

# Status and Acquisition Planning and Linguistic Minorities in India

Cynthia Groff

*University of Pennsylvania*

This paper explores India's linguistic diversity from a language planning perspective, particularly emphasizing language issues relevant to linguistic minorities and drawing insights regarding language planning from the Indian context. First, a look at the complexity of counting and reporting the number of Indian languages reveals the language planning implicit in the composition of the Indian Census. Next, the more explicit status planning involved in the naming of official languages is explored through analysis of the Indian Constitution. An overview of India's language-in-education policies, both for languages to be taught in school and for languages to be used as media of instruction in schools, further illustrates significant aspects of status and acquisitions planning for linguistic minorities. Language planning in the Indian context, both implicit and explicit, requires care to ensure just treatment of linguistic minorities. Likewise language-planning models may require expansion given the complexity of the Indian context.

## **Introduction:**

### **Languages and Linguistic Minorities in India**

**T**he diversity in India – and of particular interest here, the linguistic diversity – exemplifies the rich resources of the nation of India. Some of India's policies and practices provide a positive model for linguistic pluralism, particularly when compared with the monolingual mindset of many nations throughout the world. Yet some of India's policies and practices may in subtle ways undermine the nation's diversity. While exploring instances of language planning, inequalities found in these examples point to the question of who is served when India is said to have certain numbers of languages, when status is given to certain languages and when certain languages are valued over others in education.

As precursor to an exploration of broader language planning issues in India, some education-related statistics regarding linguistic minorities in India are relevant to the focus of this paper. According to the 1991 census, while the average literacy rate in India was 52.21%, the literacy rate for scheduled tribes (those tribes listed in the Constitution) was 29.60%. The dropout rate for scheduled tribes was 63.8% at the primary level, 79.35%

in middle school, and 86.27% in secondary school (Census of India 1991). This provides but one example of the inequalities prevalent in India's diversity. The diversity itself is not the problem, rather the injustices based on that diversity. In education situations in particular, inequalities become pronounced and perpetuated. Jhingran (2005: 3) estimates that in India "almost 25 percent of all primary school going children face a moderate to severe learning disadvantage owing to their language background." As diverse approaches to language use in education are explored, approaches that may contribute most to the educational advancement of linguistic minorities must be considered.

According to the 1991 census, within India's 28 states and 7 union territories, there are 114 languages. Of these languages, 22 are scheduled, or listed in the Constitution. 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 the concerns of this paper, 47 are used as media of instruction (Annamalai 2001). 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 *Linguistic Survey of India*. 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 *Ethnologue* lists 415 languages still spoken in India and estimates that there could be many more (Gordon 2005).

Some groups considered to be linguistic minorities since their language is not one of the 22 official languages have populations of over 3 million (King 1997: 5), populations exceeding those of some European countries. In 1981, eighty-seven of the non-scheduled languages had more than 10,000 native speakers (Khubchandani 2001: 11). According to the 1991 census, 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, also referred to as relative minorities. Relative minorities are those whose languages may be official in another state but not in the state where they are living, which has especially become an issue after the attempt to divide the states according to linguistic boundaries (Ekbote 1984: 198). Urdu speakers scattered across India may be considered relative minorities, and their position has been given special consideration in issues of language in education with the term "minority" often used in India to refer to the Muslim population alone.

This paper seeks to explore some of India's linguistic diversity from a language planning perspective, particularly emphasizing language policies relevant to linguistic minorities. First, the complexity of counting and reporting the number of Indian languages reveals the language planning that is implicit in the composition of the Indian Census. Next, the more

explicit status planning involved in the naming of official languages is explored through analysis of the Indian Constitution. From there, the focus shifts to those languages that have not been made official, having a "non-official" status, here referred to as "minority languages." A look at Constitutional safeguards and a summary of India's national language-in-education policies, both for languages to be taught in school and for languages to be used as media of instruction in schools, provide further context for the subsequent discussion of the language-in-education situation for linguistic minorities. India's acceptance and promotion of linguistic diversity contrasts with the policies of many monolingual nations, and concern for linguistic minorities in India has been increasing in recent years. Yet, vigilance is still needed in protecting the status of minority languages and insuring justice, particularly equitable access to education for speakers of all languages. Besides demonstrating the need for caution in language planning in practice, the Indian example informs and stretches the language planning frameworks used to analyze it. Specifically, additional categories are identified and proposed for Hornberger's (1994) integrative framework of language planning goals.

