



Interdisciplinary and Multidisciplinary Approaches of Indian Knowledge System (IKS) in English Language Learning in the Modern/Contemporary Era

Prof. Seema Patil - Koshti

M.A. (Eng.), B.Ed.

Prin. Dr. Sudhakar Rao Jadhavar Arts, Commerce and Science College,

Narhe-Dhayari, Pune- 411041, Maharashtra.

Affiliated: Savitribai Phule Pune University, Pune.

Email: seema.c.koshti@gmail.com / seema.koshti84@gmail.com

Abstract

Indian Knowledge System (IKS) offers a unique, holistic, and contextual framework that can be meaningfully integrated with English language learning. The integration of the Indian Knowledge System (IKS) with English Language Learning represents a powerful educational synthesis in the 21st century. The paper argues that IKS-informed English education not only promotes language proficiency but also nurtures learners' identity and worldview in the global context. This paper explores how interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approaches can rejuvenate English language pedagogy by incorporating indigenous epistemologies, literature, oral traditions, philosophy, and sciences. Through a qualitative and conceptual analysis, this study examines the relevance, challenges, and transformative potential of aligning IKS with English learning in contemporary classrooms. It promotes cultural awareness, ethical thinking, and cognitive development. It argues for a culturally rooted, contextually relevant, and globally competent framework that fosters not only linguistic proficiency but also holistic understanding.

Key Words: Indian Knowledge System, English Language Learning, Interdisciplinary Approach, Multidisciplinary Approach, Modern Pedagogy, Indigenous Knowledge, Education Policy, NEP 2020.

1. Introduction

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 emphasizes the integration of IKS into mainstream curricula, including language education. English, as a global lingua franca and a colonial legacy



in India, has long been taught with Western models. However, integrating IKS in English language learning can provide contextually meaningful content, enhance cultural pride, and support deeper comprehension. This paper aims to examine interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approaches that bring together English language pedagogy and IKS content.

2. Method

The descriptive method has been employed to present this research paper. Secondary sources, including digital materials and theses related to the topic. The study involves examining relevant literature and analyzing various aspects of Interdisciplinary and Multidisciplinary in English language learning skills of Indian Knowledge System, which highlight the contemporary application and benefits in the education field.

3. Understanding Indian Knowledge System (IKS):

The Indian Knowledge System (IKS) refers to the vast, rich, and diverse body of knowledge developed in the Indian subcontinent over millennia. It spans various domains such as philosophy, science, medicine, linguistics, literature, art, and spirituality. Unlike Western knowledge systems that often focus on compartmentalization, IKS is **holistic, integrative, and experiential, rooted in lived realities and oral traditions.**

IKS is not limited to ancient scriptures but includes folk wisdom, regional traditions, and context-based practices passed down through generations.

IKS includes the traditional knowledge systems of India:

a. Vedas, Upanishads, and Classical Literature

The Vedas are ancient Sanskrit texts composed between 1500–500 BCE, forming the foundation of IKS. They contain hymns, rituals, philosophical inquiries, and observations about nature.

Example in English Learning: English translations of Rig Veda hymns can be used to discuss early ecological wisdom (e.g., respect for rivers, fire, and wind) and to practice poetic analysis or summary writing.



The Upanishads explore metaphysics and human consciousness (e.g., concepts of Atman and Brahman).

Example: Students can read simplified English versions of Upanishadic dialogues, like the story of Nachiketa in Katha Upanishad, and reflect or write essays on self-discovery and inner growth.

Classical literature includes texts like the Ramayana, Mahabharata, and works of Kalidasa (e.g., Shakuntala), which contain moral dilemmas, narrative techniques, and poetic language.

Example: Retelling of the Mahabharata in English can be used to discuss conflict, leadership, and dharma.

b. Ayurveda, Yoga, and Environmental Ethics

- Ayurveda is the ancient Indian science of life and medicine. It emphasizes balance among body, mind, and spirit.

Example: An English comprehension passage on Tridosha theory (Vata, Pitta, Kapha) can be used to teach technical vocabulary and summarization skills.

- Yoga offers physical and mental disciplines, now globally recognized.

Example: Students may describe in English the steps of Surya Namaskar, discuss the benefits of pranayama, or write a reflective journal on a mindfulness practice.

