

LANGUAGE POLICY IN INDIA



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Abstract

This paper discusses the development of India's language policies pertaining to the roles of Indic languages vis-à-vis English in relation to issues of education, political unity and socio-economic and technological development. India is one of the few countries where language policy is enshrined in the constitution. That constitutional status notwithstanding, there have been major revisions and there are on-going debates on how India's "multilingual mindset" is best translated into political objectives and implemented at national and federal levels. This paper discusses India's policies and changes from a historical perspective. It foregrounds the continuing foci on national unity, the importance of mother tongues in education and the more recent tensions between national and global needs. While it ignores neighboring countries, i.e., Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan and Sri Lanka, it adopts a comparative perspective by looking at the European Union, Malaysia and other countries.

Key words: language policy, language education, Indian language



Introduction

India is one of the few countries that has an explicit language policy encoded in its Constitution, but a policy that has been fluid, allowing for responses to political or other demands and for periodic modifications. There has been clarity from the start about certain issues, in the main, the importance of promoting the growth of indigenous languages and the need to guard the interests of the minority communities and the right of every individual to use their language. There have been attempts to impose uniform solutions to problems of diversity, such as the choice of one official language in the first version of the Constitution in 1950, and the famous Three-Language-Formula. In response, there have been reactions against the uniform solutions, often strong enough to both force amendments in the Constitution as well as block any amendments. The present is as full of scope for debate and deliberations as ever, if only because India's language policy is consequential for the polity, literacy, culture and economy of the country in the new world order.

This article proposes to discuss India's language policy from the perspective of historical development in relation to the political, cultural, educational and socio-economic dimensions, and to focus on the main concern, i.e., the multilingual fabric of the republic. The paper ignores Pakistan, which became independent in 1947, Bangladesh that separated from Pakistan in 1971, as well as Nepal, Bhutan, and Sri Lanka. The language situation in India has developed within its own socio-political ethos and in response to the issues that concern the polity and culture of India as a republic at the time of its foundation. India was an early case in decolonization processes and the critical importance of these issues to the region can be inferred from the fact that the 21st February, the date of the formation of Bangladesh in 1971, has been declared the International *Mother Tongue Day*. We maintain therefore that the issues brought up in this article are not only of local concern but also of general relevance to regions inclined towards language policies for an enriched linguistic habitat.



India's linguistic diversity today

India has been multilingual throughout its history. It is home to six language families, namely, Austro-Asiatic, Dravidian, Indo-Aryan, Tai-Kadai, Tibeto-Burman, and the Andaman group. Of these the Austro-Asiatic, the Tai-Kadai and the Tibeto-Burman groups form part of larger groups spread over East and South- East Asia. Apart from these well-known language groups, India also has a large number of 'mixed' languages that have their source in different groups or subgroups.

The language families have interacted internally and with each other well over a few thousand years, giving rise to an enormously rich linguistic habitat with languages of diverse, often mixed origins that overlap in terms of regional use, social, ethnic or caste parameters, and in communicative functions for different communities. A rich, partially overlapping, vocabulary has developed in sociolinguistics and contact linguistics to capture that richness, such as 'classical language' (e.g. Sanskrit and Tamil), 'international' language (English), 'scheduled' language (22 languages, e.g. Bengali and Tamil, recognized by the Constitution), 'non-scheduled' language (e.g. Bhojpuri and Manchad, not recognized by the Constitution, but spoken by large communities) 'tribal' language (e.g. Kurux and Malto, spoken by the communities with the same name), 'home' language (in the case of multilinguals, a language that is restricted in use to their homes) 'mixed' language (e.g. Indo-Portuguese spoken in Deu, which is a mix of Gujarati and Portuguese), 'link' language (e.g. Hindi spoken in Arunachal Pradesh, which has many tribal languages, but where Hindi is spoken as a common language among the tribal communities), 'bazaar' or 'marketplace' language (e.g. a restricted variety of Hindi spoken by speakers of other communities in Mumbai in the marketplace), 'official' language (Hindi and English, recognized by the Constitution of India as the languages for official communication between the Centre and the States and between the States), 'lingua franca' (the languages assumed to be spoken in a wide region, e.g. English among the literates in India), 'secret' language (or 'argot' that is, a language spoken by a specific community, such as traders, for communicating among themselves), 'caste dialect' (e.g. Havyaka Kannada, spoken by



Havyaka Brahmins in Karnataka), and what have you. One label that is not available in present-day India, like it is not in many other multilingual nations in the wider Asian region on account of the developments since post-independence, is 'national' language. As the label would suggest a non-existent national consensus, it has been replaced by the label 'Official State Language' or just official language.

