

National Education Policy 2020: Exploring the Impact of Multilingual Approach to English Pedagogy in Kashmir

¹Benish Afzal Want, ²Mudasir Mushtaq Pir

¹Research Scholar, ²Research Scholar

¹Department of Linguistics, University of Kashmir, Srinagar

²Department of Linguistics, University of Kashmir, Srinagar

Abstract - National Education Policy 2020 aims at bringing significant changes to language education in India by advocating a multilingual approach to foster linguistic proficiency and diversity. Implementing a multilingual approach to English language teaching various challenges and opportunities may arise in the English language classrooms. The current study investigates the implications of this approach on the field of English language teaching in Kashmir. The study used a descriptive-quantitative strategy to acquire quantitative data for statistical analysis and representation of the results. The study employs a well-developed questionnaire to elicit responses from the teachers. This study aims to contribute valuable insights to the ongoing discourse on language education reforms in India and the specific context of Kashmir. As the NEP 2020 sets the stage for a multilingual education in India, this research highlights the importance of addressing regional nuances and fostering an inclusive environment for effective English language acquisition.

Index Terms - NEP-2020, English language teaching, ELT in Kashmir, multilingualism

I. INTRODUCTION

Language education is a dynamic field continually evolving to meet the diverse needs of learners that arise in various contexts. The National Education Policy of 2020 outlines the future of education in India ushering in a new era of language instruction. NEP 2020 embarks on a pedagogical approach valuing linguistic diversity by embracing the principles of multilingualism. The reforms envisioned in NEP 2020 may have significant implications across India, but, it is essential to recognize that the impact may not be uniform, because each region has its unique linguistic, cultural, and educational peculiarities. The present study focuses on Kashmir, where the multilingual approach interacts with a rich linguistic diversity. Situated in the northernmost part of India Kashmir has its own linguistic diversity. It is home to languages such as Kashmiri, Urdu, Pahari, Gojri, and Pashto, each holding its unique place in the socio-cultural landscape of the valley. English language has become the language of education, governance and mass media in Kashmir. In such a linguistically multifaceted context, the introduction of NEP 2020 demands thoughtful consideration of its implementation.

English, as a global lingua franca, plays a significant role in modern education. It opens doors to various opportunities and facilitates communication on the international stage. The NEP 2020 acknowledges the importance of English as a second language and encourages its study within the framework of multilingualism (NEP 2020: 14). However, the practical implications of this approach are yet to be fully understood in a region like Kashmir. This paper aims to explore the impact of a multilingual approach, as envisioned in NEP 2020, on English language teaching in Kashmir. The paper also explores challenges and opportunities that the educators encounter in this evolving linguistic landscape. As NEP 2020 reshapes language education in India, it is important that the regional variations are acknowledged and understood.

ELT in Kashmir and NEP 2020

English continues to be the language of the government, public administration, law, internet and education in Kashmir. English is taught as a compulsory subject from school level up to UG level in Kashmir. Due to its importance at the global level, English is not only taught as a separate compulsory subject but all the other textbooks and subjects are available in English except the languages such as Urdu, Hindi, and Kashmiri. In the educational landscape of Kashmir, English Language Teaching (ELT) serves as a key component of school education with far-reaching implications. English is perceived as a gateway to broader academic and professional opportunities and has become integral to the aspirations of students in Kashmir. Proficiency in English opens avenues for higher education, employment, and engagement in the global discourse. Moreover, in the context of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which emphasizes a multilingual approach, ELT in Kashmir takes on added importance. As the NEP envisions a coexistence of English with regional languages, ELT becomes a bridge by connecting the rich linguistic heritage of Kashmir with the globalized demands of the world. The ability to communicate effectively in English is seen as an essential skill to engage with a diverse range of academic and professional spheres. Therefore, English not only fosters language proficiency but also acts as a catalyst for broader socio-economic mobility and global participation, making it a cornerstone in the educational journey of students in Kashmir.