#### How Many Languages? Status Planning through Legitimization and Minimization

The main source of information about numbers of minority language groups in India comes from the census, which has been conducted every ten years since 1881. While the 1991 census listed 114 languages, it also lists 1576 mother tongues. The question on the 1991 census simply asked for mother tongue, with an additional question for listing other languages spoken. 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. How is this striking number of "mother tongues" analyzed in the census? The Registrar General of India had said in 1951 about the complexity of defining and differentiating language and dialect:

...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 1954).

The need, however, for some classification of all of the mother tongues returned 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 in the census 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 spo-

ken variety, caste names are listed instead of language or dialect names, and, interestingly, for a few mother tongues returned on the census all of the speakers were male and for others all of the speakers were female (Sarker 1964: xix-xx). Dua (1986: 135) notes also that sometimes “the notion of mother tongue has been mixed up with region, religion, profession, ethnicity, caste names, and the like. Khubchandani (2001: 8) also mentions the reasons for variations in a person or group’s own claims and the desire by some to avoid association with their mother tongue.

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**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Returned Mother Tongues</b>	<b>Rationalized Mother Tongues</b>	<b>Languages</b>
1981		723 (?)*	179 (?)
1951		782	
1961	~ 3,000	1,652	
1971	~ 3,000		105
1981	~ 7,000		
1991	~ 10,000	1,576	114

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

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

The question of who speaks what language in India starts with the question of what is considered a language. Adding to the complexity, besides differences in what people claim as their “mother tongue,” are the different definitions of mother tongue as exemplified in the various censuses. There are linguistic definitions and social definitions of language, and within the latter we must consider political definitions. Defining 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). Shapiro and Schiffman (1981) also discuss the problems and difficulties of defining language and dialect in India, as well as how certain politically-based definitions, though no longer valid theoretically, tend to remain in force.

The choice of definitions of mother tongue represents a implicit element of language planning in that census officials are not explicitly responsible for forming language policies and yet their decisions influence languages. In a more informal way, individuals who label a language variety as a dialect versus a language also influence the status of that language. 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. Here, Hornberger’s (1994: 78) integrative framework of language planning goals becomes useful in analyzing these language-planning acts (See Table 2). Her framework lists standardization and proscription / prohibition in a range of status policy goals. Between these two goals could come a language-planning goal of legitimization which encompasses the language planning acts of rationalization and classification described above.

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. Similar is the highly politicized question of whether Hindi, Urdu, and Hindustani are one, two, or three languages. Daswani (2001) makes reference to the impact of one’s affiliation and purposes on presentations of the number of languages in India. For example, as the first prime minister of India, Jawaharlal

Table 2  
Language planning goals (from Hornberger 1994)

Approaches	Policy Planning (on form)	Cultivation Planning (on function)
Types	Goals	Goals
Status Planning (about uses of language)	Standardization Status Officialization Nationalization Legitimization* Classification* Rationalization* Minimization* Protection* Proscription	Revival Maintenance Interlingual communication International Intranational Spread
Acquisition Planning (about users of language)	Group Education/School Literature Religion Mass Media Work	Reacquisition Maintenance Foreign Language / Second Language Shift
Corpus Planning (about language)	Standardization Corpus Auxilliary code Graphization	Modernization Lexical Stylistic Renovation Purification Reform Stylistic simplification Terminology unification

(The Hornberger 1994 integrative framework was based on Ferguson 1968, Kloss 1968, Steward 1968, Neustupny 1974, Haugen 1983, Nahir 1984, and Cooper 1989.)

\* Additional language planning goals described in this paper

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, 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 philolo-

gist’s and the census commissioner’s mind” (1997: 4).

Mahapatra (1986) points to minimization of minority languages 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” (208), an observation mentioned also by Khubchandani (2001: 8). The process of rationalization and the use of a broad definition of mother tongue help to explain how this happens.

