native tongue, leading to the loss of intergenerational transmission of cultural knowledge and traditions.

When a language disappears, it often takes with it a unique set of epistemologies, oral histories, and ecological knowledge systems that have evolved over centuries. These languages frequently carry insights into sustainable living, biodiversity, medicinal practices, and community-based conflict resolution methods that are rarely documented in mainstream discourse. Their extinction, therefore, results in an irreplaceable loss of cultural and intellectual wealth.

In India, which is home to a remarkable linguistic mosaic with over 1,600 languages and dialects, the pressure of urbanization, policy neglect, and socio-cultural assimilation has left many tribal and minority languages endangered (Native Tribe Info, 2022). The movement of populations to urban centres, coupled with the lack of institutional support for multilingual education, has contributed to a shift away from mother tongues toward dominant regional or national languages. Consequently, several indigenous languages have either fallen into disuse or are on the verge of extinction. Addressing this trend requires not only documenting endangered languages but also creating empowering, community-led strategies for their revitalization. Without such efforts, globalization may continue to flatten the world's linguistic landscape, leading to an irreversible loss of cultural depth and diversity.

2.3. Educational Policy and Language Preservation

Educational frameworks play a pivotal role in supporting linguistic diversity, particularly in multilingual societies like India, where hundreds of languages are spoken across various regions. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 of India has made significant strides in recognizing the cognitive and pedagogical advantages of mother tongue-based education. The policy recommends that the mother tongue, home language, or regional language be used as the medium of instruction up to at least Grade 5, aligning with previous legislative mandates like the Right to Education Act (2009), which also emphasized the importance of using a child's home language for early education (Porecha, 2025).

The NEP's recommendation reflects growing evidence that mother tongue-based education fosters better learning outcomes in young children. Research has consistently shown that children grasp foundational concepts more effectively and retain information longer when taught in their mother tongue, particularly during the early years of cognitive development. In these formative years, children develop critical language and cognitive skills, and learning in their first language enhances their ability to understand complex concepts in their later education. This form of instruction also promotes emotional and psychological well-being, as children feel a greater sense of security and connection when engaging with their cultural and linguistic roots (Porecha, 2025).

Moreover, when children are educated in their mother tongue, they are better able to engage with their cultural heritage, traditions, and values, which ultimately strengthens their sense of identity and belonging. It is widely recognized that language is a powerful means of transmitting cultural knowledge, and its role in education is crucial in preserving cultural diversity in a globalized world.

However, despite these benefits, the implementation of such policies remains a challenge due to practical obstacles such as a shortage of qualified teachers proficient in regional languages, a lack of resources for multilingual education, and the overwhelming dominance of global languages like English in academic and professional spheres. To address these challenges, further efforts are needed to build the infrastructure for mother tongue-based instruction and to support the integration of regional languages into mainstream educational curricula.

2.4. Technology and Language Revitalization

The digital age offers both challenges and opportunities for the preservation and revitalization of endangered languages. While the digital landscape is largely dominated by global languages such as English, the rise of new technologies has created innovative opportunities to support language revitalization efforts, especially for minority and indigenous languages. Digital platforms and tools have proven invaluable in making language learning more accessible and widespread. For example, language-learning platforms like Duolingo have introduced courses in several endangered languages, enabling users to learn and connect with their cultural heritage in an engaging and user-friendly manner. These platforms allow speakers of lesser-known languages to create communities of learners, breaking down geographical and social barriers that have traditionally hindered language learning.

In addition to language learning platforms, digital projects like South Africa's SADiLaR (South African Digital Language Resources) initiative are utilizing advanced technologies to preserve and promote indigenous languages that are under-resourced. SADiLaR leverages digital infrastructure to digitize and archive linguistic

materials, create language resources, and develop tools for language education, thus providing a much-needed platform for the promotion of indigenous languages in the digital. Such projects help increase the visibility of underrepresented languages and provide valuable resources for future generations of speakers.