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 signals a departure from conventional language education paradigms. "Wherever possible, the medium of instruction until at least Grade 5, but preferably till Grade 8 and beyond, will be the home language/mother tongue/local language/regional language" (NEP 2020: 14). This policy advocates for a multilingual approach, recognizing the intrinsic value of regional languages alongside English. English, once positioned as a primary vehicle for socioeconomic mobility, now shares the educational stage with a renewed emphasis on linguistic diversity. This approach presents both a challenge and an opportunity for ELT practitioners in Kashmir. On one hand, there is the imperative to enhance English language proficiency, aligning with global communication demands. On the other, educators must also preserve and promote regional languages, as emphasized by the NEP 2020.

II. LITERATURE SURVEY

The Indian education system is multilingual. Indian classrooms are usually multilingual and languages are used to complement one another. Indian students who learn English as a second or foreign language often already speak two or more languages. Due to the multilingual nature of India, knowing more than one language has become a necessity for people in India. As per the census report of 2011, the number of languages specified in the 8th schedule is 22. Due to the linguistic diversity of India, the Kothari Commission recommended ‘The three languages formula’ (1966):

1. Language: The mother tongue or the regional language.
2. Language: The official language of the union.

Or

The Associate official language as long as it exists.

3. Language: A modern Indian or foreign language (not covered under I and II and other than the medium of education).

The three-language formula aimed at developing and strengthening the multilingual character of the educational system as well as in ELT classrooms in India. The linguistically diverse classrooms provide students with opportunities to enhance their vocabulary in other languages as well as enhance their understanding of English. This educational setup prepares the students to communicate easily in their local language and also helps them to develop their proficiency in English and other foreign languages.

NEP 2020 is the third revision in the educational policy of India. National Policy on Education 1968 proposed the ‘Three Language Formula’ and emphasized the development of regional languages as the media of education at the university level. The National Policy on Education emphasized on promoting Hindi as the link language and as a medium of expression for all the elements of the composite culture of India (National Policy on Education, 1968). The promotion of English was also encouraged in the policy to keep up with the world knowledge especially in science and technology.

The second revision came in 1986 which reiterates with respect to the language policy elaborated in 1968 policy. The policy emphasizes mother tongue or any modern Indian language wherever feasible as the medium of instruction for the first five years of education. The 1986 policy also emphasizes using Indian languages as the media of instruction at the university level by taking requisite measures. The actions proposed in the policy include the production of textual materials in modern Indian languages on a much larger scale, the orientation of university teachers, translation of textbooks from English into Indian languages, and regular review and monitoring of the effort (National Policy on Education, 1986).

Policies on education in India reflect the nature of India as a multilingual nation. NEP 2020 also recognizes the need for educating the youth of India through indigenous languages along with making progressive efforts in inculcating English and other foreign languages to keep up with the progress around the world. NEP 2020 emphasizes teaching children by using their mother tongue up to 8th grade and production of textbook materials in Indian languages, also emphasized in the policy of 1986.

III. METHODOLOGY

This research study adopted a descriptive survey method as per the objectives of the research. The primary instrument used was a structured questionnaire. A sample of 270 English teachers from different schools located in Kashmir was taken for the current study. The questionnaire was designed to get quantitative data on teachers’ perceptions of the multilingual approach and the perceived implications for their overall educational experience. The questionnaires were structured as Google Forms and were distributed among the teachers using online digital platforms. The results were derived from percentages based on the frequency count of the collected data. The findings were tabulated using bar charts followed by a description of the data.

In addition to the questionnaire, semi-structured interviews were conducted with a purposive sample of key informants. The interviews provided an in-depth qualitative insight into the challenges and opportunities arising from the implementation of the NEP 2020’s multilingual framework in ELT. By combining the structured questionnaire data with qualitative information from interviews, a holistic understanding of the multilingual approach’s impact on English language teaching in Kashmir will be achieved.

IV. RESULTS

1. School level:

- I. Middle School**
- II. High School**

In this question, the categorization of samples taken from different school levels i.e., middle school and high school level is given. As per the response received by the teachers, the results achieved are represented in the following graph.

