

Status and Acquisition Planning and Linguistic Minorities in India¹

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Abstract

How is the development and revitalization of the languages of linguistic minorities officially addressed in India? What policies deal with multilingual education and what impact have they had on linguistic minorities?

The number of languages in India remains a political question and census categorization of minority languages impacts that number. Within the Indian Constitution there are many safeguards for linguistic minorities. How have their rights, both linguistic and educational, been addressed? Over the years, national education policies have recommended such strategies as the Three Language Formula and considered education for linguistic minorities. One important question: What actually happens in education for linguistic minorities in India?

This paper examines the development over time of India's language policies pertaining to linguistic minorities as revealed in the census, constitution and national education policies, and citing the work of current Indian socio-linguists. Issues include national versus state jurisdiction, positive rights versus negative rights, linguistic versus relative minorities, the transitions from one language to another in the school, standardization's impact, and natural bilingualism versus planned bilingualism.

With respect to the problem of providing access to education through the mother tongue and access to higher education and economic advancement through the more powerful languages, could the observed de facto multilingual education be part of the solution? The paper considers these possibilities, keeping in mind the words of Khubchandani (2001: 43): "When dealing with plural societies, we shall do well to realize the risks involved in uniform solutions."

Introduction: Languages and minorities in India

How many languages are there in India? Which languages get status? What about the other languages? What languages should be taught? What languages should be used for teaching? What happens in education for linguistic minorities?

The importance of the latter question can be seen in education-related statistics on minorities in India. According to the 1991 census, while the average literacy rate in India was 52.21 percent, the literacy rate for scheduled tribes (those tribes listed in the Constitution) was 29.60 percent. The drop-out rate for scheduled tribes was 63.8 percent at the primary level, 79.35 percent in middle school, and 86.27 percent in secondary school (Census of India). The importance of the middle questions above can be seen from a glance at India's linguistic diversity. The importance of the first question will become apparent in the discussion that follows.

According to the 1991 census, within India's 28 states and 7 union territories there are 114 languages. Of these languages, 18 are scheduled, or listed in the Constitution, and 94 are non-scheduled languages (Pattanayak, 2001: 48). Subtracting such foreign languages as Arabic and Tibetan, there are 90 tribal languages. Of the 114 languages in India, 87 are used in the press, 71 on the radio, 13 in the cinema and state administration, and, most significant to our interest, 47 are used as media of instruction (Annamalai, 2001).

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Giving a simple statistic on the number of languages in India is not a simple task, however. Grierson (1966) provided details on Indian languages in a vast 11-volume *Survey of Indian Languages*. He listed 179 languages and 544 dialects (Sarker, 1964). According to Annamalai (2001) India has about 200 total languages reducible from the various dialects. Meanwhile the Summer Institute of Linguistics estimates 850 languages in daily use and lists 398 of them in their *Ethnologue* (2003), perhaps using sociolinguistic survey methods similar to those suggested by Sreedhar, Dua & Subbayya (1984). Pattanayak summarizes the complexity as an India with 4000 castes and communities with 4000 faiths and beliefs (2001: 51).

It is important to remember that some groups who are considered linguistic minorities—since their language is not one of the 18 official languages—have populations of over 3 million (King, 1997: 5); populations exceeding those of some European countries (Daswani, 2001). In 1981, eighty-seven of the non-scheduled languages had more than 10,000 native speakers (Khubchandani, 2001: 11). According to the 1991 census these groups speaking non-scheduled languages make up 4% of India's population. Other linguistic minorities are those whose mother tongue is a regional language but who live outside of the state(s) where that language is official. This applies to many Urdu speakers scattered across India, and their position has been given special consideration in issues of language in education with the term “minority” usually used to refer to the Muslim population alone (Daswani, 2001: xii.).

Khubchandani describes two different zones related to India's language diversity. The stable zone covers most of India where language identity and for the most part match. The language the people use belongs to the group of people they are a part of. In the fluid zone, the northern strip is sometimes called the Hindi belt, however, “language identity and language communication patterns are not necessarily congruent. From this area in particular language counts fluctuate in the census (2001: 17-18).

How many languages? Status planning through legitimization and minimization

The main source of information about numbers of minority languages in India comes from the census, conducted every ten years since 1881. While the 1991 census listed 114 languages, it also listed 1576 mother tongues. The question on the 1991 census asked simply for mother tongue, with an additional question for listing other languages spoken (See Appendix 4). The number of mother tongues returned on census forms in the 1961 and 1971 censuses was around 3000, in 1981 there were around 7000, and in 1991 the census returned 10,000 mother tongues.

Regarding the complexity of defining and differentiating language and dialect, the Registrar General of India said in 1951: “...In view of these doubts and difficulties, it was decided that the Census of India should not be committed to the resolution of any controversy in such matters and the name given by the citizen to his own mother-tongue should be as such and the returns of identical names totaled” (Census of India, 1951).

The need, however, for some classification of the mother tongues can be seen not only in the vast numbers returned but also through a closer look at the returns. In 1951, for example, 73 languages and dialects were listed as spoken by only one person and 137 by two to ten persons. Sometimes mother tongue names are spelled differently, different names are used in different areas for the same language, caste names are listed instead of language or dialect names and, interestingly, a few mother tongues returned on the census stated that all of the speakers were male and for others all of the speakers were female (Sarker, 1964: xix-xx). Dua notes also that sometimes “the notion of mother tongue has been mixed up with region, religion, profession, ethnicity, caste names, and the like (1986: 135). Khubchandani (2001: 8) also mentioned the reasons for variations in a person or group's claims and the desire by some to avoid association with their mother tongue. Such factors in diverse reporting of mother tongue had also been noted by Sarker (1964).