However, while these technological innovations offer great promise for language revitalization, they also raise important concerns, particularly regarding issues of cultural appropriation and digital equity. For example, some argue that the commercialization of endangered languages on platforms like Duolingo might lead to a superficial engagement with the language, where users may gain basic proficiency but fail to understand the deeper cultural context in which the language is embedded (Daniel, 2024). Additionally, there is the issue of digital equity, as many marginalized communities may not have equal access to the technology or internet infrastructure required to benefit from these language preservation tools. This digital divide poses a significant challenge to ensuring that all communities, especially those in rural or economically disadvantaged areas, can fully participate in language revitalization efforts.

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1 Heritage and mother tongue

Prasad (2023) asserts that heritage is intimately linked to language, and one's mother language is often linked to emotional connection and comfort. Utilising one's original language may nurture a feeling of warmth, trust, and familiarity in interpersonal relationships as folktales, proverbs, songs, and oral histories are transmitted through generations in one's mother tongue. These linguistic forms serve as vital repositories of a community's wisdom, traditions, and historical experiences. The absence of language threatens the preservation of these cultural expressions, posing a significant risk of loss or distortion of essential knowledge.

In our globalised world, speaking multiple languages is essential for personal and professional growth. As economies become interconnected, the demand for multilingual individuals is increasing, making foreign language proficiency crucial for better career opportunities (Drishti IAS, 2023). Studies suggest that the mother tongue plays a crucial role in connecting individuals to their heritage and fortifying their sense of belonging within a community (Prasad, 2023). Other research has confirmed similar findings that by preserving indigenous languages, societies not only safeguard unique knowledge systems but also uphold cultural diversity that may otherwise be diminished in the face of globalisation (Saini, 2025).

If one has a strong understanding of their mother tongue, it is easier for him or her to master a new language. A child who reads aloud in their mother tongue from an early age will have better literacy skills in other languages. Mother tongue advances a strong basis for learning additional tongues. Children are capable of learning numerous languages while young. Hence, having a strong basis in their mother's language equips them with the skills to learn extra languages. Children achieve this by transferring the different structures of language to other languages. The grammar that develops as a child learns their native language is easily transferable, enabling them to guess or read between the meanings of words in different languages.

3.1.1 Lack of mother tongue learning shows pre-existing inequalities

Learning in one's mother tongue is not just about education—it is about identity, clarity, and empowerment. When we think and express ourselves in our native language, we learn better, innovate faster, and connect deeper with our roots. A future built on the foundation of one's own language is a future of confidence, creativity, and cultural pride! -Bose (2025)

There is a strong equity dimension in the failure to provide mother-tongue education. Children's language education often mirrors broader societal inequalities or power imbalances. For instance, marginalised tribal groups struggle to have their identity and languages fully recognised, respected, or understood within a wider society. The failure to provide mother-tongue teaching is a form of discrimination that perpetuates these inequalities. Children from poorer rural areas or from ethnic and linguistic minorities are less likely to receive a quality education and more likely to become non-literate adults. Many children in minority language communities, especially those living in remote areas, face significant challenges in accessing a high-quality education. When pre-existing pockets of marginalisation, poverty, or poor teaching quality intersect with schooling in an unknown language, children may never make it to school, or if they do, will find little meaning in the classroom to keep them there. Minority groups continue to make up a large proportion of those left out of classrooms. Ensuring more inclusive education policies which guarantee all children's right to education will involve providing education to minority groups in their own language.