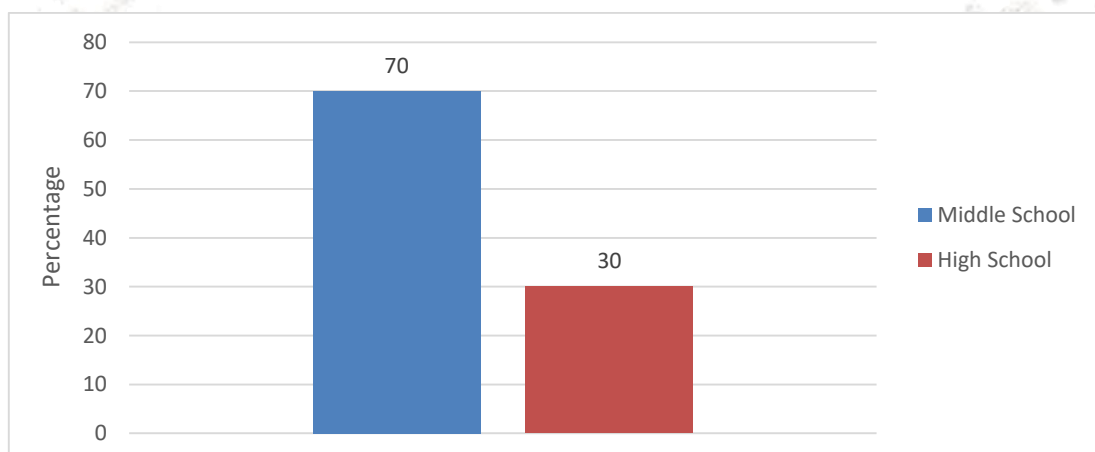


Fig.1: Teachers’ distribution at different levels of Education

As shown in the graph above from the responses received from the teachers, 70% of teachers taught English language at the middle school level and 30% of teachers taught English language at the high school level.

2. Gender:

i) (Male

ii) (Female

In this question, the gender distribution of these teachers teaching at different school levels is given. As per the response received by the teachers, the results achieved are represented in the following graph.

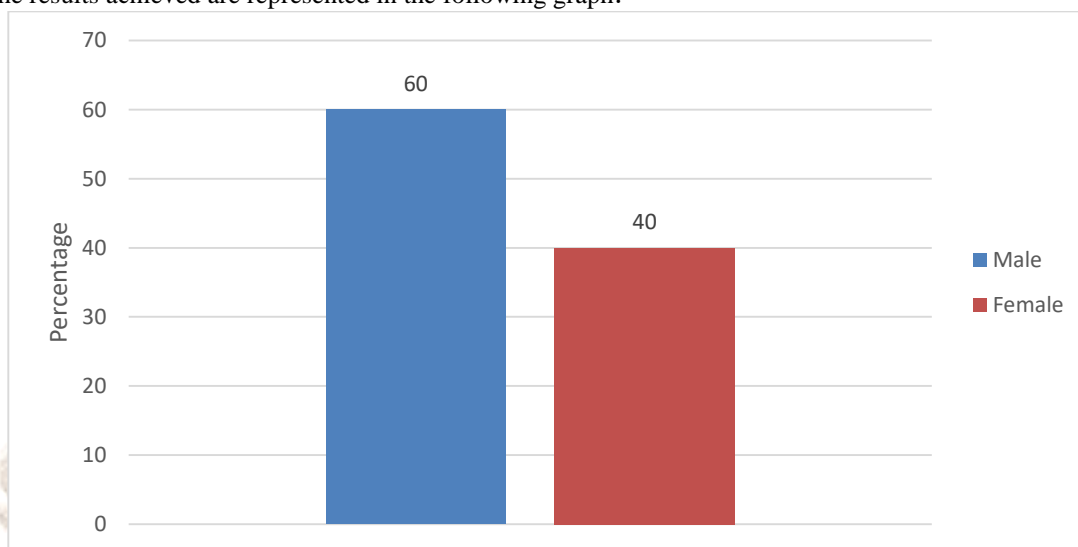


Fig.2: Gender Distribution of the Teachers

As shown in the graph above, from the sample of teachers taken 60% of teachers were male teachers and 40% of teachers were female teachers.