Currently the method for wading through the complexity of census results is described officially as follows: “These vast raw returns need to be identified and classified in terms of actual languages and dialects to present a meaningful linguistic picture of the country. This operation of linguistic identification of raw mother tongue returns, or linguistic rationalization and classification, produced a list of rationalized mother tongues in each census: For example, the list produced in 1961 was containing 1652 mother tongue names, in 1991 it was 1576. These 1576 rationalised mother tongues were further classified following the usual linguistic methods and grouped under appropriate languages. The total number of languages so arrived at was 114 in 1991 Census” (Census of India). Table 1 provides a visual representation of some of these numbers.

Table 1: Counting Languages in the Indian Census

Year	Returned Mother Tongues	Rationalized Mother Tongues	Number of Languages
1891		723 (?) ²	179 (?)
1951		782	
1961	~ 3,000	1652	
1971	~ 3,000		105
1981	~ 7,000		108
1991	~ 10,000	1576	114

(Census of India; Dua, 1986: 135; Sarker, 1964).

The question of who speaks what language in India starts with the question of what is to be considered a language. Adding to the complexity, in addition to the differences in what people claim as their mother tongue are the different definitions of “mother tongue” used in the various censuses. As we know, languages are defined differently by linguists than by speakers: linguistic definitions versus social definitions. And within the latter we must consider political definitions. The difference between language and mother tongue or dialects is described by Sarker (1964) as comparable to the complexity of defining mountains and hills. Mother tongue can be defined narrowly or broadly according to Khubchandani (2001: 4). The narrow definition of mother tongue as a child’s home language is exemplified in the 1951 Census definition: “The language spoken from the cradle...in the case of infants and deaf mutes... the mother tongue of the mother” (quoted in Khubchandani, 2001: 4). The broad definition of mother tongue, on the other hand, classifies all minority languages that have no written form or script as “dialects” of the regional language (2001: 4).

In the choice between definitions we find a covert element of language planning. The classification of a spoken form as a language versus a dialect could be considered status policy planning. In addition, the rationalization process named as a census procedure along with classification also serves as language planning as it narrows down and names which dialects are available to be classified as languages. While not equivalent to officialization, these language planning acts could be considered part of a language planning goal of legitimization, between standardization and prohibition in the range of status policy goals. I refer to the organization of language planning goals set forth by Hornberger (1994: 78).

Political motivations behind the legitimization of language can be found in the Indian context as in other countries. Khubchandani (2001) mentions the denial of the rights of linguistic minorities through use of the broad definition of mother tongue. Another example is the highly politicized question of whether Hindi, Urdu, and Hindustani are one, two, or three languages (2001). Daswani (2001) makes reference to the impact of one’s affiliation and purposes on presentations of the number of languages in India.

As the first prime minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru had an interest in promoting the unity of the Indian people. He said: “The notion that India has hundreds of languages is, like most other notions about her,

² Sum of the languages and dialects from Grierson’s work based on the 1891 Census (Sarker 1964)

entirely based on the lively imagination of some persons and has no basis in fact. India has a dozen languages, one of which – Hindustani – is spoken by about a third of her entire population and is understood by a great part of the rest” (King, 1997: 3). Later he called the notion of many languages “...a fiction of the philologist’s and the census commissioner’s mind” (1997: 4).

Current interests are still strong for avoidance of political uprisings through minimization of minority languages. Mahapatra makes this implication saying that “the government through its language census has also vastly increased the figure of scheduled languages to 95 percent of the total population in India and thus relegated the non-scheduled language speakers to a mere 5 percent” (1986: 208), an observation mentioned also by Khubchandani (2001: 8). The process of rationalization and the broad definition of mother tongue mentioned above can explain how this happens. In his introduction to Sarker’s (1964) *Handbook of Languages and Dialects of India*, Y.M. Mulay states that “the classification and grouping of all the Indian languages and dialects have not yet been finalized. While defending Sarker’s objectivity, he points out that the controversial nature of the subject may invite criticism...” (1964: v.).

Minimization of language status through denial of diversity occurs through the census and by and for political interests. This minimization of minority languages, a kind of non-legitimization, is still more covert than legitimization in the census example and could also be considered a status policy goal, just above prohibition.

Which languages at the top? Status planning through officialization

In light of the linguistic diversity in India, the question of which language to use for the new nation sparked much discussion during the move for Indian independence. Continuing the use of English for official purposes was one option and many colonized nations have chosen that route at independence. This would avoid the need to cultivate or modernize an Indian language for these purposes and, more importantly, would not promote dominance of one Indian language group over another.

Many, including Mahatma Gandhi, felt strongly, however, that the use of a foreign language would not be appropriate. His requirements for a national language are listed by Das Gupta (1970: 109, quoted in Baldrige, 2002) as follows:

1. It should be easy to learn for government officials.
2. It should be capable of serving as a medium of religious, economic, and political intercourse throughout India.
3. It should be the speech of the majority of the inhabitants of India.
4. It should be easy to learn for the whole of the country.
5. In choosing this language, considerations of temporary or passing interests should not count.

The language that Gandhi promoted was Hindustani, a compromise between Hindi and Urdu, significant because of the religious tensions between Hindus and Muslims. After the partition of India and Pakistan, however, Hindi took precedence.