3.2 Mahatma Gandhi's Thoughts on Education

Mahatma Gandhi firmly believed that all forms of education should be taught in Indian vernaculars and was against the English educational system. Here are a few of his opinions on education. He (Gandhi, 1953) stated, “I find daily proof of the increasing & continuing wrong being done to the millions by our false de-Indianising education. The foreign medium has caused brain fag, put an undue strain upon the nerves of our children, made them crammers and imitators, unfitted them for original work and thought, and disabled them from filtrating their learning to the family or the masses. The foreign medium has made our children practically foreigners in their lands. It is the greatest tragedy of the existing system. The foreign medium has prevented the growth of our vernaculars. If I had the powers of a despot, I would today stop the tuitions of our boys and girls through a foreign medium and require all the teachers and professors, on pain of dismissal, to introduce the change forthwith. I would not wait for the preparation of textbooks. They will follow the change. It is an evil that needs a summary remedy. Among the many evils of foreign rule, this blighting imposition of a foreign medium upon the youth of the country will be counted by history as one of the greatest. It has sapped the energy of the nation, it has estranged them for the masses, and it has made education unnecessarily expensive. If this process is still persisted, it bids fair to rob the nation of its soul.” Unfortunately, India's English-educated policymakers disapproved of his ideas and kept the colonial educational system in place.

4. Globalisation and Mother Tongue

According to May (2005), globalisation has emerged as one of the most defining forces of the 21st century, influencing economies, political systems, and societies worldwide. Despite extensive studies on its economic impacts, the complex issue of globalisation's influence on cultural identity continues to spark substantial debate. Globalisation tends to favour dominant languages like English, often marginalising local languages and dialects. According to Urbaite (2024), on the one hand, globalisation has fostered unprecedented levels of interconnectivity, allowing cultures to share their practices, beliefs, and traditions across borders, thereby enhancing global cultural awareness. On the other hand, globalisation has raised concerns about the potential erosion of local cultures, as the dominance of Western media, economic systems, and cultural practices threatens to overshadow and, in some cases, replace indigenous cultural traditions.

4.1 Impact of globalisation on language shift in India

When a community acquires a new language, it is referred to as a language shift. This process frequently results in the original language declining or becoming extinct. In multilingual countries like India, where thousands of languages are spoken, this phenomenon is most noticeable. The process of corporations, cultures, and communities becoming globally interconnected and interdependent is known as globalisation. Language dynamics are impacted by globalisation when dominant languages, like English, are promoted at the expense of regional tongues. In India, this trend is clearly seen as the usage of regional languages gradually declines as English becomes more and more linked to social mobility and economic opportunity. The impact of globalisation manifests in educational policies that promote English-medium instruction, the expansion of digital information in English, and cultural exchanges that prefer global languages over local tongues. As a result, the language shift is accelerated by globalisation, changing community identities and linguistic landscapes in India. India's historical language variety has been greatly influenced by its socio-political dynamics and colonial past. English was introduced during British control, solidifying its status as a language of prestige and power and fostering a complicated relationship with other languages. Following independence, initiatives to support regional languages were frequently eclipsed by the expanding use of English in the corporate and educational spheres. It is essential to comprehend how globalisation has affected language shifts in India because it captures the continuous conflict between maintaining one's linguistic identity and following international trends. Losing a language might result in a reduction in cultural diversity because spoken language is an essential part of cultural identity.

Native language-based distinctive cultural manifestations may become less prevalent as communities move toward more widely spoken languages worldwide. Minority language significance in terms of cultural significance is impacted by this. There is a pressing need to evaluate how the increasing use of English as a medium of teaching in various institutions impacts students' proficiency in their native tongues. The school system's preference for English may produce a generation of speakers who are fluent in many languages yet disconnected from their mother tongues. We can comprehend how educational policies contribute to language change by analysing these

subjects. Globalisation often prioritises economic efficiency over cultural preservation, necessitating research into sustainable practices that can balance both. The pursuit of better job opportunities often compels individuals to adopt English or other global languages, leading to a gradual neglect of regional dialects. Economic factors are a main component of globalisation which directly affects language shift in India. There are still gaps in the literature about particular case studies in the Indian setting, despite the abundance of work on language change and globalisation.