Understandably, the number of languages in use today is controversial and depends on the criteria employed in identifying them. The 1961 Census of India counted 1,652 'mother tongues' with the Constitution of India then having officially recognized only 14. The officially recognized languages in India, the so-called 'Scheduled Languages', are 22 in number today; all others are called 'non-scheduled'. Singh and Manoharan (1993) have a total of around 350 in their anthropological list, while Annamalai (2004: 117) has argued for only 200 languages. The mismatch between anthropological and the linguistic lists may have to do with the names of the communities in the former being more important a criterion for labeling the languages than actual linguistic differences. Although official recognition has been given to only 22 of the languages, a growing number of non-scheduled languages are being used as media of instruction in schools. Only Nagaland has English, and no other language, as its official State language. Most states have one major language, but not all do. Arunachal Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh have Hindi and English as their official languages. A large number of languages are used in other states, such as Adi, Milang, Monpa in Arunachal Pradesh and Kullu, Derma, and Manchad in Himachal Pradesh. Four languages are recognized as Classical languages, namely, Sanskrit (Indo-Aryan) and Kannada, Tamil and Telugu (Dravidian). Of these, Sanskrit has received official patronage for a very long time, and is used both as a subject of study as well as the medium of instruction in a large number of schools, colleges, and universities all over India.

Apart from the criteria implied in this list of language types, their 'size' in terms of numbers of speakers and broad domains of use are important. Print media appear in countless languages (Bhatia 2000). Major dailies and periodicals are published in more than 20



languages of which sixty-three are bilingual and fifteen are multilingual major dailies. There are 2,409 bilingual and 455 multilingual major periodicals published on a regular basis. Bhatia and Baumgardner (2008) mention 72 languages as media of radio broadcasting. Movies are made in 13 languages. English is part of the media domain everywhere. The number of speakers of the top languages, i.e., Hindi, Bangla and English, is more difficult to establish. As for English, there are estimates that range from between 30-50 million or 3-5 per cent to 200 million in the 1980's. The first figure comes from Braj Kachru (1986: 54), when the population was much lower than now. The second estimate is used in the *Encyclopedia Britannica* (2002: 796) and in Crystal (2003: 50) and assumes that some 20 per cent of citizens use English. Though English bilingualism has been on the rise since the 1960s (Khubchandani 1994), that is clearly out of the way or assumes a very low level of competence. According to the 1991 Census figures, English-speaking bilinguals constituted 57.3 per cent of the bilingual population, who speak English as a second or third language. English was returned by 90 million, or 11.15 per cent of 807 million, speakers of scheduled languages. Hindi was returned by 70 million or 8.67 per cent of bilingual speakers. That trend has continued. In the 2001 Census more than 125 million speakers returned English as their first, second or third language, with the following breakup – 23 million listed it as their first language, 86 million as their second language and 39 million as their third language. But the total does not come close to the 200 million figure of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*. With the rise of English speakers in India, the L1-segment of Indian languages is increasingly apprehensive of the decreasing importance of their languages. Bengali, for instance, which used to be the second largest language, now comes in third place. First, second and third language Bengali speakers total just 91.1 million, trailing well behind English.

The burning questions in language policy at national and state levels

Language practices are hard to regulate at the individual and group levels and, like in most countries, have not been an issue in India's language policies.¹ The use of language in the