2. What is your ideal medium of instruction?

i) (English

ii) (Kashmiri

iii) (Urdu

iv) (English/ Kashmiri/ Urdu

In this question teachers were asked about their ideal medium they use for instruction in classroom. As per the response received by the teachers, the results achieved are represented in the following graph.

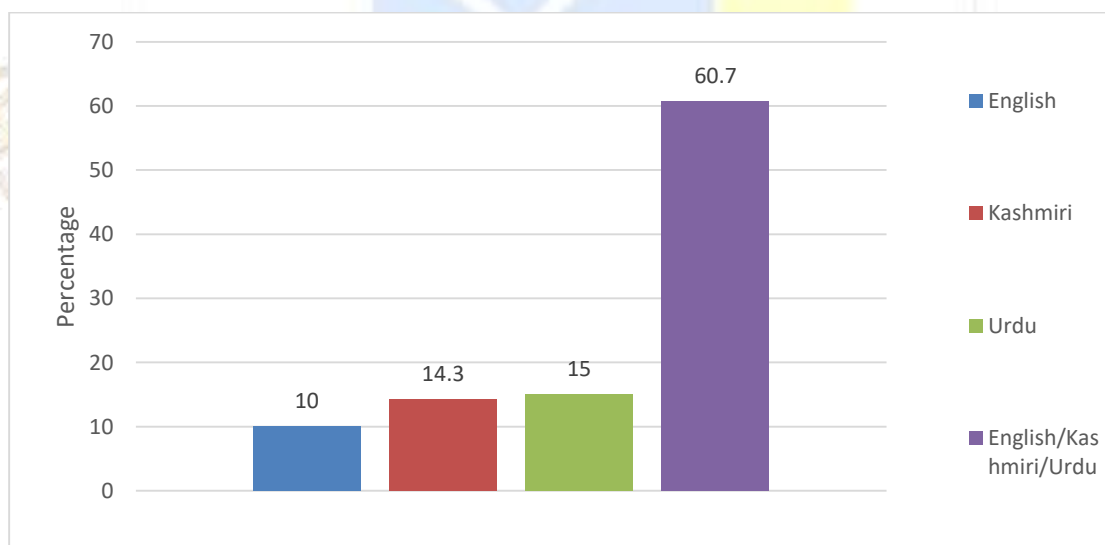


Fig.3: Teachers' Ideal Medium of Instruction

As shown in the graph above, 60.7% of the teachers prefer English/Kashmiri/Urdu as a preferred medium of instruction in their classroom, 15% of teachers prefer Urdu language as the medium of instruction, 14.3% of teachers prefer Kashmiri as the medium of instruction and 10% of teachers preferred English as the medium of instruction. It is important to note here that a maximum number of teachers' ideal medium of instruction is a mixed approach to teaching English by using Kashmiri and Urdu wherever necessary.

This helps the teachers in two ways:)i(teaching English language effectively by using the language themselves while giving a lecture or interacting with the students, and)ii(explaining difficult words and structures by using Kashmiri or Urdu. For such teachers, local languages act as a bridge in understanding difficult language structures of English. A good percentage of teachers also use only Kashmiri or only Urdu in their classroom for teaching English. Most of these teachers belong to middle school level. They are of the view that at an early stage we cannot use English as a medium of instruction as the students will not understand. Therefore, they use Kashmiri)when the students belong to linguistic background of Kashmiri(and Urdu)when the students belong to Kashmiri and other linguistic backgrounds(in their classroom. Teachers who chose English as an ideal medium of instruction stated that the key to developing English language skills of the students is to use English as a medium of instruction. This helps the teachers in creating chances of active interaction in English among the students. Moreover, it helps in exposing the students to a large amount of language data in speech.