5. Challenges to language preservation

Due to migration, globalisation, and the dominance of major world languages, many languages are in danger of going extinct despite their significance. In this regard, attempts are currently underway to revive the Ainu in Japan, Yuchi in the United States, and Manx on the Isle of Man, all of which have faced near extinction (Baglione, 2017; The Japan Times, 2022). Economic constraints, a lack of institutional support, and cultural assimilation programmes are frequently the causes of indigenous language demise. Cultural diversity is threatened by linguistic homogenisation, which diminishes the depth of the world's legacy. A historical example is the suppression of Indigenous languages in colonial circumstances, such as Canada's forced assimilation practices, which resulted in linguistic loss by preventing Indigenous children from speaking their native tongues in residential schools (Voce, et al., 2021). Similar to this, many regional languages have been sidelined, and their loss has accelerated due to the dominance of English and other global languages in business and education.

Implementing the NEP-2020 is another challenge. The promotion of Indian languages in education requires the cooperation of various stakeholders, including educational institutions, policymakers, and communities. The effective implementation of the policy requires the development of a comprehensive action plan, the allocation of resources, and the monitoring of progress. The involvement of multiple stakeholders and the complexity of the process may lead to delays and roadblocks in the implementation. Changing mindsets and attitudes towards Indian languages is another challenge. Many people view Indian languages as less important than other languages, such as English. The promotion of Indian languages requires the recognition of their importance in shaping the cultural identity of the country and the development of a multilingual society. The promotion of Indian languages also requires raising awareness about their importance and their contribution to the development of the country. The use of technology in promoting Indian languages in education is also a challenge.

The NEP-2020 envisions the use of technology to promote Indian languages in education. However, the lack of access to technology and digital infrastructure in many parts of the country could pose a challenge to the implementation of this aspect of the policy. The use of technology requires the availability of digital resources, such as online language learning apps and educational videos, which may not be accessible to all students. It is unfortunate that many fail to realise the value of Indian art. While some may view them as outdated, these works of art play an important role in shaping our cultural identity. They are a significant contributor to our soft power and help promote our cultural heritage. The biggest challenge we face in promoting Indian arts is the lack of resources, including adequate facilities and funding. This makes providing quality education in these areas difficult. To overcome this challenge, we need to create more art galleries, museums, and cultural centres, and allocate more resources to these important endeavours. This is the only way we can properly promote and appreciate the rich and diverse arts of India.

In today's world, many people tend to overlook the importance of Indian arts in comparison to other subjects like science and technology. However, it is important to recognise that Indian arts play a significant role in shaping the cultural identity of the country. It is not only important to promote Indian art, but also to create awareness about their contribution to the development of the country. The NEP 2020 has taken a step in the right direction by envisioning the use of technology to promote Indian arts in education. However, the real challenge lies in ensuring that this aspect of the policy is implemented effectively. The lack of access to technology and digital infrastructure in many parts of the country could pose a challenge in achieving this goal. It is important to ensure that digital resources, such as online art galleries and educational videos, are made available to all students, regardless of their location. Only then can we truly promote Indian arts and provide a well-rounded education to our students. As a diverse country with numerous languages, religions, and customs, India faces a major challenge in promoting its culture. Many people view Indian culture as outdated and irrelevant in modern times. To address this issue, the country must recognise the importance of its culture in shaping its cultural identity and soft power. It's also necessary to raise awareness about its role in the country's cultural heritage. However, promoting Indian culture requires inclusive efforts that reflect the diversity of the country's population. This promotion should not be limited to one particular region or community, and adequate facilities such as cultural centres, museums, and

libraries should be established. Another challenge is the lack of resources to provide quality education in these areas. Developing a comprehensive curriculum that incorporates Indian culture into mainstream education is crucial. The curriculum must meet the needs of a diverse student population and provide them with a well-rounded education.

