

## Vernacular education in Hospitality: Need, Scope, and Challenges in Light of the National Education Policy 2020

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**Abstract.** Hospitality, a highly labor-intensive industry, accounted for approximately 10% of total employment in the country and 8% of the GDP.

Being such a significant contributor to the economy good quality workforce is very important for the continuous development of the industry. Hospitality education institutes (HEI) like IHMs and other private institutes play a significant role in preparing future industry hospitality leaders and have played a commendable role in supplying a qualified workforce to the industry.

Among other technical skills, good communication skills are an intrinsic bedrock of the Hospitality Industry, and language proficiency plays a crucial role in it.

To make students globally competitive, English has universally been the preferred medium of education in all the IHMs. Also, for admission into the IHMs, students must have passed English as a compulsory subject in their 12th standard.

But, many students come from small towns and villages where they have pursued their education only in the vernacular medium. For many others, English is like an Achilles' heel and prevents them from realizing their full potential. Because of weak English, many students suffer from low self-esteem and an inferiority complex.

India has 121 mother tongues; out of those, 22 languages are included in the 8th schedule of the constitution as scheduled languages and account for the mother tongues of more than 95% of the Indians.

The new national education policy 2020 emphasizes multilingualism and suggests that along with English, higher education should also be available in vernacular medium to the students willing to opt for it.

In line with that, at least 14 colleges in different states have secured approval from AICTE (All India Council for Technical Education) to offer technical courses like engineering in regional languages. Also, the Gujarat government has formed a committee to create content for medical, engineering, and other courses in the Gujarati language.

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To promote Hospitality as a preferred choice for higher education, the HEIs need to be more flexible in facilitating higher education in at least one Indian language and English.

This change will undoubtedly have its own set of challenges for institutions and the facilitators in the short term because, like students, the faculties are from various parts of the country, and not all are proficient in Hindi or local languages. But, on the flip side, the benefits to the students could be immense as the move will level the playing field between students from different backgrounds.

This article identifies the need for vernacular education, its scope, and the possible challenges in implementing the vernacular language as the medium of Instruction in hospitality education.

**Keywords:** National Education Policy; Hospitality Education Institutes (HEIs); Multilingualism; AICTE

## 1 INTRODUCTION

English has been the apparent mode of imparting education for a very long time. Hospitality education is no different. It considers English the obvious, most basic, and necessary way of teaching. With students joining this course from various demographics, it is also essential to think that there are students who come from rural India, where English might not be a widely spoken language or would not be used as a medium of communication. In such cases, where the weightage of the English language is less, it might become difficult for the students to adapt to the hospitality education curriculum.

In the 6th UNESCO General Conference, 1951, it was proposed that education should be in the Vernacular language. The previous president of India, Dr. A P J Abdul Kalam, once stated, "Science education should be provided to youngsters in local language to generate creativity and enable simple grasp of the subject," which is the finest way to understand the importance of vernacular language.

In introductory courses, the New Education Policy of India strongly focuses on teaching students in their mother tongue or native language. A start toward removing the language barrier in learning is being made by the ongoing efforts in Odisha and Assam to use tribal languages as a medium of Instruction.

In the hospitality industry, communicating with guests is essential. But unfortunately, it is perceived as communication with the guest in English is necessary. Most of the time, the guest is more concerned with the services or the answer to their concern rather than in which language it is addressed. It can be observed that there are a few employees in the kitchen and housekeeping who need to learn English or learn very basic English but are doing great in their job. Despite not understanding English, a Chef can cook fantastic food, and a housekeeper can make unique ideas in towel art and other creativity in the rooms. Thus, knowing English cannot be the only basis for an employee's ability to be judged.

### 1.1 Concerns surrounding the hospitality education

- It is perceived that if one wants to succeed in the hospitality industry, it is a mandate to excel in English. But this is a myth. Many Chefs in the hotel might need to improve at speaking English and may not be able to match the hotel's English standards of the hotel, but it is also true that the skills they have in terms of food are unmatched. So, knowing English is not essential here, and instead, the skill of cooking is more important and should be given weightage.
- A concern is that students who need to learn English wouldn't be accepted into the industry. However, this doesn't hold the truth. There are departments where guest interaction could be more active; these students can be employed there. There might be a student who might need to learn English but is excellent in flair bartending. This can open the doors of various places where showmanship is required.