- Environmental Ethics are deeply embedded in texts like the Vedas and Puranas, where rivers, trees, and animals are personified and revered.

Example: An English lesson can explore how rivers like Ganga are treated as sacred and discuss how that worldview can inform modern environmentalism.

c. Art, Aesthetics, and Performing Traditions

- Natyashastra (by Bharata Muni) is an ancient Indian treatise on drama and performance that explains rasa theory (emotions: love, heroism, fear, etc.).

Example: English students can describe or perform stories using the nine rasas and write reflective essays on how different emotions are conveyed in literature and drama.



- Folk traditions like Yakshagana (Karnataka), Baul music (Bengal), or Theyyam (Kerala) combine storytelling, music, and dance.

Example: Students could be assigned a group project to research and present (in English) on a regional art form, improving both cultural awareness and speaking skills.

d. Oral Storytelling, Folk Narratives, and Bhakti Poetry

India has a rich oral tradition with stories passed down through generations. These include:

- Panchatantra, Jataka Tales, and Hitopadesha – moral stories that teach life skills.

Example: Read an English version of The Lion and the Mouse or The Clever Jackal, and conduct vocabulary exercises, moral discussions, or creative rewriting.

- Bhakti Poetry by poets like Kabir, Mirabai, Akka Mahadevi, and Tukaram express devotion, love, and rebellion through lyrical language.

Example: Students can analyze translated poems by Kabir (e.g., “Between the poles of the conscious and the unconscious”) for metaphor and symbolism, encouraging spiritual and poetic appreciation.

e. Logic (Nyaya), Epistemology (Pramana), and Linguistics (Vyakarana)

- Nyaya philosophy developed tools of logic and debate. It teaches structured argumentation and critical reasoning.

Example: Teach students how to make claims and counterclaims, inspired by Nyaya’s methods of inference (Anumana) and debate structure (Tarka).

- Pramana means "sources of knowledge" and includes perception, inference, comparison, and verbal testimony.

Example: A lesson could involve identifying different pramanas in everyday arguments, improving reasoning and persuasive writing.

- Vyakarana, or grammar, was codified by Panini in the Ashtadhyayi, the world’s earliest known grammar treatise.

Example: Comparing Panini’s grammar rules to English syntax helps students understand the underlying logic of language.



These offer rich material for language teaching across reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills.

The Indian Knowledge System is not just about content, but also about a way of knowing, learning, and being. By exposing English learners to the depth and variety of IKS—through stories, science, logic, and arts—we nurture linguistic skills, cultural intelligence, and critical thinking in tandem.

- **Benefits of Integrating IKS in English Learning**

- **Cultural Relevance** → Students relate better to content rooted in their culture.
- **Knowledge Diversity** → Promotes pluralism in worldviews.
- **Language Depth** → Translations of Sanskrit/Tamil/Prakrit texts into English reveal linguistic nuances.
- **Character Education** → Teaches empathy, environmental values, and ethics.
- **Motivation & Engagement** → Students find meaning in learning when content reflects their heritage.

4. Interdisciplinary Approach to IKS in English Language Learning

What is the Interdisciplinary Approach?

An interdisciplinary approach in education integrates knowledge, methods, and perspectives from multiple academic disciplines to examine a topic, solve problems, or create deeper understanding. In the context of IKS and English Language Learning (ELL), this means using IKS themes, content, and ways of thinking across philosophy, science, literature, ethics, and arts within English language pedagogy.

This approach goes beyond merely borrowing content—it fosters dialogue between traditions, promoting cognitive flexibility, contextual thinking, and cultural sensitivity in students learning English.

Key Features:

Integrated Learning – Language skills (reading, writing, speaking, and listening) are developed through content drawn from Indian philosophy, traditional sciences, arts, and culture.



Cognitive and Cultural Engagement – Students engage with Indian worldviews while practicing English.

Critical Thinking & Reflection – Encourages inquiry-based learning and cross-cultural comparisons.

Examples of Interdisciplinary Applications:

A. Literature + Philosophy: Bhakti Poetry in English

Activity: Reading and analyzing Kabir's dohas or Mirabai's devotional songs in English translation.

Skills Developed: Reading comprehension, metaphor analysis, reflective writing.

Discussion: Compare Kabir's non-dual philosophy with modern ideas of identity and spirituality.