Preserving India's diverse cultural heritage is a top priority, and promoting Indian languages, arts, and culture through education is a significant step towards achieving this goal. Effective solutions must be developed to overcome the challenges that hinder its implementation. This includes creating a comprehensive curriculum, leveraging technology, increasing funding, forging partnerships, hosting cultural festivals, and raising awareness. By taking concrete steps such as including regional languages in education, increasing resources, conducting awareness campaigns, and collaborating with the private sector, we can promote regional languages, arts, and culture, while preserving and promoting India's rich cultural heritage. The education system is an excellent platform to achieve this objective. However, several challenges need to be addressed to ensure the successful implementation of this policy. In conclusion, the successful promotion of Indian languages, arts, and culture can help preserve India's cultural diversity, develop national unity and integration, and ensure a well-rounded education for future generations.

5.1 Democratising language education

India, one of the most linguistically diverse countries, has taken democratic steps towards language education. The National Education Policy (NEP) of India, which was revised and approved in 2020, aims to promote multiple languages within education, aligning with the concept of "democratic reform" in educational language policymaking and addressing the challenges of creating a "democratic", "socially just", and "progressive education policy" in a socio-political country like India. The stated goal of NEP 2020 is to "promote multilingualism and the power of language in teaching and learning" (p. 5), a fundamental tenet that plays a crucial role in policymaking in India. This is because national policy documents have not previously promoted multilingualism as a teaching technique across all curriculum disciplines.

According to the NEP 2020, young children learn and grasp nontrivial concepts more quickly in their home language/mother tongue (p. 13). It also offers a few other suggestions to promote and capitalise on multilingualism, most of which are broadly in line with what is commonly known as mother tongue-based multilingual education (UNESCO, 2024). This approach means that the home language/mother tongue/local language/regional language (as stated on page 13) is preferred as the medium of instruction (MOI) until grades 5 and 8. The policy also recommended that textbooks should be made available in local languages, bilingual teaching-learning materials, as well as classroom interaction should be in the mother tongue. Therefore, we should encourage the knowledge of the "local language" (GOI, 2020, p. 9). The policy's goal for language teaching is to "improve" it to be "more experiential" and focus on "the ability to converse and interact in the language" (GOI, 2020, p. 54). 50% of pupils in 10 out of 29 Indian states may speak different languages at home and school. This implies that we must invest more effort in addressing the children's initial literacy learning needs, including curriculum creation, teacher training, and materials development. Several governments, such as Kerala and Karnataka, have made this decision.

5.1.1 Leveraging Technology for Native Language Empowerment

Dosmambetova (2025) states that machine translation is among the most extensively studied domains of natural language processing (NLP), addressing indigenous languages. The utilisation of machine translation models, speech recognition for indigenous languages, and the digitisation of documents in these languages exemplify the usefulness of artificial intelligence (AI). Consequently, artificial neural networks represent the ultimate goal of machine translation when significant quantities of training data are readily available, particularly for high-resource languages (HRL).

In Peru, Quechua, Aymara, Ashaninka, and other minority languages have been traditionally marginalised in the digital domain; however, artificial intelligence facilitates the generation of linguistic corpora and the development of tools that enhance their utilisation on contemporary platforms. The preservation of indigenous languages secures invaluable knowledge and is essential for maintaining the identity and well-being of their speakers. Nonetheless, these and other rights of indigenous peoples persistently face violations owing to insufficient political backing and entrenched systemic imbalances within national institutions. In this context, artificial intelligence applications that support indigenous languages serve as instruments for social engagement that actively counteract the displacement and extinction of these languages, thereby safeguarding and reclaiming

them. In its recommendations on the use of AI with indigenous peoples, UNESCO (2021) emphasises the importance of promoting these groups' active involvement throughout the AI system's life cycle. From design to implementation, this involves making sure that they represent their values, worldviews, and traditional knowledge. Additionally, it highlights the significance of ensuring indigenous data sovereignty in order to maintain control over the gathering, utilising, and preserving of information that is pertinent to these people.

The MIT News article titled "Investigating and Preserving Quechua" (Daniel, 2024) highlights a two-week introductory course at MIT led by graduate student Soledad Chango, focusing on Kichwa, a variant of Quechua. The course emphasised interactive learning, integrating cultural context to enhance language acquisition. Chango's initiative highlights the importance of preserving endangered languages through education and technology.