¹The use of an official or dominant language by migrants or other minorities at the micro-level is sometimes



public domain, especially the government at national and state levels, and education has been a hotly debated, controversial area. British involvement in India had started on a commercial basis, much in line with colonial practices of other countries like France or Denmark. The British East India Company was willing to use contact languages such as local varieties of Portuguese in trade situations or Sanskrit in government negotiations. In South-East Asia it used Bazaar Malay in the former and standard Malay in the latter type of situation (Azirah/Leitner 2015). English entered commercial interests only slowly by the mid-18th century. When Bengal became a property of the East India Company as a result of the *Treaty of Paris* (1763) that ended the *Seven-Year War* in Europe, the East India Company's objectives could no longer be just commercial. It had to address matters of administering a political entity. Its regulations were being supplanted by Parliamentary ones. The renewals of the Charter in 1773 and 1784 established that it was the Crown and not the Company that had ultimate control over the country. In 1813 the Company lost its trading monopoly and the country was opened to missionaries, whose role in the propagation of English is well-known. At the end of the Anglicist-Orientalist controversy informal policies emerged that emphasized English as the language of the control of the country. From 1833 on the Company opened the civil service to Indians, provided they had the required level of command of English. This marked the beginnings of English as a source of aspirations for Indians in the new world of British-ruled India.

Education and the medium of instruction came onto the agenda. The Anglicists favoured English-only medium, as was explicitly stated in a Parliamentary presentation by Lord Macaulay, a historian and Whig politician, in 1835. To quote from his "Minute", a document submitted to the British Parliament:

referred to in unofficial policy statements as an obstacle to integration or assimilation, to participation and access to the labour market etc. (*see* Leitner's survey of Australia in Leitner 2004). But micro-decisions such as spelling reforms, standardizations of pronunciation, the rejection of loan words or usage can affect individual usage though they are typically left to non-governmental agencies (Leitner 2004). The plain English debate in public writing in native English countries has had repercussions in India and other non-native countries too (Leitner 2009)



“We now come to the gist of the matter. We have a fund to be employed as Government shall direct for the intellectual improvement of the people of this country. The simple question is, what is the most useful way of employing it?”

“All parties seem to be agreed on one point, that the dialects commonly spoken among the natives of this part of India, contain neither literary nor scientific information, and are, moreover, so poor and rude that, until they are enriched from some other quarter, it will not be easy to translate any valuable work into them...”

“In one point I fully agree with the gentlemen to whose general views I am opposed. I feel with them, that it is impossible for us, with our limited means, to attempt to educate the body of the people. **We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect.** [Bold ours-GL and PP] To that class we may leave it to refine the vernacular dialects of the country, to enrich those dialects with terms of science borrowed from the Western nomenclature, and to render them by degrees fit vehicles for conveying knowledge to the great mass of the population.”

Macaulay’s Minute is often reduced to the bolded sentence, while the context shows that he was aware of wider educational issues. But having referred to them as a task of the class of English-bilinguals, they were encapsulated into a controversy between “English for the classes” and an unclear vision of what should be done for “the masses”. The Orientalists, too, highlighted the needs of the classes and focused on India’s classical languages and Arabic. While both parties debated education for an elite, a third minority view emphasized the translation of English texts into Indic languages to enable the masses to learn in India’s widely used other languages. Though considered too expensive, this proposal did at least address the issue of education for the masses and has become a stronger element in current debates. The wide use of non-scheduled languages described earlier is a sign of the long-term strength of that argument.



After the 1857 Rebellion, also known as the *Sepoy Revolt*, the Company was vested of its entire power: India became a Crown Colony. English had by then become the language of the public domain. It is controversial whether that success was solely due to it being politically imposed or whether it was also driven by a local demand once it had become a 'career language' that promised economic success and status (Ram 1983; Brutt-Griffler 2002).

A powerful factor that promoted the use of English was the growth of an Indian opposition towards the end of the 19th c. that drew part of its inspiration from emerging socialist views and the rise of Marxism and Leninism. A knowledge of English was essential to be able to follow the debates. Language policies, thus, needed to be informed by what was going on outside India. Politically, both the Hindu and the Muslim parties were at first content with a greater role in the administration of the country. It was Gandhi who initiated a broader opposition from the grassroots. Diarchy, which was introduced in the *Government of India Act I* in 1919, reflected the influential outlook of Nehru and other leaders and can be seen as the precursor to full regional autonomy in 1935 and of independence in 1947. In terms of language the Act increased the role of Indian languages.