Planning for the status of a language begins with acknowledging its existence. Minimization of language status through denial of diversity occurs by and for political interests, as exemplified in the census. This minimization of minority languages, or refusal to legitimize, is even more covert than legitimation in the census example and could also be considered a status policy goal. Perhaps minimization is the converse of legitimation, or could be listed just above proscription in a continuum from restrictive to non-restrictive policies.

#### Which Languages Get Status? Status Planning through Officialization

In light of the linguistic diversity in India, the question of which language to use for official purposes in 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 government and official purposes and, more importantly, would not promote dominance of one Indian language group over another.

Many Indian leaders, 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 as follows (Das Gupta 1970: 109, quoted in Baldrige 2002):

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 in India since Urdu was associated with Muslims and Pakistan

The Constitution of India of January 26, 1950, 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 whose status was to be reconsidered in fifteen years.

Concerning the states, the Constitution allows for choice of official language, an important concession that was demanded particularly in non-Hindi-speaking states. Article 345 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 (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 should s/he observe 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 to eighteen with the addition of Nepali, Manipuri, and Konkani. In 2003, the 100th Constitutional Amendment added Bodo, Santali, Maithili, and Dogri to the list of scheduled languages, bringing the number of official languages in India up to twenty-two. 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, then 200 others could be included (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 will be seen in the discussion below relating to 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 (2000: 26) 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..." They also mention how the use of minority languages varies from state to state. While not explicitly giving status for the minority languages excluded from the twenty-two that are constitutionally recognized or scheduled, 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 within 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.

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.

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

The question has been raised of how language rights fit into the language planning goals framework. While not explicitly planning for the status of particular languages, 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 form 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 where 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)

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).

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" (Kumar 1985: 9). This protection of minorities by the government stands in contrast to the minimization of languages described in the context of the Indian census above. While it may have been in the government's interest to smooth over the linguistic 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. To ensure protection under the Constitution, being included in the list of Scheduled Languages was an important status for languages, related to the complex question of defining language and mother tongue. Also relevant to minority rights is the listing of tribes and castes for special protection, which occurs elsewhere in the Indian Constitution, providing the categories of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, which are distinct from the list of Scheduled Languages.

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. Although the Indian Constitution does not promote favoritism for minorities and does not make them an added burden on the states, it remains the state's obligation to provide for the minorities and for their educational rights (Ekbote 1984: 199). Some groups and organizations use their right to demand protection. This group unification is feared by governments wishing to avoid formation of rebel groups that 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). Whichever group is involved, it remains the responsibility of states to provide for the educational needs of minorities. Although we see no explicit acquisition planning for minority languages in the Constitution, the rights of the minorities safeguarded there at least provide an opening for de facto status planning by giving to certain minority languages the educational function and prohibiting that function to none.

### What Languages in Education? Indian Education Policy, Status and Acquisition Planning

Thus far the discussion of status planning in this paper has been based on Kloss's (1969) definition of status planning as relating to a language's importance or its position 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), this paper has also explored how the government of India plans for several of the language functions listed by Stewart (1968): official, provincial, and wider communication. The focus now turns to the educational function of language and its function as a school subject. Hornberger (1994) includes the educational function, under the category of acquisition planning, though closely tied to status planning. According to Cooper (1989), 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). India's complex linguistic situation adds complexity to education decisions regarding languages to use as media of instruction and languages to be taught.

#### *A Brief History of Language-in-Education Planning in India*

Prestige languages used in India for educational purposes over the generations included Sanskrit (codified since 500 BC), Persian (under the Mughal dynasty which ruled with varying strength from the 16th to the 19th centuries), and English (under the British East India Company from the 17th to the 19th century and under the British Raj from 1858 to 1947). Throughout India's recent history the question of medium of education has raised significant debate. During British rule there was debate about whether and when to use the vernacular as opposed to English in education: Orientalist versus Anglicist perspectives. Appendix A outlines the major colonial decisions concerning language, education, and linguistic minorities.