5.2 Bilingual Education Framework

Mubina (2025) writes that UNESCO and several countries, such as Uzbekistan, Canada, Finland, the United States, and European countries, have recommended and implemented bilingual education models in schools to maintain linguistic diversity while ensuring English proficiency. Here is a list of these models:

- Mother-Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE)
- Dual Language Programs (DLP)
- Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)
- Mother Tongue as a medium of instruction: Multilingual Model

UNESCO advocates the MTB-MLE model to enhance learning outcomes and cultural identity in schools; in such a model, native language instruction in early childhood education is prioritised before the introduction of English. Besides promoting bilingualism and biliteracy, Canada and the United States have school programmes that use both English and another language (local language) as a medium of instruction under the DLP model. European countries utilise the CLIL model to develop multilingual competence in subjects other than languages. Such a model encourages learners to use their native language and English interchangeably, fostering their learning and cognitive flexibility. Not only this, but Finland also uses the multilingual model to achieve high literacy rates both in English and the learner's native language. The country strongly incorporates the mother tongue first in schools and universities while English is introduced gradually. Furthermore, Uzbek serves as the primary medium of instruction in schools to help students master English. Their bilingual programme preserves their cultural and linguistic heritage. If it is about Canada, without compromising their language, culture and linguistic competence, the country merges French with English, and their bilingual education maintains French as their official language while promoting English proficiency.

5.2.1 Mother Tongue-Based Medium of Instruction

One important educational resource that improves students' overall learning experience is the employment of a mother tongue-based teaching medium, particularly in primary school (Zeeshan, 2025). He (2025) argues that "[. . . the longer children utilise their mother tongues (MTs) as the primary languages of instruction, the greater their academic success and proficiency in the dominant language." Likewise, Coleman (2011) emphasises the advantages of using children's native language in early schooling, as they "[&] learn to read and write far more easily in a language with which they are already familiar." UNESCO (2023) says that "education in the mother tongue is a crucial element for inclusion and quality learning, promoting mutual understanding and respect while aiding in the preservation of the rich cultural and traditional heritage inherent in every language globally."

6. Conclusion

The mother tongue remains a foundational pillar of cultural identity, social cohesion, and intergenerational legacy. As globalization accelerates, the linguistic landscape in India is undergoing a profound transformation. While global languages like English open doors to education, employment, and international engagement (Crystal, 2012), they also pose a risk to the survival of regional and indigenous languages that encode unique cultural knowledge and worldviews. This linguistic shift is particularly evident among younger generations who, driven by aspirations for upward mobility, often prioritize global languages at the expense of their native tongues.

India's vast linguistic diversity is increasingly endangered by rapid urbanization, policy neglect, and the lack of awareness among youth. Without intentional and coordinated efforts, the nation risks losing invaluable linguistic heritage. Educational reforms like the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 mark a critical step by

promoting mother tongue instruction in early education (Porecha, 2025). However, policy alone is insufficient. A multifaceted approach—integrating education, community participation, digital innovation, and inclusive governance—is vital to preserving linguistic diversity. Technological advancements offer promising tools for language preservation. From platforms like Duolingo to national digital language projects such as South Africa’s SADiLaR, technology is proving to be a critical ally in making endangered languages accessible and engaging. Yet, concerns around digital equity and cultural sensitivity must be addressed to ensure that such initiatives serve the communities they aim to empower (Daniel, 2024).

In an increasingly interconnected world, the challenge lies in balancing the need for global communication with the preservation of local identities. The future of India’s linguistic heritage depends on fostering an environment where regional and global languages coexist. As Prasad (2023) aptly notes, safeguarding mother tongues is not only about language—it is about protecting the identity, dignity, and history of entire communities. Empowering youth with the tools and awareness to value their linguistic roots is essential for ensuring that India’s cultural mosaic remains vibrant for generations to come.

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The authors declare no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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