Although many of the Indic languages, such as Bengali, Marathi, Tamil and Telugu, had a long history of creative and administrative use, it was Hindi which came to gain the spotlight in the drama of political developments in pre-Independence India. Hindi had forerunners, i.e., the Hindi-Urdu-Hindustani complex, which developed during the late 12th and 13th c. under pre-Mogul dynasties. It was a spoken language, derived from the Hindi in the Delhi area, and was the result of contact between different language and religious groups. It was really a mixed language that had no straightforward religious associations. In the 16th and 17th centuries it was favoured by southern kingdoms and an early literature appeared in various parts of the continent. While the official language in administration at the Mogul time was Persian, it was the Hindi-Urdu-Hindustani complex that replaced Persian as language of poetry and in other domains throughout the country in the 18th c. It became a *lingua franca* that spanned from the North to the South. Terms like Hindi, Urdu, Hindustani



and others names were commonly used to refer to it. During the 19th c. a division between a Muslim and a Hindu form of Hindi began to develop. Muslims tended to lean towards Persian lexis and a modified Arabic script, Hindus towards Sanskrit and the Devanāgarī script. By the beginning of the 20th c. the Hindi-Urdu complex was firmly divided along lines that reflected the two religious factions. Drawing on the continuing *lingua franca* tradition of the use of Hindi-Urdu, Gandhi tried to formulate a compromise when he suggested that two alternative scripts be used. By doing that he also did away with the practice of using an elite classical language, Sanskrit or Persian, as official language.

Politics, however, was to go against Gandhi's position. The early post-independent educational policy debates emphasized the need to shift from English to Indian languages, but they mainly promoted a Hindi-only policy for the public and governmental domains at the national level. Tensions between Hindus and Muslims hardened in the advent of the division of the sub-continent into India and (East and West) Pakistan. The Hindi elite now saw no need for a compromise and fixed its views on a Sanskrit- based Hindi. While a colloquial spoken variety continued to exist in practice and eased differences and conflicts, the important formal and written language created a double conflict. One was a sign of the two large religious groups, the Muslims and the Hindus, with one insisting on the Persian-Arabic, the other on the Sanskrit tradition.

Unlike many independent nations, India's independence in 1947 (*de facto* 1950, as it was in this year that India emerged as a federal republic) started with the proposal in the VIIIth Schedule of the use of Hindi written in the Devanāgarī script and with international numerals as the official language of the Union (Articles 343 and 344 of the Constitution of India 1950), and 14 official languages, (including Hindi and English as well as 12 other languages, i.e., Urdu, Punjabi, Kashmiri, Bengali, Assamese, Oriya, Telugu, Tamil, Malayalam, Canarese (Kannada), Marathi, Gujarati) for communication between the States and the Union and for other purposes. For a period of about 15 years English would be allowed to continue for use as an auxiliary official language. The 15 years in which Hindi functioned as the virtual national language saw changes in its form. Words that had already



entered it from English, and Perso-Arabic contacts as well as other languages recognized by the constitution were retained in order for Hindi to be a medium of expression of the composite culture of the country. Notwithstanding these accommodative efforts, the decision to proclaim Hindi as sole official language of independent India had not envisaged the resistance that would come from the South when the time for the implementation of the proclamation came. Hindi alone, in whatever form, was unacceptable to the South, where the much longer ancestry of Dravidian languages and their older literary tradition was now fore-grounded. Besides, there were other claimants, such as Sanskrit and Bengali, which didn't garner adequate support. The decision regarding Hindi as the official language of the union along with 14 other languages of the States was a result of a series of debates in the Constituent Assembly in the period 1946-50. As Agnihotri (2015) argues "...most of the linguistic decisions taken by the Constituent Assembly, in many cases insightful, were located in consensual democracy and the domination of the elites in that body. The multilingual and multicultural ethos that is constitutive of Indian society was ignored. The focus was so much on containing the existing political safeguards available to the religious and backward minorities that the rights of linguistic minorities were compromised. In trying to prepare a blueprint for a liberal and secular democracy, the makers of the Constitution were forced to reconcile several contradictions."

The public domain and education– perpetual areas of conflict?

Education had been a field of perpetual conflict in the pre-independence era. The three major themes that were being discussed throughout the 19th and pre-independence 20th c., were English-medium education for an elite with a mechanism of downward filtration (the Anglicist's view), the use of India's classical languages Sanskrit and Arabic along with English (a modified Orientalist's view), and the use of vernaculars for the masses (the minority option). Following, and in fact accompanying the debates on language in the Constituent Assembly, the three major positions came to give way to an Indian or Eastern perspective. An important crystallizing committee, the University Education Commission (1949) or popularly known as Radhakrishnan Commission, having been headed by Dr. S.