3. What language/s do students prefer as medium of instruction?

-)i(English
-)ii(Kashmiri
-)iii(Urdu
-)iv(English/ Kashmiri/ Urdu

In this question, teachers were asked about the language/s students prefer more as a medium of instruction in the classroom. As per the response received by the teachers, the results achieved are represented in the following graph.

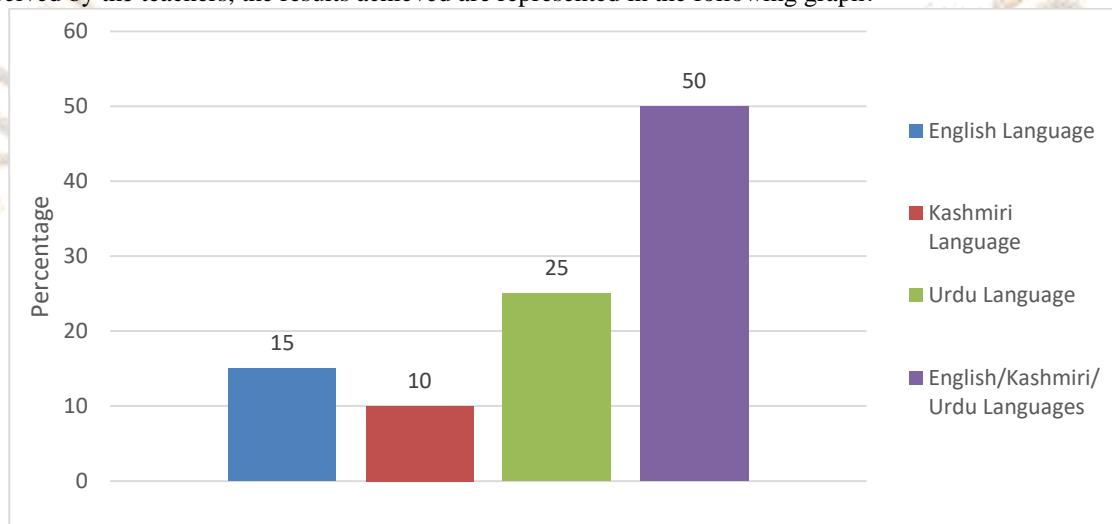


Fig.4: Students’ preferred Medium of Instruction

As shown in the graph above, 50% of teachers claimed that students prefer ‘English/Kashmiri/Urdu’ languages as the medium of instruction, 25% of teachers claimed that students prefer ‘Urdu’ language as the medium of instruction, 15% of teachers claimed that students prefer ‘English’ language as the medium of instruction and only 10% of teachers claimed that students prefer ‘Kashmiri’ language as the medium of instruction. Students’ preference for medium of instruction depends on various background factors. These background factors include age, mother tongue, parents’ education, availability of resources for learning English. The results revealed that the students who preferred English as a medium of instruction mostly belong to the families with good income and resources for learning English language. Also, some of these students belong to high school level of education and a small percentage of these students also belong to middle schools. The students who prefer Kashmiri, Urdu, or an amalgam of English, Kashmiri, and Urdu belong to lower middle class and poor families who do not have resources for learning English. However, some students belonging to families with good income and resources, also face difficulty in understanding when an English-only approach is used in the classroom.

4. According to the NEP 2020 the medium of instruction until grade 8 should be mother-tongue. Do you think that the use of mother tongue in teaching English will hamper the development of English language of the students?

-)i(Yes
-)ii(No

State your reason.....

As per the response received by the teachers, the results achieved are represented in the following graph.