### 1.2 Unfortunate effects

It sometimes leads to moral demotivation among good students as they can learn the concepts and skills very well, provided that it is imparted in a language they can understand.

#### Guests Perspective:

- The guests may only sometimes be concerned with the language of communication once their concerns are answered satisfactorily.

#### Industry Perspective:

- HR always prefers hiring English speakers for the guest areas. But there are many other areas with the scope if the candidate has the right skills.
- For Hospitality to become a preferred career choice for students from all corners of India. The education must be imparted in vernacular language.

## 2 Hypothesis:

1. H1: Students feel that their learning is negatively affected because the course is entirely in English
2. H2: The learning among students would be better if the course were in the regional language.
3. H3: If students can choose between English and their regional language, they will opt for their regional language.
4. H4: Hindi is the most preferred language of Instruction among the regional languages.
5. H5: Students perceive language skills to be directly related to job prospects.

### 3 Research Methodology:

Descriptive research using qualitative data.

**Data Collection:** Primary sources- Survey using a structured questionnaire.

**Sampling method:** Simple convenience sampling with the students of Hotel Management.

**Secondary sources:** Web-based online websites, articles, and magazines.

### 4 Literature review:

The first language learned is that of the mother. The main focus in vernacular schools is the mother tongue. In India, there are fewer and fewer schools teaching in the vernacular. In addition, several vernacular-medium schools are being transformed into English-medium institutions.

In 1911 Gopal Krishna Gokhale tried to make primary vernacular education free and compulsory. Education in the Government of India saw many changes in 1913 but could only be implemented after the First World War.

Vernacular and local languages are regarded for various reasons. It is acknowledged that using local languages is essential for preserving intangible cultural assets. (Mark Love, Anne Brown, Samuel Kenneth, Gordon Edwards, 2018).

According to the United Nations: Languages are the most potent instruments for preserving and developing our tangible and intangible heritage. All moves to promote the dissemination of mother tongues will serve not only to encourage linguistic diversity and multilingual education but also to develop fuller awareness of linguistic and cultural traditions throughout the world and to inspire solidarity based on understanding, tolerance, and dialogue (United Nations 2018).

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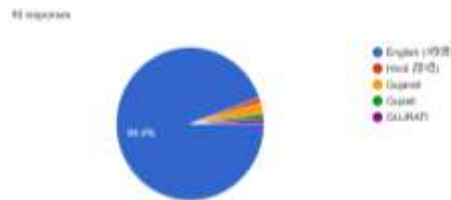
In determining a potential learner's ability to learn the target language at the undergraduate level, the past socio-educational environment is critical (T. Joseph R. Jaykar & K Tejaswani, 2013). As in most places, English is the language used to impart hospitality education. It becomes challenging for students not well versed in the language to cope with the new language in a brief period. Some indigenous students who had previously studied in their vernacular language perform poorly in universities because of the use of English as the medium of Instruction. Given that many undergrads burn

out midway through their studies and drop out to pursue low-paying jobs due to a relatively weak command of English, policymakers must provide students with the tools they need to quickly switch between their mother tongue and English.

It is essential to make changes to the educational system that will respond to the demands of the changing economy and adopt appropriate steps to do communicative English training required to get young people meaningful employment. Increased productivity and a rise in the country's GDP will ultimately be advantageous to all parties involved, including businesses, the government, and the economy (Ayushi Chheda, 2020).

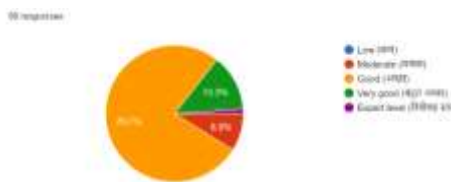
## 5 Questionnaire & Responses:

What was your medium of Instruction in class 12th?