During the time of colonial rule the vernacular came into use in education as a transitional medium to pacify the people's demands, and national leaders in the drive for independence spoke for universal primary education through Indian languages. The language issue was so powerful, in fact, that questions about content in education were pushed into the background. The strength of Gandhi's opinion is clear: "The foreign medium has made our children practically foreigners in their own land. It is the greatest tragedy of the existing system. The foreign medium has prevented the growth of our vernaculars" (Gandhi's *Education*, cited in Sharma 1985: 13). Gandhi saw the connection between educa-

tional status and the corpus planning of a language, rejecting the idea that languages must first be developed before they can be used in education. Challenging Macaulay's ideas about the superiority of English, Gandhi expressed his opinion about the use of English as the national language as follows:

Our language is the reflection of ourselves and if you tell me that our languages are too poor to express the best thought, then I say that the sooner we are wiped out of existence, the better for us. Is there a man who dreams that English can ever become the national language of India? (Cries of 'Never') (Gandhi's Speech at Banaras Hindu University, February 6, 1916, cited in Saksena 1972: 28).

After independence in 1947, solutions were not simple given the demands of the diverse inhabitants of the states and diverse opinions throughout the new nation. Commissions and committees were appointed to address language and education issues. Appendix B outlines key national decisions concerning language, education, and linguistic minorities. In principle, many policies promoted the use of minority languages. Provincial governments were not to force minorities into linguistic conformity; however, at the same time, the voices of minorities often went unheard (Ekbote 1984).

While many advances have been made regarding the use of minority languages in education, most of the national decisions may be seen only as suggestions given the fact that education, for the most part, comes under the jurisdiction of the states. The role of the national government comes in uniting the support of the states, coordinating higher education institutions, persuading the elite of the importance of a particular scheme, and providing financial incentives for specific programs (Khubchandani 2001). The central government "does not exercise any effective control over the implementation of general education programmes" (Khubchandani 1981: 6). Still, national decisions regarding education do influence the decisions of states, as exemplified in the Three-Language Formula, first presented in 1956 by the Central Advisory Board of Education.

#### *The Three-Language Formula: Acquisition Planning for Official and Regional Languages*

The Three-Language Formula deals with acquisition planning through the selection not of media of instruction but of languages to be taught as school subject. While the minority languages receiving attention in this paper are not included among languages to be taught, the formula certainly influences the education of linguistic minorities. The Three-Language Formula includes the following (according to the 1966 modifications):

- 1<sup>st</sup> the mother tongue or regional language – 10 years
- 2<sup>nd</sup> the official language – Hindi or English – 6 years minimum
- 3<sup>rd</sup> another modern Indian or foreign language – 3 years minimum

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

While overall a broad consensus exists among states, implementation of the Three-Language Formula varies considerably. According to Ekbote (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 south Indian language, (c) southern schools, especially in Tamil Nadu, resisting the teaching of Hindi, and (d) the cost of arranging for instruction. 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.

The multilingualism promoted in the Three-Language Formula springs in part from a concern for maintaining the status of the official and regional languages. Concern continues in India for the maintenance and spread of the official Indian languages. This includes a 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 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 only to spread the Indian languages, but to spread knowledge through the national language was raised by Ekbote (1984):

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 (139-140).

With the Three-Language Formula, those students whose mother tongue is not a regional language end up learning four languages, and possibly three or four scripts since their mother tongue is not the same as the state majority language. This has been seen as one drawback of the policy. 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. Knowing four languages should certainly not be thought of as a disadvantage. Rather children who are educated through the medium of an unfamiliar language face greater learning challenges than their peers (Jhingran 2005).

*Medium of Instruction & Minority Rights: The Use of Minority Languages in Education*

The question of what languages should be taught as school subject is obviously closely linked to the question of medium of instruction. 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.” 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, 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 to do so send their children to English-medium schools, and the government also has begun in some schools to comply with this demand for English medium. Annamalai (1990) referred, however, to attempts in government policy to reduce the use of English as medium of instruction at the primary level, most likely for the sake of India’s official and regional languages, languages that themselves appear to be minority languages when compared to English.