The Constitution of India, established on January 26, 1950 and needing to maintain unity within diversity, addresses the language issue more explicitly than most other national constitutions. The official language of the new nation was declared in Articles 343-344 to be Hindi, written in the Devanagari script, with English as an auxiliary official language to be reconsidered in fifteen years (See Appendix 1).

Concerning the states, the Constitution allows for choice of official language. This is important to and demanded particularly for non-Hindi-speaking states. The Constitution states that “the Legislature of a State may by law adopt any one or more of the languages in use in the State or Hindi as the language or languages to be used for all or any of the official purposes of that State: Provided that, until the Legislature of the State otherwise provides by law, the English language shall continue to be used for those official purposes within the State for which it was being used immediately before the commencement of this Constitution” (Article 345, Constitution of India). Also included in Articles 346-349 are provisions for the language use of the Supreme Court and High Courts and for communication between states and with the central government. The constitution also established the right of the Indian president to recognize a regional language, seeing that this is needed and wanted by a significant portion of a state’s population.

The means used in the Constitution for officializing the regional languages is through their listing in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution. The Eighth Schedule’s original purpose was stated in Article 351 in relation to the corpus planning of Hindi: “It shall be the duty of the Union to promote the spread of the Hindi language, to develop it so that it may serve as a medium of expression for all the elements of the composite culture of India and to secure its enrichment by assimilating without interfering with its genius, the forms, style and expressions used in Hindustani and in the other languages of India specified in the Eighth Schedule, and by drawing, wherever necessary or desirable, for its vocabulary, primarily on Sanskrit and secondarily on other languages” (Constitution of India). As Mahapatra says: “It is generally believed that the significance for the Eighth Schedule lies in providing a list of languages from which Hindi is directed to draw the appropriate forms, style and expressions for its enrichment” (1986: 206; see also Khubchandani, 2001: 14). This provides an interesting example of the same act serving both corpus and status planning purposes.

The fourteen languages first listed in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution were Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Kashmiri, Malayalam, Marathi, Oriya, Punjabi, Sanskrit, Tamil, Telugu and Urdu. Through the 21st Amendment in 1967 Sindhi was added to the list and in 1992 the 71st Amendment brought the total number up to eighteen with the addition of Nepali, Manipuri, and Konkani (Mahapatra, 1986: 204). The map in Appendix 2 shows the distribution of these languages by state. Movements by minority language groups have been and are underway in a push for constitutional recognition, but as one Indian prime minister implied in discussing this issue, if one language is included, they would need to include 200 others (Mahapatra, 1986: 207).

State Official Language Acts were passed in the various states between 1950 and 1987. This gave new motivation for developing regional languages for new domains. But, as we will see with education policy, the implementation of these policies varies by state, most having formed advisory committees and organizations for the development of the regional language. Jayaram & Rajyashree observe that “in almost all the states, initial enthusiasm died and indifference prevailed soon which led to amendments in the Official Language Act providing continuance of English for most of the official purposes” (2000: 26). They also mention that the use of minority languages varies from state to state. While not explicitly giving status for the minority languages excluded from the 18 constitutionally recognized or scheduled languages, the Indian Constitution includes certain safeguards to protect linguistic minorities from the prohibition of their languages and from some discrimination.

What about the other languages? Language rights and minority safeguards

Given the great diversity of India, some assurance was needed in its uniting under a democratic government that the rights of all peoples would be protected. Article 29 of the Constitution of India provides explicit guarantees for protecting the interests of minorities:

(1) Any section of the citizens residing in the territory of India or any part thereof having a distinct language, script or culture of its own shall have the right to conserve the same.

(2) No citizen shall be denied admission into any educational institution maintained by the State or receiving aid out of State funds on grounds only of religion, race, caste, language or any of them (Constitution of India).

Having stated the right of minority peoples to maintain their own language and culture, the Constitution adds on the explicit protection of the rights of minorities to provide their own education in their own language, certainly an important part of language maintenance. Article 30 details this right, along with protection against discrimination, in the receiving of government grants for education:

(1) All minorities, whether based on religion or language, shall have the right to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice.

(1A) In making any law providing for the compulsory acquisition of any property of any educational institution established and administered by a minority, referred to in clause 1, the State shall ensure that the amount fixed by or determined under such law for the acquisition of such property is such as would not restrict or abrogate the right guaranteed under that clause.

The State shall not, in granting aid to educational institutions, discriminate against any educational institution on the ground that it is under the management of a minority, whether based on religion or language (Ibid).

This final clause does not keep the state from regulating for educational standards, but does protect against regulations concerning medium of instruction. This fact has also been upheld in the courts (Dua, 1986: 138)

The question has been raised of how language rights fit into the language planning goals framework. While not explicitly related to language planning, these constitutional safeguards provide protection for language maintenance objectives. Giving languages the right to be and the right to be learned through protection of them seems also to be an implicit forms of status planning, another means of legitimization, this one related inversely with prohibition.

Besides these general safeguards, the Indian Constitution includes a section titled Special Directives in which language and education issues beyond simple protection for minorities are explicitly addressed. Article 350 guarantees the right of all people to use a language they understand in “representations for redress of grievances.” In the Seventh Amendment to the Constitution made by the Constitution Act of 1956, two articles were added addressing linguistic minority issues:

350A. Facilities for instruction in mother-tongue at primary stage.

It shall be the endeavour of every State and of every local authority within the State to provide adequate facilities for instruction in the mother-tongue at the primary stage of education to children belonging to linguistic minority groups; and the President may issue such directions to any State as he considers necessary or proper for securing the provision of such facilities.