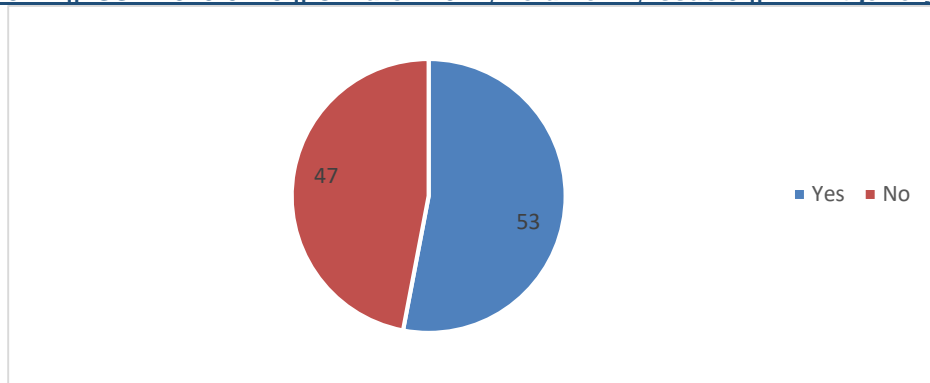


Fig.5: Use of Mother Tongue as Medium of Instruction by Teachers

As shown in the graph above, 53% of the teachers claimed that the use of mother tongue in teaching English will hamper the development of English language of the students while only 47% of teachers claimed that the use of mother tongue in teaching English will ‘not’ hamper development of English language of the students.

Given below is a summary of various reasons stated by the teachers regarding this question;

- a. NEP 2020 proposes a good framework for English language teaching in Kashmir. One of the important element in developing speaking skills is to make sure the student is confident and motivated to speak. Thus, teachers should encourage students to speak, not only using English but also other languages that they know.
- b. By using mother tongue students can develop an understanding of their indigenous culture and context and transfer it in a positive way in developing English language skills in the classroom.
- c. Mother tongue helps students understand difficult texts easily. Teachers must use mother tongue or other language which all the students understand in order to explain difficult texts. Mother tongue is a great resource to develop language skills whenever students fail to understand various concepts in English language.
- d. Use of mother tongue in English classroom does not help students in developing listening and speaking skills. Students should be provided with ample data on English language to develop their listening. A teacher can be a good source in this regard because he can modify his teaching according to the situation and needs of students. Also, students should be encouraged to use English language in the classroom instead of their mother tongue to develop their speaking skills.
- e. While speaking or writing a sentence, students always keep on translating words and sentences from the native language to the target language)English language(in their mind which ultimately results in various grammatical and lexical errors in the ta.

5. NEP 2020 recommends the production of bilingual textbooks at the school level.

Do you think that English needs to be taught through the use of bilingual textbooks, bilingual dictionaries, and other bilingual material?

i(Yes

ii(No

As per the responses received from the teachers following results were achieved. The results are represented in the graph given below:

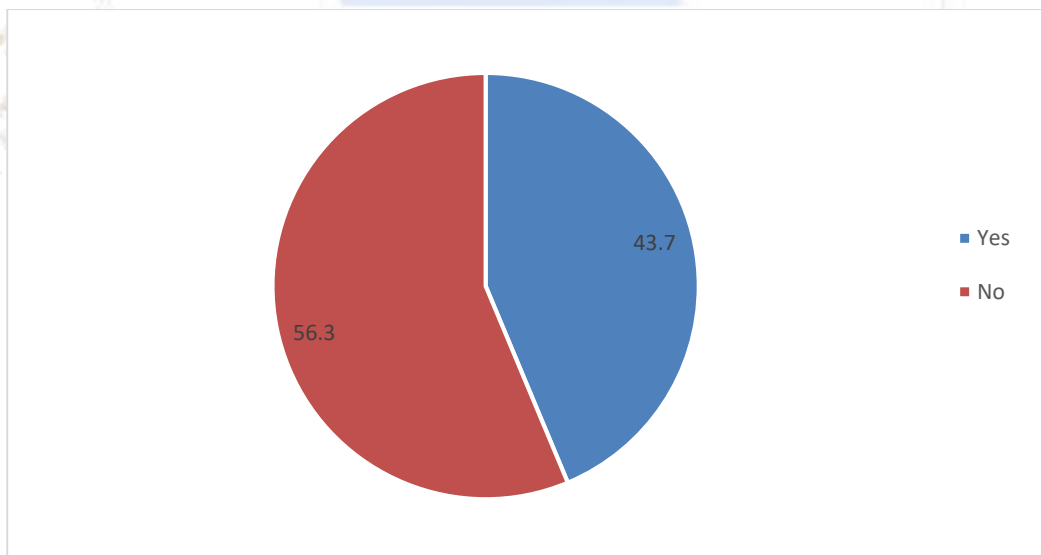


Fig.6: Use of Bilingual Materials in Classrooms

As shown in the graph above, 56.3% of the teachers claimed English language needs ‘not’ to be taught through the use of bilingual textbooks, bilingual dictionaries, and other bilingual material while 43.7% of teachers claimed that English language needs to be taught through the use bilingual textbooks, bilingual dictionaries, and other bilingual material. Although, there are bilingual dictionaries available in the markets in Kashmir, but there are no other available authentic bilingual materials for English language teaching. Thus, some of the teachers stated that teaching English through bilingual materials would be problematic. One teacher stated, “Instead of using bilingual materials, teachers themselves can use native languages in the classroom whenever the need arises. In this manner, we will not always be in need of a book, a teacher must rely on his/her own resources that the native languages such as Kashmiri and Urdu has to offer.” Some teachers stated that the use of bilingual materials becomes problematic as it shifts the focus of the students from the target language completely and they start thinking about the target language in terms of their native language/s.

The various reasons in support of using bilingual texts, as given by the teachers include; minimizing the efforts in understanding various concepts, giving students ideas regarding the representation of ideas in different languages, help students in comparing language structures, and help students to develop a better understanding of English language by utilizing various resources from bilingual materials.

6. How will bilingual texts help students in learning English?

- i) (Explaining difficult words
- ii) (Understanding grammar better
- iii) (Enhancing vocabulary
- iv) (Enhancing the multilingual approach to language learning
- v) (All of the above

As per the responses received from the teachers following results were achieved. The results are represented in the graph given below:

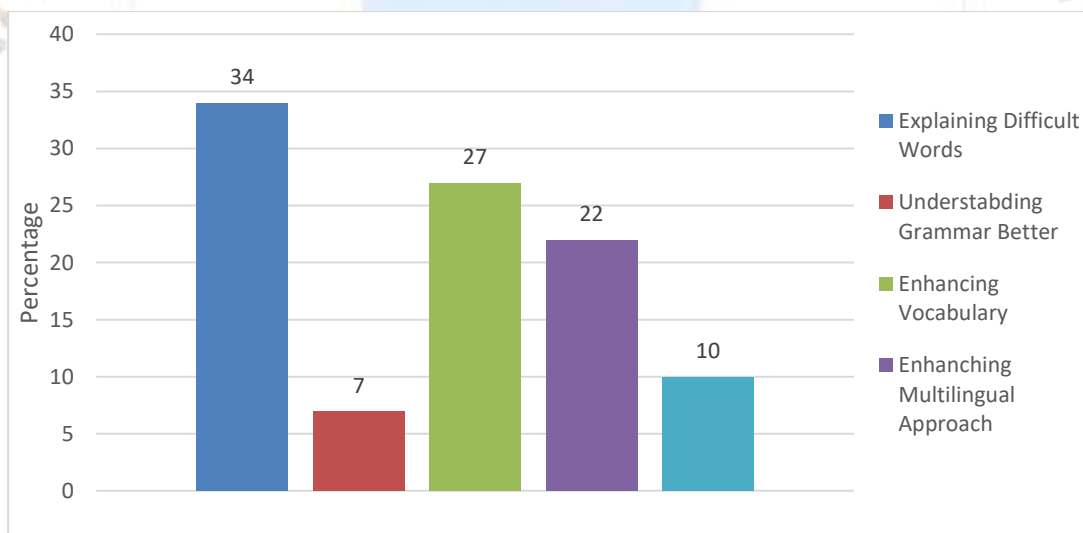


Fig.7: Advantages of using Bilingual Materials

As shown in the graph above, 34% of teachers claimed that bilingual texts help students in learning English by ‘explaining difficult words’, 27% of teachers claimed that it helps students in ‘enhancing vocabulary’, 22% of teachers claimed that it helps students in ‘enhancing multilingual approach’, 10% of teachers claimed that it helps students with ‘all of the above’ options and only 7% of teachers claimed that bilingual texts help students in understanding ‘Grammar better’.