Radhakrishnan, later the President of India, argued that "The purpose of all education ... is to provide a coherent picture of the universe and an integrated way of life. We must obtain through it a sense of perspective, a synoptic vision, a *samanvaya* of different items of knowledge" (Ram 1983: 264ff). While accepting Western positions, the final report remained solidly Eastern: "Knowledge must be translated into wisdom and both must be integrated into virtue, the life of the soul." It added that "Our ancient teachers tried to teach subjects and impart wisdom. Their ideal was wisdom (*irfam*) along with knowledge (*ilm*), *jananam*, *vijnanam*, *sahitam*." Logically, it emphasized the mother tongue: "The study of the language and literature of our mother tongue should occupy the first place in general education. Language incarnates the genius of the people which has fashioned it ... We get into the spirit of our people by acquiring control over the language." It concluded that "Whatever the advantage of English and the immediate risks of a change over to the new, the balance of advantage on a long view of the matter lies in the change." English, it argued, should function as a bridge between the two worlds, and not divide the country into two nations. In other words, it saw a limited role for English and a vibrant role for Indic languages. English was to be a bridge between the cultures of India and Indic languages vehicles of the indigenous cultures and thought. In principle, it advocated the use of a range of Indic languages, from the classical to the vernaculars.

The choice of language at national and state levels and the role of English were finally reconsidered at a meeting of the Chief Ministers of the states and Central Ministers of the Republic in 1961 and the consensus reached was stated in amendments to the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution. Hindi remained as the Official Language but English became Associate Official Language. A third language, Hindi, English and a Scheduled language such as Bengali or Tamil, were to be acquired by all school-going children. The political compromise, the so-called *Three Language Formula*, did not overcome the division between the North and the South of India, although it did underscore the significance of centering the importance of India as a federal State (see Amritavalli & Jayseelan 2007:56 for an expression of the view that India is more of "a loose federation



than as a centralized state”). First formulated in 1957 by the Central Advisory Board of Education, and accepted in 1961 by the Chief Ministers of the States and Central Ministers, it was modified by the Kothari Commission (1964-66) and formally stated in the 1968 *National Policy Resolution of the Union Education Ministry, the Language Policy and Planning* document. In 1970-71 the Union Education Ministry clarified that the formula was not a policy but a program. However, the *National Education Policy* of 1986 returned to it as a policy, in spite of considerable discussion on its efficacy (Pattanayak 1986; Sridhar 1989). It was adopted as a Programme of Action by the Parliament in 1992 and was included in the National Curriculum Framework for School Education in 2000.

English had been turning into an ‘Indian’ language for centuries, as it acquired and stabilized Indian features and stratified internally (Pandey 2015). But it still has not reached final and explicit acceptance or Stage 5 in Schneider’s (2007) developmental scale. It is not formally a teaching target. But poets like Kamala Das (*‘...Why not let me speak in/Any language I like? The language I speak, / Becomes mine, its distortions, its queernesses / All mine, mine alone. It is half English, half Indian, funny perhaps, but it is honest, / It is as human as I am human, don't You see?...’*; ‘An Introduction’ *Summer in Calcutta* 1965) and Nissim Ezekiel (*‘Goodbye Party For Miss Pushpa T.S.’* in *The Collected Poems 1952-88*, 1989) wrote in ‘very Indian’ English. English in India was gradually gaining character as Indian English. It was around this time that a model of Indian English pronunciation, namely General Indian English was proposed (see CIEFL 1972, Bansal & Harrison 1976).

The 1970’s thus was a period when an Indian perspective on English and Indic languages gained ground. A 1976 commission remained vague but vernacular languages were now used at all levels of education, and English continued to grow alongside. While it may appear as a conundrum, it states correctly the situation about the simultaneous growth of the use of the ‘vernacular’ languages as well as of English. The conundrum is easily explained because of the patronage to the vernaculars and English by the State governments on the one hand and the adoption of English by the public at large on the other. Policies could not eliminate English. A new policy emerged in 1986, which abolished



a date for the replacement of English and left it to the States to formulate their own policies. This led to the States to promote the State languages in State-run schools and colleges. The expansion of English-medium education amongst the poor urban and rural classes was already on the rise. English now went below the upper and upper middle class and cut across caste-lines. Access to it was and is seen by many as essential for employment and wealth, be it only at a low level such as that of call centres. Parents' decision in favour of English found the support of the courts at state and national levels. States, whose obligation it is to find and to implement educational language policies, can no longer impose a 'regional language formula' if it is not acceptable to the populace. Annamalai (2004) reports on the decisions taken by High Courts that strengthened the right of parents who had wanted English-medium education. International laws and trade agreements that India signed too make the rejection of English impossible.