350B. Special Officer for linguistic minorities.-

(1) There shall be a Special Officer for linguistic minorities to be appointed by the President.

(2) It shall be the duty of the Special Officer to investigate all matters relating to the safeguards provided for linguistic minorities under this Constitution and report to the President upon those matters at such

intervals as the President may direct, and the President shall cause all such reports to be laid before each House of Parliament, and sent to the Governments of the States concerned (Constitution of India).

To ensure protection under the Constitution, being defined as a minority becomes an important issue tied to the complexity of defining language and mother tongue. The issue of listing tribes and castes for special protection occurs elsewhere in the constitution, providing the categories of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, not to be confused with the list of official languages referred to as Scheduled Languages. While the definition of linguistic minorities was not included in the Constitution, a Supreme court decision defined minority language as separate spoken language, not restricted to languages using or having a separate script (Dua, 1986: 134).

According to Kumar, the framers of the Constitution recognized the importance of addressing “the problem of the minorities,” a universal issue in democracies, and they “had a firm faith that healthy national consciousness would grow if the minorities are guaranteed liberty, equality, fraternity and justice” (1985: 9). This is different from the minimization practices previously mentioned, for though it may have been in the government’s interest to smooth over the diversity in search of unity, the rights of the vocal minorities needed to be addressed. Safeguarding those rights was an important political issue at independence, especially given the Muslim-Hindu conflicts.

Although the constitution does not explicitly promote acquisition planning for India’s minority languages, it does allow for *status* planning in its provision for the use of the minority languages in education

How should they be educated? Indian education policy, status and acquisition planning

Thus far I have mentioned status planning, as did Kloss (1969), in terms of a language’s importance or positions compared with other languages, as through the recognition of a language by the government. Addressing the more common view of status planning in terms of changes in the functions of a language or language allocation (Cooper, 1989: 32), we have seen the government of India planning for several of the language functions listed by Stewart (1968): official, provincial, wider communication. We turn now to the educational function and the function as school subject. Stewart uses these categories only for languages that are not already official or provincial (Cooper, 1989: 108). The educational function, however, has been included under the category of acquisition planning (Hornberger, 1994), closely tied to status planning. I wonder, however, whether transitional language use in education can be considered acquisition planning, an issue to be later discussed.

According to Cooper (1989:109), decisions about media of instruction for school systems “is perhaps the status-planning decision most frequently made, the one most commonly subject to strong political pressures.” Often decisions are based more on political considerations than on concern for facilitating education (109). This can be seen in the Indian example. Choices about what languages to teach in the school carry political motivations.

The Three-Language Formula: Acquisition planning for official and regional languages

The Three-Language Formula included the following:

1st mother tongue or regional language – 10 years

2nd official language – Hindi or English – 6 years minimum

3rd other modern Indian or foreign language – 3 years minimum

(According to the 1966 modifications, Khubchandani 1981: 14)

The language first used depends on the definition of mother tongue. The choice of second and third language is, according to Khubchandani (1981:14), “tied up with the issues of language privileges, cultural prestige, and socio-economic mobility.”

The Three-Language Formula deals with acquisition planning in selection of languages to be taught as school subjects. The question of medium of education often becomes intertwined, however. While the Three-Language Formula is not accepted by all states, all agree that the mother-tongue or regional language should be used at the secondary level (Sharma, 1985:15). While a broad consensus exists among states overall, implementation varies. According to Ekbote, G. (1984), difficulty in the implementation of the Three-Language Formula comes from the following factors:

- a. The “heavy language load in the school curriculum”
- b. Northern schools not being motivated to teach a South Indian language
- c. Southern schools, especially in Tamil Nadu, resisting the teaching of Hindi
- d. The cost of arranging for instruction

The map in Appendix 3 shows the diversity in implementation of instruction of Hindi, for example, reflecting the resistance of some states to the imposition of that language. In addition, the Three-Language Formula does not include the mother tongue of minorities, classical languages, and foreign languages (Pattanayak, 2001: 55). Thus the formula has been adapted by the various states in various forms and in various contexts. Some stick to two languages, some need four, some provide additional optional languages. Often, however, the importance of the languages in the curriculum outweighs the actual value placed on them in instruction, and the languages are given different amounts of time and degrees of emphasis (Khubchandani, 1981: 28). Sharma (1985: 17) insists that “the earnest need of rationalizing language policy at national level cannot be ignored and a firm decision in this respect is expected to solve the controversy of the medium of instruction as well at all levels.”

The question of medium of instruction often seems to overlap and is obviously closely linked to the question of what languages should be taught as school subjects. Khubchandani (1981:12) presents what he calls the multiple-choice medium policy as follows:

1. Primary stage:
 - a. Dominant regional language
 - b. Pan-Indian language – English / Hindi
 - c. Other major languages
 - d. Newly cultivated languages (as preparatory media)
2. Secondary stage:
 - a. Dominant regional language
 - b. Pan-Indian language – English / Hindi
 - c. Other major languages
3. Higher Education stage:
 - a. English as developed medium
 - b. Hindi and regional languages as emerging media

From a look at educational preferences in India it is obvious that the medium of instruction preferred by most from the primary stage onward is the one most valued at the higher stages of education: English.

Those who can afford it send their children to English-medium schools and the government also has begun to comply with this demand in selected schools. Annamalai (1990: 1) referred, however, to attempts in government policy to reduce the use of English as medium at the primary level.