**Fig. 1.** 94.4% of the respondents had English as their medium of Instruction in class 12<sup>th</sup>

According to you, what is the level of your English language proficiency at present?



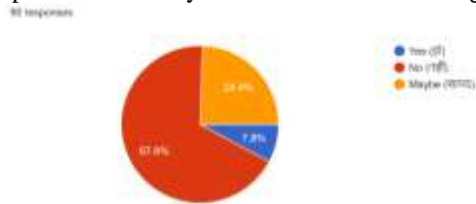
**Fig. 2.** More than 90% of students believe that their language proficiency is good for experts

Do you find it challenging to keep up with your studies due to the course delivered in English?



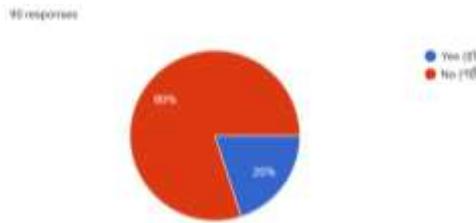
**Fig. 3.** More than 92% feel that they don't find it challenging to keep up with their studies because the course entirely being delivered in English

Would you learn the concepts better if the system was available in a regional language?



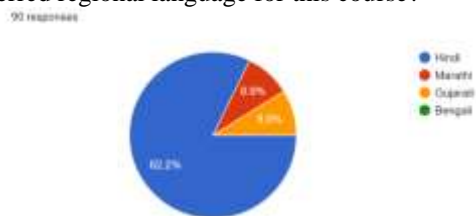
**Fig. 4.** Almost 68% of respondents feel that language will not make any difference in their understanding of the concept, and less than 8% think that regional language will make things better understandable

If you could choose between English and your regional language to pursue the same course, would you go for that?



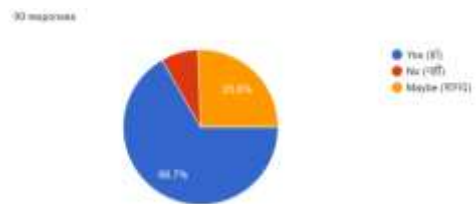
**Fig. 5.** 80% of respondents will not opt for a regional language as their medium of Instruction if given an option, and 20% will take it

What would be your preferred regional language for this course?



**Fig. 6.** If asked to choose a regional language, then 82% will select Hindi

Do you feel that learning a regional language will affect your job prospects in the future?



**Fig. 7.** Almost 67% of respondents believe that their job prospects will be affected if they learn in a regional language

## 6 Results of Hypothesis:

H1: Students feel that their learning is negatively affected because the course is entirely in English

- No, the responding students don't think English negatively impacts their learning

H2: The understanding among students would be better if the course were taught in their regional language

- No, the responding students don't believe that their learning will be better if the course was taught in their regional language

H3: If given an option to choose between English and their regional language, the students will opt for their regional language

- No, even if given a choice, the students will not opt for the regional language to pursue the course

H4: Hindi is the most preferred language of Instruction among the regional languages.

- Yes, among all the available options, Hindi was chosen as the most preferred language for the course

H5: Students perceive language skills to be directly related to job prospects.

- Yes, most students feel that language skills directly relate to job prospects

## 7 Conclusion:

The research was aimed at finding the opinion of the hotel management students about the relationship between the language of Instruction and education. It is observed that most respondents feel that English should be the primary language of Instruction in hospitality education, and a tiny minuscule portion supported vernacular education. Also, even if given an option, most will still opt for English. The higher preference for English is the belief that language skills directly relate to job prospects.

## 8 Limitations:

As most of the responders had their higher secondary education in English medium, though English is not their mother tongue, they have acquired a reasonable language proficiency. To find out the absolute need for vernacular education, the sample should be restricted to those students who had higher education in some regional language.

## 9 Suggestions & Recommendations:

- NCHMCT can introduce optional English for those who wish to learn and develop their English; this subject shall not carry any marks in the curriculum.
- An introductory English lecture per week can be introduced

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