Thus in spite of the official avocations, the Three-Language-Formula remains a program rather than a policy since the learning of a regional language by a Hindi-speaking child in the Hindi-speaking region is optional. The difficulty in the language learning situation vis-à-vis the Three-Language-Formula is the richness of the linguistic options, mainly the presence of the Classical language Sanskrit, which is available as a strong option, and, in the metropolis, of the availability of foreign languages such as French and German that promise economic benefits. The 'programme' status of the Three-Language-Formula is further underscored by the lack of resources to have teachers for the regional languages in the Hindi states, which are amongst the most densely populated states of the country. In effect, the Three-Language-Formula is best seen today as a "3 ±1" language policy (Laitin 1989). The +1 situation arises with the addition of the Classical Language Sanskrit, or of Kannada, Tamil and Telugu that have risen in status recently. The -1 situation arises, especially in the Hindi-speaking states, with only Hindi and English. In actual governance, all Central Government official communication has provisions for English and Hindi, with greater importance to one or the other in different areas of governance. State governments do with the regional language and English for most purposes.



Besides debates about the Three-Language-Formula, a major case has recently been made for the mother tongue as the medium of instruction, which has had the support of UNESCO since 1953. The latest UNESCO document, the *Educational Position* paper of 2003, categorically states the need for imparting instruction through the mother tongue in school for as long a period as possible. The importance of the mother tongue as medium of instruction at the primary level had already been recognized in the *Seventh Amendment Act* of the Constitution of India in 1956 but got a boost with its re-statement in 2003.

Two more proposals for policy implementation for language in school education in India have come up. One is an improvement of Mother Tongue Education (1956) in areas where many languages are being spoken. *Multilingual Education*, as this revised position is called (see e.g. Mohanty et al. 2009), addresses the problems of language barriers and the drop-out rate for tribal children, supports the need for developing multilingual competence, and proposes the use of the mother tongue and surrounding languages, with a planned transition to the regional and official languages. The other is the proposal of the National Knowledge Commission 2006-2009 supported by the government of India, still in the process of formulation and awaiting implementation. The National Knowledge Commission (see <http://www.aicte-india.org/downloads/nkc.pdf>) proposed to introduce English from the 1st standard “along with the first language (either the mother tongue or the regional language) of the child... This phase of language learning should focus on using both languages for purposeful and meaningful experiences” As is obvious, this proposal requires close examination vis-à-vis UNESCO’s Mother Tongue Education proposal (see Benson 2004, <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001466/146632e.pdf>), whereby children in multilingual countries should be provided schooling in L1 (“a language in which school children are competent”) before moving to L2, by gradually transferring “skills from the familiar language to the unfamiliar one”.

The bottom line of the discussion of education issues is that there is considerable uncertainty and openness at this stage. English and Hindi or the regional languages are at



the top in that order. There is variety at the bottom of instructional mediums as well as of approaches and qualities of education.

Globalization and technology

With the advent of globalization in the early 1990's and its continuous rise, the multilingual fabric of India has in no way been de-stabilized, although English has continued to spread. This state appears to be a puzzle, since globalization is known to lead to the promotion of a single language, English, in many regions elsewhere. The puzzle is easy to solve if we understand the complementary functionality of languages as a characteristic feature of Indian multilingualism (Pandey 2014). Thus, English has continued to grow in use as a language of the aspiration of the masses—in business, trade and technology. At the same time, Hindi has spread as the spoken link language used among the educated and not-so-well-educated working classes across the country communicating amongst themselves as well as among the higher echelons in business and trade. The regional languages have gained in strength, too, at the local level supported by the public education system in the state. As King (1986:141) notes, “The unique genius of south Asia...is the ability to absorb conflicting ideas and create harmony out of opposing views. ...These countries live every day with a degree of diversity unknown in the countries of the West. Language conflicts go against the grain of this tradition of tolerance”. And, one might add, that some foreign languages, too, have an appearance as they promise some economic benefit.