Output: Students write a reflective piece or poem expressing their spiritual beliefs or doubts, using metaphor and imagery.

Reference: *Eating God: A Book of Bhakti Poetry*, ed. Arundhathi Subramaniam.

B. Language + Ethics: Panchatantra and Moral Reasoning

Activity: Reading *The Monkey and the Crocodile* from the Panchatantra.

Skills Developed: Storytelling, summarizing, vocabulary building.

Discussion: Moral dilemmas and decision-making—link to current social scenarios.

Output: Students write a fable in English with a moral relevant to modern life (e.g., digital honesty, environmental awareness).

Reference: *Panchatantra: Translations by Arthur W. Ryder* (available in simplified English versions).

C. Science + Language: Ayurveda and Descriptive Writing

Activity: Reading a short passage on Tridosha theory (Vata, Pitta, and Kapha).

Skills Developed: Technical vocabulary, classification, description.

Discussions: Compare holistic and modern approaches to health and medicine.

Output: Students write a paragraph describing their body constitution or a balanced daily routine based on Ayurvedic principles.



Reference: Charaka Samhita – Adapted English versions by P.V. Sharma

D. History + Speaking Skills: Nalanda and Ancient Indian Education

Activity: Watching a short documentary or reading a passage on Nalanda University.

Skills Developed: Listening comprehension, note-taking, oral presentation. Discussion: Comparison of ancient and modern education systems.

Output: Group presentation on “What can modern education learn from Nalanda?”

Reference: Education in Ancient India, Altekar A.S., and NCERT textbook materials.

E. Performing Arts + Listening/Speaking: Rasa Theory from Natyashastra

Activity: Introduction to Navarasa (nine emotions) with examples from Indian dance and drama.

Skills Developed: Descriptive and expressive vocabulary, spoken interaction.

Discussion: How emotions are portrayed in literature, cinema, and speech.

Output: Students perform mini-monologues or role-plays based on different rasas in English.

Reference: Natyashastra of Bharata – Adapted English texts; cultural education modules by IGNCA or Sahitya Akademi.

- **Benefits of Interdisciplinary IKS Approach in English Learning**
 - **Contextual Learning** → English is learned through culturally familiar content.
 - **Deeper Understanding** → Concepts from philosophy, science, and literature deepen comprehension.
 - **Engagement** → Traditional stories, arts, and ideas increase student interest.
 - **Cultural Confidence** → Encourages students to value indigenous knowledge while mastering global language skills.
 - **Skill Integration** → Combines language development with ethics, logic, creativity and critical thinking.

Using an interdisciplinary approach to IKS in English Language Learning transforms the classroom from a space of mechanical skill acquisition into a culturally grounded, intellectually rich learning environment. It creates a meaningful bridge between India’s civilizational wisdom



and contemporary global communication demands. Teachers become not just language instructors but cultural facilitators and critical thinking enablers.

5. Multidisciplinary Approach to IKS in English Learning

What is the Multidisciplinary Approach?

A multidisciplinary approach involves learning from two or more disciplines simultaneously, but without necessarily integrating or synthesizing them into a single framework. Each discipline retains its identity, and students approach a topic or theme from different subject angles, which enriches their overall understanding.

For example, an English lesson could involve reading a story from Indian folklore, while science class covers herbal medicine, and art class involves drawing a scene from the story—all connected to a common theme like health or wisdom.

Key Features:

Parallel Learning- IKS content is taught in subject-specific ways, but its themes are echoed in English learning.

Exposure over Integration- Focuses on broad cultural awareness without deep conceptual blending.

Supportive Role- IKS supports language development through cultural richness.

Examples of Multidisciplinary IKS Applications in English Language Learning:

A. Literature + History + Language

Topic: Freedom and Resistance in Indian Thought

History Class: Students learn about Swadeshi Movement and freedom struggle.

English Class: Students read extracts from Mahatma Gandhi's writings or Jawaharlal Nehru's "Discovery of India" in English.

Activity: Vocabulary development, comprehension questions, letter writing ("Write a letter to a friend about participating in a non-violent protest").

Reference: Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi (Navajivan Trust)



Outcome: Students develop reading and writing skills while understanding IKS values like Ahimsa and Swaraj.

B. Science + Health + English

Topic: Ayurveda and Well-being

Science Class: Introduction to herbal remedies and Indian medicinal plants.