Concern continues in India for the maintenance and spread of the official Indian languages, concern that some Indians, especially the elite, feel the need only to learn English, minimizing the value of learning Indian languages. Pattanayak (1973) noted that most resources for teaching of Indian languages are created in and for foreign language learning in the United States. "It is a great pity that very little systematic attention is being given in India to the teaching of Indian languages either as the mother tongue or as a foreign language" (Pattanayak, 1973: 11). The need not just to spread Indian languages, but to spread knowledge through the national language was raised by Ekbote (1984:139-140):

On the one hand, we have products of English medium schools who have no touch with the Indian reality, who cannot even speak their mother-tongue properly, intending to be totally careerists in their outlook and way of life. And on the other, we have products of regional medium schools who suffer from inferiority complex and who cannot take an effective part in all-India gatherings. Hindi as national language thus assumes importance and it must be taught to everyone" (Ekbote, 1984: 139-140).

The question of the spread of the official and regional Indian languages leaves out the issue of minority languages. While the issues noted in the timeline above were being debated, discussion about which language to use at the university level was another important component. Khubchandani (1981: 28) laments the distraction of the powerful intellectuals on university language issues while the nation faces the "gigantic task of eradicating illiteracy."

A. Minority rights: De facto educational status planning

While education policy under the Three-Language Formula has children learning three languages in 10 years, linguistic minorities end up learning four as, when they enter education, their mother tongue clashes with the state majority language. According to Annamalai (2001: 73) "this conflict has not yet been resolved politically and pedagogically." Some have referred to the policy as being 3 plus or minus one (Ager, 2001:29), since Hindi speakers need only learn two languages and minority-language speakers end up with four.

Ekbote (1984: 198) explains the distinction between linguistic minorities and relative minorities. The relative minorities are those whose languages may be official in another state but not in the state where they are living. This has especially become an issue after attempts to divide the states according to linguistic boundaries. Both groups of minorities face problems in education.

Debate has arisen as to whether minority peoples have positive rights, as in the provision of education in their language, and not just negative rights, as in the prevention of discrimination or prohibition of their language (Ekbote, 1984: 199). Although the Constitution does not promote favoritism for minorities and does not make them an added burden on the states, according to Ekbote it remains the state's moral obligation to provide for the minorities and for their educational rights.

Some groups and organizations use their right to demand protection. This is a cause of fear for governments wishing to avoid formation of rebel groups who might use those demands for the political interests of their group. "This compels us to draw distinctions, between diverse linguistic groups, which enrich Indian life and culture, and organized linguistic groups which sometimes press causes that derogate from the national interest" (Ekbote, 1984: 141).

The multilingual contribution from the state comes from its obligation to provide education and to keep children from dropping out of school (Annamalai, 2001:72). Annamalai points out, however, that, "the

state may provide a place for the minority mother tongue in education not on any principle of pedagogy or human right but to meet political expediency” (2001:72).

Can this be considered acquisition planning? The above rationale for promoting the use of minority languages in education does not seem to match Cooper’s (1989:157) examples of acquisition planning: “organized efforts to promote the learning of a language.” Giving a language a new educational function may not be done with an acquisition goal, i.e. it is not part of the government’s language planning goal. However, an act granting educational status for the sake of linguistic human rights serves to bring about de facto acquisition planning. Language maintenance, part of acquisition cultivation, becomes a de facto result of the use of mother tongue in school. Backing up one step, increasing the status of a language through its use in education seems itself to be a de facto result, not of a desire to raise the status of the language, but a desire to preserve the rights of minority people, or to avoid their revolt if those rights are not preserved. Is this language planning?

What actually happens in education for linguistic minorities? Implementation issues and de facto multilingual education

The pluralistic provisions safeguarding the rights of linguistic minorities in the Indian Constitution and later policies exceed those in most countries, as in the United States where the constitution, while officializing no language, has no guarantee of language rights or educational rights regarding language. As Dua (1985: 172) points out, however, “it depends on various socio-political and sociolinguistic factors whether or not these provisions are effectively implemented.”

Given the complexity of India’s multilingual situation and “the variations in the size and concentration of linguistic minorities,” while some minority languages are being used in education, mass media, and/or administration, “the implementation of constitutional safeguards is a challenging, stupendous task” (Dua, 1986: 134,135). In defense of India’s implementation difficulties Dua (1985: 189) elsewhere states that, “in most developing countries it is rarely possible to find necessary consensus and conducive climate for the implementation of educational language policy keeping in view the goals of language education and national development.”

With the Three-Language Policy, those students whose mother tongue is not a regional language end up with four languages, and possibly three or four scripts. This has been seen as one drawback of the policy. According to Dua (1985: 190), however, the use of minority languages in education faces implementation problems, not of student motivation and ability or from the parents’ value of such instruction, but from pedagogic, environmental and curricular problems. The use of tribal languages in the first few years of education is not an automatic solution. As Pattanayak (2001:54) says: “With inexperienced teachers and insufficient reading materials these programs are apologies for education.” Contributing to the problem are literacy materials with very little practical village content and little that would be motivational for learners (Pattanayak, 2001:54).

The linguistic survey of Tribal Dialects and Cultures, focusing on four districts of Orissa, reported that: “India has failed to meet the commitment of universalizing Primary Education and ensuring a basic human right because of this problem of language.” They expressed the need for “eradicating the language barrier, which instead of serving as a ‘driving force’, serves as a ‘depriving force’” (Academy of Tribal Dialects and Cultures, ST/SC Development Department, Orissa, Oct 1999 in Pattanayak, 2001: 52). This last statement seems to reflect almost a switch from language-as-resource ideas to a language-as-problem orientation, saying that in light of educational limitations, linguistic diversity deprives more than it drives.