Conclusion

As in other countries in the world, the Indian macro- and micro-sociolinguistic situation reflects a multilingual mindset that expresses itself in the simultaneous and sequential use of different languages. Policy underscores that mindset, though politics relating to language use often fails to define balances between different types of languages. Language usage patterns develop largely independently in the population. Policy also fails to address the issue of the role of different manifestations of English in India.



Endo-normativity may well be called for to facilitate intra-national communication. But there must be space for English as an international language, a language of science, technology, and of empowerment. English. It seems, remains fully entrenched in society and at the same time it remains divisive in a novel way (Annamalai 2004). The early phase of developing an Indian language policy, i.e., that of rejecting English after 15 years may well have influenced the language policy of Malaysia. Both countries were faced with a similar issue, that of deciding on the fate of a colonial heritage. The close relationship between Jawaharlal Nehru und the Malaysian PM Tunku Adbul Rahman may have facilitated the taking over of a similar position on English. English was not abolished in either country; in India it was given some official status while it was given a minor status as a 'second important language' in Malaysia (Azirah/Leitner 2015). More research is needed on this issue.

We will make three generalizations. The first seems specifically Indian in character. New proposals do aim at neutralizing the effects of earlier policies that served the interests of a small, if growing, elite and disadvantaged the poor, the rural populations. These policies have yet to pick up momentum. Competing proposals ironically reinforce the position of English with the argument that as lack of English would deny access to better jobs and mobility, the introduction to English should be made available at school from the start of education. The argument that Indian languages need to be modernized before they can be used in the domains relevant to globalization is perpetuated, but the expectation of modernization can barely be fulfilled on account of the progress being too fast to catch up. India is not the only country where such a situation is encountered. It has been studied in Malaysia, another former British colony, by Azirah/Leitner (2015). One can see it in East Asia, Africa, the Caribbean and elsewhere. Countries that have no Anglophone colonial past like former Indo-China only promote Anglo-American or a form of International English, while those that have such a colonial background like Malaysia or the Philippines are faced with the same conflict that India has. Should they encourage endo-normativity



with local varieties of English or promote bi-dialectalism with local and international English?

Secondly, one of the objectives of a language policy that is characteristic of some language movements (see Cooper 1990), namely, literacy of the masses, seems not to have been of concern to English language education in India. English has been seen more as a medium of higher education than as a medium of mass literacy. It is here that the promotion of Indigenous languages has played a complementary role vis-à-vis English. The recent proposal of the National Knowledge Commission appears to have been an attempt at presenting English as functionally comparable to the mother tongue. Much of the controversy that the proposal has generated has to do with this aspect of the issue.

Thirdly, language choice and the sequencing of languages as second or foreign are acutely felt problems. Clear guidance from experts, let alone educationists and politicians, is hard to come by. Indian academics sometimes believe that the conflict-laden status-quo of India could be a model for other countries in its positive acceptance of diversity and multilingualism. Bhatti (2008), for instance, argued that view to contrast the situation in India with the traditional emphasis on monolingualism in Europe (Leitner 1992). Many European nations, such as Germany or Italy, have indeed a long history of monolingualism or have a history of suppressing minor languages, such as the United States, France and Spain. But those countries have come to recognize their linguistic richness today that has resulted from massive work and refugee migrations. Such problems are even visible in Malaysia and other Asian nations, where work-related migrations are strong (Azirah 2009). India, at any rate, has become an example of national multilingualism whose policies deserve to be observed.

To sum up, the following considerations have claimed the attention of language planners and educationists in India:

- i. The need for strengthening the notion of a unified India as a federal state has been the primary force in the attempt to formulate language policy. The original proclamation of a language policy and its continual revision over the significance of this fact. It is this that led



to the revision of the Constitution of India in favour of keeping English as a Second Official Language of the State.

ii. Language policy foregrounds the importance of the mother tongue in school education and protects the rights of individuals to use their language.

iii. Aspirations of Indian citizens for modernization as well as economic and social progress must be guarded.

Adherence to these central concerns distinguishes India from some of its neighbouring countries, such as Pakistan and Sri Lanka, whose polities would have been less severely affected with these foci in their language policies.



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