Regardless of the global and political status of a child’s mother tongue, educational research has clearly shown that children learn best when taught in their own languages and minority children face multiple disadvantages when they are required to learn primary literacy skills through the medium of a second language (Jhingran 2005). The multilin-

gual contribution from the state comes from its obligation to provide education and to keep children from dropping out of school (Annamalai 2001). As Annamalai points out, however, "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 political rationale for promoting the use of minority languages in education does not seem to match Cooper's (1989: 157) definition 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. acquisition of the minority language is not part of the government's language planning goal, but an act granting educational status for the sake of linguistic human rights. This 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. Furthermore, 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 rather of a desire to preserve the rights of minority people or to avoid their revolt if those rights are not preserved. Despite the motivation behind them, such policies change the status of a language and contribute to its acquisition and maintenance.

#### **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 in education policies exceed those in most countries, as, for example, in the United States where the Constitution makes no language official and provides no guarantee of language rights or educational rights related to 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) 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" (189).

Reporting the number of languages used as media of instruction in India parallels the complexity addressed earlier of numbering the

nation's languages. In 1976 there were reported to be 33 tribal languages in use as media of instruction in schools (Pattanayak 2001: 57). In 1981, Khubchandani (1981: 6) reported that a total of 80 languages were being used as media of instruction in India. Annamalai (2001) reports 47 languages used as media of instruction. Later Jhingran (2005) states that less than 20 languages are being used for media of instruction in primary education. Several Indian 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; see also Jhingran 2005). Besides state provisions, some tribal schools have been formed by the Education department and some by the Welfare Department. Other mother-tongue education programs have been promoted by NGOs.

Even when the systems seem set in place, implementation problems hinder the use of minority languages in education. Programs implementation suffers from inefficiencies due to few inspections, absent teachers, unavailability of texts, and alienation from the home language (Pattanayak 2001). According to Dua (1985), the use of minority languages in education face implementation problems, not due to lack of student motivation and ability or from the parents' devaluation 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 to educational problems for linguistic minorities. 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, as well as the lack of planning for transitions from one language to another in the school (2001). Other hindrances to program implementation spring from mistrust, as some 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.

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 a switch from a language-as-resource 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, focused 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 (Government of India 1991: 72).

They further 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” (72). Their suggested 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).

Looking beyond program implementation problems to micro-level decisions about language use in the classroom may reveal another level of language planning in India. The multilingualism that has been observed in educational settings in India outside of official policy deserves some consideration. Khubchandani (1981) notes that “in actual practice one notices a good deal of code-switching and hybridization of two or more contact languages in informal teaching settings” (31). Multilingual teachers can speak in whatever way best helps their students. According to Khubchandani (2001) multilingualism manifests itself in multiple ways in the classroom:

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 (33).

In a multilingual setting, this may be more natural than we think. Referring to the developed world, Pattanayak (2001) 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 (50).

Annamalai (1990) refers to the successive use of languages for different stages of education as a successive model of bilingual education. Since no plans are made, however, for the switchover between media, the de facto result is what he terms “unplanned simultaneous bilingual education” (2). In light of the need for planning for the switch between languages in preparation for higher education, noted also by Khubchandani (2001), perhaps such informal multilingualism serves an important educational function. 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 with standard for writing, 4) Pluralistic model of literacy. In this latter medium, varieties are viewed as assets, giving them positive value, but instruction of the standard is still provided for economic advancement (1992).

This pluralistic model of literacy needs clearer definition. How does “grassroots ‘folk’ multilingualism” compare with Annamalai’s “unplanned simultaneous bilingual education”? Is it truly effective? 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. Might there also be a distinction between natural bilingual education and planned bilingual education? Whether natural de facto multilingual education can provide an effective bridge between access to education through the mother tongue and access to higher education and economic advancement though the more powerful languages remains to be seen. This question too is not without its controversies.