The Report of the Group on Minorities Education, focusing particularly on the Urdu-speaking minorities, also issued a negative report. The right of primary education in the mother tongue was being denied many Urdu speakers. As they report: “the Group strongly felt that the denial of this right to the minorities

has contributed largely to their educational backwardness. The orthodox parents would have to truck with a system that deprives their children of access to education in their own language.” They note the “alarming drop-out rate” of minority students and point out how the current system causes children to “suffer grievously at an impressionable age” (Government of India, 1991: 72).

Their solution mostly reflects a desire to see the current provisions fully implemented: “Nothing short of instruction in the child’s mother tongue at the elementary stage and inclusion of Urdu in the Three-Language-Formula at the secondary stage, can salvage the situation, remove the grievance of the minority and improve the quality of education and prospects of minority students” (Government of India, 1991: 72)

Other problems include the lack of planning for transitions from one language to another in the school (Pattanayak, 2001: 57). In addition, the very standardization meant to build up a vernacular and make it suitable for the educational function, serves to minimize its usefulness for a diverse population. Khubchandani (1981:29) also points out “the problems of the wide gap between the hinterland varieties and the ‘elegant’ urban-based standard languages, being imposed as school mother tongue.” He notes the common practice of drilling for correct usage in some elementary curricula, which seems to show a preference for linguistic accuracy over content and a de-valuing of diversity within a mother tongue community. The problem is usually not recognized of the “unintelligibility of the instant ‘high brow’ standards projected in mother tongue textbooks, resulting in wastage and stagnation in literacy programmes” (1981: 29).

So, what actually is going on? In 1976 there were reported to be 33 tribal languages in use as media of instruction in schools, and according to the Human Development Report no information has since become available about use of tribal languages in education (Pattanayak, 2001: 57). In 1981, Khubchandani (1981:6) reported that 80 languages were being used as media of instruction in India. Annamalai (2001) reports 47 languages used as media of instruction.

Many states have implemented the use of minority languages as “preparatory medium” or “partial medium” (Khubchandani, 2001: 32). Some states are trying bilingual programs and producing textbooks in minority languages, especially in eastern India and among some urban minority groups (Khubchandani, 1981: 7). Besides state provisions, some tribal schools have been formed by the Education department and some by the Welfare Department. These, however, suffer from inefficiencies due to few inspections, absent teachers, unavailability of texts, and alienation from the home language (Pattanayak, 2001:54).

The New Policy on Education of India of 1986 was set to be implemented by the Central Institute of Indian Languages which has developed a flexible bilingual education system, providing primers and teacher training. Even here, where the systems seem set in place, further complications hinder the use of minority languages. Administrators fear more demands from minority groups and community members fear loss of access to the languages of power (Annamalai, 1990). Annamalai points out that bilingual education faces more resistance when it is centrally planned than when it is used informally, a part of the multilingualism common in society, a point to be picked up later.

Multilingualism in education has been observed outside of official policy. Khubchandani (1981:31) noted that, “in actual practice one notices a good deal of code-switching and hybridization of two or more contact languages in informal teaching settings.” Multilingual teachers can speak in whatever way best helps their students. According to Khubchandani (2001:33) “it is not unusual to find in many institutions anomalous patterns of communication where the teacher and the taught interact in one language, classes are conducted in another, textbooks are written in a third, and answers are given in a fourth language or style.” In a multilingual setting, this may be more natural than we think. Referring to the developed world, Pattanayak (2001:50) says: “Having accepted a single language as a goal, a single language as ideal for state formation, a single language as a point of departure for linguistic enquiry, and a single

language as a convenient launching pad for describing an individual, a social group and a State, they are at a loss to explain variation. The Third and Fourth Worlds cannot afford such luxury.”

Since 1949, the recommendation of the Education Commission has been for monolingual education as medium, with the use of the regional language as medium through all stages. This has not been implemented and is seen as impractical since if English were not used at the higher level, the diverse media would “hinder mobility and interaction between Indian intellectuals” (Annamalai, 1990: 2). Annamalai refers to the successive uses of languages for different stages of education as a successive model of bilingual education. Since no plans are made, however, for the switch-over between media, the de facto result is “unplanned simultaneous bilingual education” (1990: 2).

In light of the need for planning for the switch between languages in preparation for higher education noted also by Khubchandani (2001: 32), perhaps such informal multilingualism becomes part of the answer. In discussing the problems of low literacy among tribals, Khubchandani (2001:43) pointed out the need for respect for grassroots ‘folk’ multilingualism, having stated earlier (1992: 102) that “in the ‘filterdown-approach of the educational elite, grassroots ‘folk’ multilingualism is devalued.”

Though placing it in terms of a remedial language to help backwards people catch up, Khubchandani does call for diversity, noting that standardization is not helpful but serves “only to extend the convention-inspired value system of small urban elites” (1992: 102). He lists four media used for promoting literacy:

1. Regional standard
2. Transitory bi-dialectal
3. Diversity of speech, standard in writing
4. Pluralistic model of literacy

This latter media views varieties as an asset, giving them positive value, but still providing instruction of the standard for economic reasons (1992: 102).

This pluralistic model of literacy needs clearer definition. How does it compare to Annamalai’s “unplanned simultaneous bilingual education”? As mentioned earlier, Annamalai (1990) has observed that bilingual education faces more resistance when it is centrally planned than when it is used informally, a part of the multilingualism common in society. He also differentiates natural bilingualism and planned bilingualism.