7. From the below list select the materials you use for teaching English in addition to the prescribed textbooks:

- i. Monolingual materials)such as English magazines, newspapers, etc.(
- ii. Bilingual materials)such as bilingual dictionaries, and other bilingual texts(
- iii. Multilingual materials
- iv. All of the above

As per the responses received from the teachers following results were achieved. The results are represented in the graph given below:

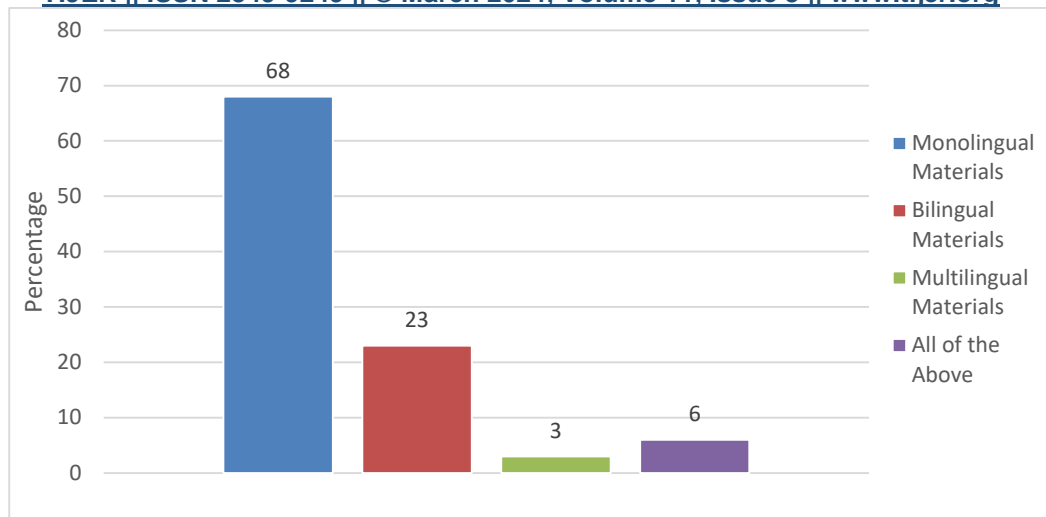


Fig.8: Materials used by Teachers

As shown in the graph above, 23% of teachers claimed to use ‘bilingual materials’, 68% of teachers claimed to use ‘monolingual materials’, 6% of teachers claimed to use ‘all of the above’ options and only 3% of teachers claimed to use ‘multilingual materials’. The reason for lower percentage of the teachers using bilingual or multilingual materials is the unavailability of such authentic materials. Some of the teachers, using only monolingual materials, stated that they wanted to use bilingual or multilingual materials but these materials are not available.

V. CONCLUSION

This study revealed many in terms of multilingual education at the school level. Many teachers showed a very positive outlook towards including a multilingual approach as a part of their teaching but, a good percentage of teachers pointed out the difficulties they face while using a multilingual approach to teaching in terms of the unavailability of multilingual sources at their disposal. A major gap was identified in the planning and enactment of multilingual teaching at the school level as the policymakers appear to be little informed about the gross root challenges. The teachers suggested that for the implementation of multilingualism in the pedagogical process, there is a need for the administration and the policymakers to provide proper training to their teachers in terms of conducting and handling multilingual classrooms, making the teachers acquainted with using different resources for properly planning their teaching.

VI. REFERENCES

- MHRD “National Education Policy 2020”)2020(. Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, New Delhi.
- MHRD “National Policy on Education 1968”)1968(. Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, New Delhi.
- MHRD “National Policy on Education 1986”)1986(. Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, New Delhi.