### Conclusion

Through this analysis of India’s linguistic diversity from a language planning perspective, more questions have been raised than have been answered. How many languages are there in India? This is a question open to debate and involves definitions, census practices, and multiple motivations. Which languages get status? What about the other lan-

guages? Though addressed in the Constitution, issues of language status too are not without fluctuation, and the reasons behind which languages have received status are rarely linguistic. As a language planning case, the Census activities of classification and rationalization exemplify a status-planning goal of legitimization. Similarly hesitance to acknowledge linguistic diversity reveals a language-planning goal of minimization. Meanwhile safeguarding the rights of linguistic minorities in the Constitution results in language protection rather than proscription. What happens in education for linguistic minorities? Constitutional rights and national education policies make some provision, but implementation varies. And what actually happens in the classroom adds another level of complexity deserving more exploration. Throughout India's history, attempts have been made by the government to manage the linguistic diversity in India, with complexity and controversy at each turn. In the introduction the question was raised of who is served when India is said to have certain numbers of languages and when status is given to certain languages. Perhaps the answer will highlight for us the importance of including those who have not been served by language policies in the past. Which approaches may contribute most to the educational advancement of linguistic minorities? I applaud India's ongoing efforts to answer this question, with the diversity of situations to be considered. In the words of Khubchandani (2001: 43): "When dealing with plural societies, we shall do well to realize the risks involved in *uniform* solutions."

*Cynthia Groff is a Ph.D. candidate in educational linguistics at the University of Pennsylvania's Graduate School of Education. Her research interests include language policy and planning, mother-tongue and multilingual education, multiple literacies, and empowerment for linguistic minorities. Her dissertation research focuses on issues of language, education, and empowerment in the views of Kumaoni young women and educators of northern India.*

E-mail: [cgroff@dolphin.upenn.edu](mailto:cgroff@dolphin.upenn.edu)

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## Appendix A

### A History of Colonial Language-in-Education Planning in India

(Information compiled from Dua 1986:166; Khubchandani 1981: 29-30; 2001; Sharma 1985; Daswani 2001, Ekbote 1984: 198-201)

- 1797 – Charles Grant of the East India Company discussed possibilities for educating Indians.
- 1813 – The 1813 Charter of the E.I. Company, allocated 100,000 Rs. to educate Indians through an Indian language.
- 1833 – The 1833 Charter allocated 1,000,000 Rs. to educate Indians.
- 1835 – Macaulay's famous *Minute of 1835* - T.B. Macaulay, Chairman of the General Committee on Public Instruction proclaimed the superiority of English for use in Indian education, i.e. education to a minority, given the need for development of the Indian languages:

We have to educate a people who cannot at present be educated by means of their mother-tongue. We must teach them some foreign language. The claims of our own language it is hardly necessary to recapitulate. It stands pre-eminent even amongst the languages of the West (Sharp, *Selections from Educational Records*, as cited in Sharma 1985: 2).

- 1854 – That same year a resolution was passed approving Macaulay's suggestion.
- 1854 – The Wood's Dispatch reaffirmed the importance of English in education but promoted the use of the vernacular at the school level for those who don't know English.
- 1882 – The Hunter Commission also suggested the use of vernacular in primary education for subjects not leading to university study.
- 1904 – A Resolution on Educational Policy by the (colonial) Government of India suggested the age of 13 as a point of division for use of vernacular versus English in education.
- 1913 – A Resolution on Educational Policy called for improvement of English at the secondary level.
- 1915 – Rama Rayaningar's Motion in the Imperial Legislative Assembly for the use of vernacular in secondary school with instruction on English as a second language sparked debate in parliament but brought no resolution, the decision being left to the states:

## Appendix B

### Post-Independence Language-in-Education Planning in India

(Information compiled from Dua 1986:166; Khubchandani 1981: 29-30; 2001; Sharma 1985; Daswani 2001, Ekbote 1984: 198-201)