English Class: Reading a passage on Neem or Tulsi in English.

Activity: Students create a brochure or write a paragraph on “An Indian home remedy for cough and cold”.

Reference: CSIR Traditional Knowledge Digital Library (TKDL)

Outcome: Functional writing, paragraph development, and vocabulary in health and wellness.

C. Performing Arts + Language Skills

Topic: Folk Traditions and Emotions

Music/Drama Class: Students learn about Baul songs, Rajasthani puppet theatre, or Bhavai performances.

English Class: Students describe what they saw or heard, write a review or perform the dialogue in English.

Reference: IGNCA modules on Folk Arts of India

Outcome: Enhances descriptive and narrative skills; promotes listening and speaking.

D. Environmental Science + Ethics + English

Topic: Sacred Groves and Indigenous Ecology

Environmental Studies: Students learn about Bishnoi community or Chipko Movement

Class: Students read an article on India’s sacred trees or write an essay titled “Nature as a Teacher”.

Reference: Vandana Shiva's writings on traditional ecological knowledge

Outcome: Essay writing, environmental vocabulary, persuasive writing skills.

E. Visual Art + English Expression

Topic: Epics and Storytelling

Art Class: Drawing a scene from Mahabharata or Ramayana.



English Class: Writing a description of the scene, or retelling the story in their own words.

Reference: Amar Chitra Katha adaptations in English

Outcome: Creative writing, sentence construction, use of past tense.

- **Benefits of Multidisciplinary Approach to IKS in English Learning**

- **Broad Exposure** → Encourages awareness of IKS without forcing deep integration.
- **Flexible Design** → Easy for teachers to incorporate across grades and boards.
- **Motivates Students** → Learners engage more with familiar, culturally relevant content.
- **Skill Reinforcement** → Language skills are reinforced through content learned in other subjects.
- **NEP 2020 Alignment** → Encourages use of local knowledge and mother-tongue-inspired content even in English learning.

The multidisciplinary approach to IKS in English language learning brings Indian knowledge into the classroom as theme-based cultural enrichment, not content synthesis. It supports the development of language skills while allowing students to explore heritage, ethics, science, and arts in English. This approach is especially beneficial in early education and secondary levels, where cultural context enhances understanding and engagement.

6. Application in Contemporary English Classrooms

Reading Comprehension: Using IKS texts like folk tales, mythologies, Bhakti poetry, and wisdom stories in English translation.

Writing Skills: Essay writing on traditional festivals, debates on indigenous vs. modern practices, journal writing inspired by Gandhian thought.

Speaking Skills: Group discussions on Indian ethical concepts, storytelling of regional folklore in English.

Listening Skills: Audio resources of translated chants, folk songs, and discourses on Indian philosophy.



7. Challenges and Considerations

Translation Issues: Loss of poetic/literal essence in translation.

Teacher Training: Requires educators who understand both IKS and ELT pedagogy.

Curriculum Integration: Risk of tokenism unless meaningfully embedded.

Secularism & Diversity: Must avoid privileging one tradition over others.

8. Conclusion

The fusion of Indian Knowledge Systems with English language education through interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approaches offers a transformative path for pedagogy in India. It aligns language learning with cultural rootedness and global readiness. The future of English education in India lies not in imitation, but in innovation rooted in heritage.

9. Supporting Frameworks & Policies

NEP 2020 encourages integration of IKS in all subjects, promoting multilingualism and interdisciplinary learning.

CBSE & NCERT have begun embedding folk narratives, Indian scientists, and ancient philosophies into English and general curriculum.

UGC Guidelines on IKS (2022) support including traditional Indian knowledge as part of modern educational discourse.

NEP 2020 – Advocates for multilingualism and Indian ethos in curriculum.

NCERT Integrated Curricula (Foundational Stage) – Incorporates storytelling and local traditions.

NCTE Framework for Teacher Education – Encourages use of indigenous knowledge in pedagogy.

IKS Division, Ministry of Education, Govt. of India – Provides multidisciplinary content and support.

Kumar, Krishna. Politics of Education in Colonial India.

Subramaniam, Arundhati. When God is a Traveller

Capra, Fritjof. The Tao of Physics

NCERT & NIOS materials on Indian Knowledge Systems

Sharma, R.S. Ancient India: IKS Perspective