Perhaps what is already happening to an extent in this de facto multilingual education can become part of the answer. In place of drilling linguistic forms, the multilingualism that students are accustomed to in society could be respected and promoted in the classroom. That multilingualism is common in India is perhaps understated by the Census of India rates of bilingualism calculated to be 9.70% in 1961 and rising from there to 13.04% in 1971, 13.34% in 1981 and 19.44% in 1991. The national average rate of trilingualism, presented for the first time in the 1991 Census is 7.26%. With much talk about the value of language as resource orientation, why not promote the status of this multilingualism to a new educational function, which it is often taking de facto anyway. This may provide an important solution to the problem of access to education through the mother tongue and access to higher education and economic advancement through the more powerful languages.

Conclusion

How many languages are there in India? This is a question open to debate and involves the status planning elements of legitimization through classification, rationalization, and protection. Which languages get status? What about the other languages? Though addressed in the Constitution, this too is not without fluctuation. What happens in education for linguistic minorities? This deserves more exploration. In the area of multilingualism, the difficulty in counting the languages may be comparable to the question of what languages are actually used for minorities in school. What languages should be taught? What languages should be used for teaching? In the words of Khubchandani (2001: 43): “When dealing with plural societies, we shall do well to realize the risks involved in *uniform* solutions”

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Appendix 1. Provisions for Language and Minorities in the Constitution of India

(Constitution of India <http://alfa.nic.in/const/a1.html>)

PART XVII: OFFICIAL LANGUAGE CHAPTER I.- LANGUAGE OF THE UNION

343. Official language of the Union.

The official language of the Union shall be Hindi in Devanagari script. The form of numerals to be used for the official purposes of the Union shall be the international form of Indian numerals.

(2) Notwithstanding anything in clause (1), for a period of fifteen years from the commencement of this Constitution, the English language shall continue to be used for all the official purposes of the Union for which it was being used immediately before such commencement: Provided that the President may, during the said period, by order 306 authorise the use of the Hindi language in addition to the English language and of the Devanagari form of numerals in addition to the international form of Indian numerals for any of the official purposes of the Union.

(3) Notwithstanding anything in this article, Parliament may by law provide for the use, after the said period of fifteen years, of-

- (a) the English language, or
- (b) the Devanagari form of numerals, for such purposes as may be specified in the law.

344. Commission and Committee of Parliament on official language

CHAPTER II.-REGIONAL LANGUAGES

345. Official language or languages of a State.-

Subject to the provisions of articles 346 and 347, the Legislature of a State may by law adopt any one or more of the languages in use in the State or Hindi as the language or languages to be used for all or any of the official purposes of that State:

Provided that, until the Legislature of the State otherwise provides by law, the English language shall continue to be used for those official purposes within the State for which it was being used immediately before the commencement of this Constitution.

346. Official language for communication between one State and another or between a State and the Union.-

The language for the time being authorised for use in the Union for official purposes shall be the official language for communication between one State and another State and between a State and the Union:

Provided that if two or more States agree that the Hindi language should be the official language for communication between such States, that language may be used for such communication.

347. Special provision relating to language spoken by a section of the population of a State.-

On a demand being made in that behalf the President may, if he is satisfied that a substantial proportion of the population of a State desire the use of any language spoken by them to be recognised by that State, direct that such language shall also be officially recognised throughout that State or any part thereof for such purpose as he may specify.

CHAPTER III.-LANGUAGE OF THE SUPREME COURT,HIGHCOURTS, ETC

348. Language to be used in the supreme Court and in the High Courts and for Acts, Bills, etc.

349. Special procedure for enactment of certain laws relating to language.

CHAPTER IV.-SPECIAL DIRECTIVES

350. Language to be used in representations for redress of grievances.-

Every person shall be entitled to submit a representation for the redress of any grievance to any officer or authority of the Union or a State in any of the languages used in the Union or in the State, as the case may be.

350A. Facilities for instruction in mother-tongue at primary stage.-

It shall be the endeavour of every State and of every local authority within the State to provide adequate facilities for instruction in the mother-tongue at the primary stage of education to children belonging to linguistic minority groups; and the President may issue such directions to any State as he considers necessary or proper for securing the provision of such facilities.

350B. Special Officer for linguistic minorities.-

(1) There shall be a Special Officer for linguistic minorities to be appointed by the President.

(2) It shall be the duty of the Special Officer to investigate all matters relating to the safeguards provided for linguistic minorities under this Constitution and report to the President upon those matters at such intervals as the President may direct, and the President shall cause all such reports to be laid before each House of Parliament, and sent to the Governments of the States concerned.]

351. Directive for development of the Hindi language.

It shall be the duty of the Union to promote the spread of the Hindi language, to develop it so that it may serve as a medium of expression for all the elements of the composite culture of India and to secure its enrichment by assimilating without interfering with its genius, the forms, style and expressions used in Hindustani and in the other languages of India specified in the Eighth Schedule, and by drawing, wherever necessary or desirable, for its vocabulary, primarily on Sanskrit and secondarily on other languages.

Eighth Schedule to the Constitution (Articles 344(1) and 351)

Languages Listed (14): Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Kashmiri, Malayalam, Marathi, Oriya, Punjabi, Sanskrit, Tamil, Telugu, Urdu

21st Amendment, 1967 (15) – Sindhi

71st Amendment, 1992 (18) – Nepali, Manipuri, Konkani

PART III: FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS

Cultural and Educational Rights

29. Protection of interests of minorities.-

(1) Any section of the citizens residing in the territory of India or any part thereof having a distinct language, script or culture of its own shall have the right to conserve the same.

(2) No citizen shall be denied admission into any educational institution maintained by the State or receiving aid out of State funds on grounds only of religion, race, caste, language or any of them.

30. Right of minorities to establish and administer educational institutions.-

(1) All minorities, whether based on religion or language, shall have the right to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice.

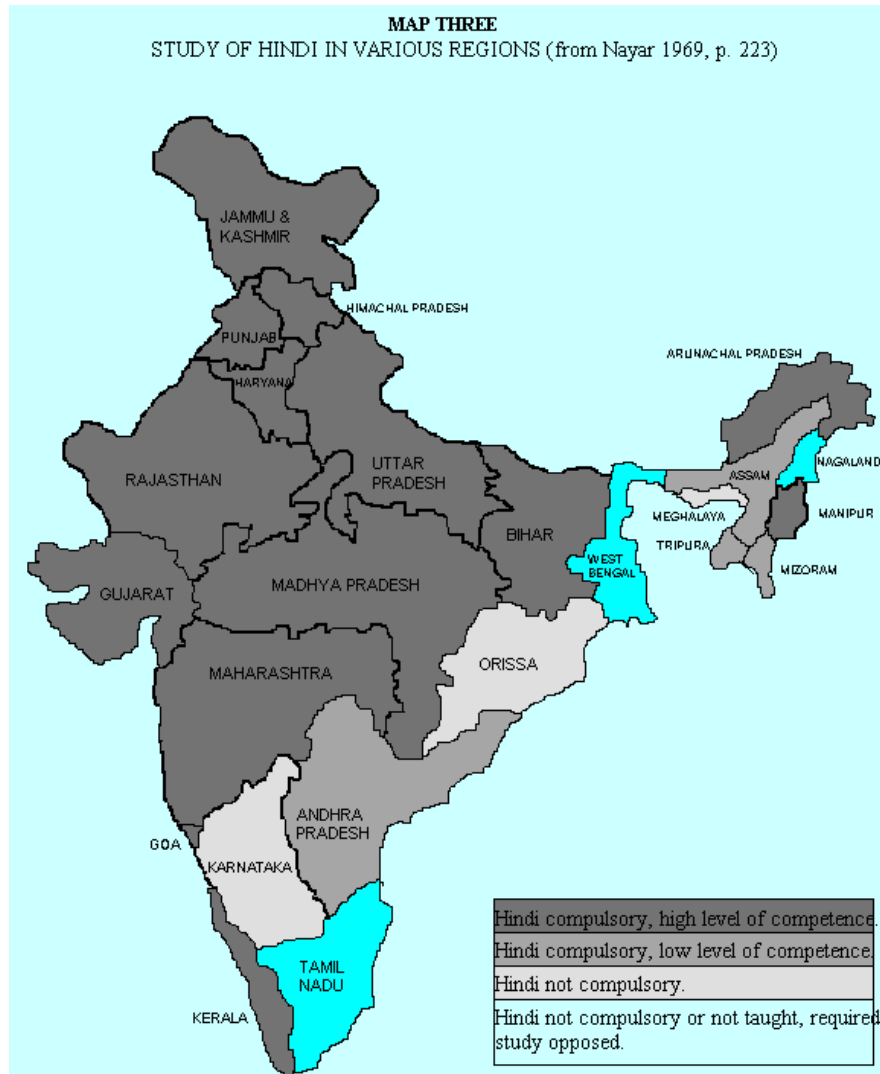
20(1A) In making any law providing for the compulsory acquisition of any property of any educational institution established and administered by a minority, referred to in clause (1), the State shall ensure that the amount fixed by or determined under such law for the acquisition of such property is such as would not restrict or abrogate the right guaranteed under that clause.]

The State shall not, in granting aid to educational institutions, discriminate against any educational institution on the ground that it is under the management of a minority, whether based on religion or language. 21[* * *

Appendix 2. Scheduled Languages of India by Region



Appendix 3. Study of Hindi in Various Regions (from Nayar 1969, p.223)



Appendix 4. 2001 Census: Household Schedule

Part II : *Individual Particulars:*

GENERAL AND SOCIO-CULTURAL CHARACTERISTICS

- | | | |
|--------|---|-----------------------|
| Q. 1: | Name of the person | |
| Q. 2: | Relationship to head | |
| Q. 3: | Sex (Male/ Female) | Codes |
| Q. 4: | Age last birthday (<i>in completed years</i>) | |
| Q. 5: | Current marital status | Codes |
| Q. 6: | Age at marriage (<i>in completed years</i>) | |
| Q. 7: | Religion (<i>write name of the religion in full</i>) | Codes |
| Q. 8: | If Scheduled Caste, write name of the Scheduled Caste from the list supplied | |
| Q. 9: | If Scheduled Tribe, write name of the Scheduled Tribe from the list supplied | |
| Q. 10: | Mother tongue | |
| Q. 11: | Other languages known (<i>enter up to two languages in order of proficiency</i>) | |
| Q. 12: | Literacy status (Literate/ Illiterate) | Codes |
| Q. 13: | Highest educational level attained
(<i>for diploma or degree holder, also write the subject of specialisation</i>) | |
| Q. 14: | If attending educational institution | Codes |
| Q. 15: | If the person is physically/mentally disabled, give appropriate code number | Codes |

Retrieved April 21, 2003 from <http://www.censusindia.net>