- It was also openly admitted that a boy receiving education through the vernacular medium up to the highest classes of the school had an edge over the boy educated in English through middle school because he did not have the disadvantage of studying through a foreign language (Sharma 1985: 3).
- 1929 – The Hartog Committee suggested the use of bilingual instruction in one school instead of starting two schools with different media in the same area. The Committee didn't specifically examine vernacular languages or media of instruction, however.
- 1931 – The Indian National Congress passed the "Karachi rights" declaring protection for the "culture, language and scripts of the minorities and of the different linguistic areas."
- 1937 – The Wardha Education Scheme recommended seven years of basic education for all under the influence of Gandhi, who strongly opposed the use of a foreign language.
- 1937 – The Abbott-Wood Report recommended the use of vernacular in high school, with English also compulsory.
- 1938 – The Committee of Central Advisory Board of Education advocated the use of the mother-tongue in primary education to be supported by the government. At the Annual Meeting of the Central Advisory Board, however, it was said that dialects were clearly not acceptable as media of instruction.
- 1947 – An Expert Committee of the Indian National Congress made recommendation for the protection of minorities who would not be kept from developing their languages, but also for government support in providing facilities for mother-tongue education if a non-regional language is used by a significant proportion of the population.
- The Minorities subcommittee of the Central Advisory Board of Education made a similar recommendation for rights protection.
- 1948 – The National Planning Committee on General Education and Technical Education and Developmental Research reported that the time and energy of the students were diverted by the use of English and that the mother-tongue should be used at the secondary level.
- 1949 – The Central Advisory Board of Education and the State Education Ministers' Conference stated that at the primary stage mother tongue instruction should be provided for linguistic minorities with 40 or more students in a school or 10 in a class. The regional language would be introduced after class three. Secondary education in the mother tongue would also be provided given sufficient numbers of students. It was stated that "the medium of instruction in the junior basic stage must be the mother-tongue of the child and that when the mother-tongue was different from the regional or State language arrangements must be made for instruction in the mother tongue by appointing at least one teacher to teach all the classes, provided there are at-least 40 such pupils in a school" (Ekbote, G. 1984, p.200-201).
- The Congress Working Committee issued a resolution on bilingual areas, revealing a language-as-problem orientation. Provinces would choose a language for administration and education. In bilingual areas where a minority group made up more than 20% of the population, public documents should be available in both languages. State languages for communication with provinces and union government would replace English in 15 years.
  - The University Education Commission, however, stated that only

- modern literary languages were fit for instruction.
- 1952 – The Secondary Education Commission suggested a Two Language Formula.
- 1953 – The All-India Language Development Conference decided that tribal languages were acceptable media for primary school.
- 1954 – The Congress Working Committee agreed that tribal languages were acceptable in primary school.
- 1956 – The Central Advisory Board of Education suggested the Three Language Formula.
- Protection for mother tongue education would still be possible to the secondary level.
  - The Second Five-Year Plan included provision for making textbooks in minority languages.
  - On a different note, the Official Language Commission stated that only modern literary languages were fit for instruction, demonstrating that diversity of opinions still prevailed.
- 1961 – The Conference of Chief Ministers of various states approved a simplified Three Language Formula with the purpose to "promote national integration and equalise the burden of learning languages on children in Hindi and non-Hindi speaking areas" (Kumar 1985). The language to be added in secondary school was to be a modern Indian language, and thus, most notably, languages of the southern states should also be taught in the north.
- On a different note again, the President of India stated that it was not reasonable to expect mother tongue instruction to be provided for small linguistic minorities.
- 1964 - 1966 – The Education Commission "emphasized the role of mother tongue education for the massive resurgence of national life, the development of indigenous languages, the achievement of industrialization and modernization goals through a wider dissemination of science and scientific outlook and the release of original, creative thinking necessary for national development" (Dua 1986, p.166).
- 1966 – The Education Commission issued a Modified 3-Language Formula:
- 1<sup>st</sup> mother tongue or regional language would be taught for 10 years.
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> an official language – Hindi or English – would be taught for 6 years
  - minimum, to be introduced in 5<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> grade.
  - 3<sup>rd</sup> another modern Indian or foreign language would be taught for 3 years minimum, to be introduced in 8<sup>th</sup> - 10<sup>th</sup> grade.

- 1968 – A Resolution of Parliament on the Official Language Policy affirmed the importance of the Three Language Formula for learning other regional official Indian languages.
- 1968 – The National Policy on Education urged implementation of the Three Language Formula.
- 1979 – The National Policy on Education (Draft) affirmed that "the medium of instruction at all stages shall be the regional language except a the primary stage where it will be the mother-tongue."
- 1986 – The National Policy on Education, paragraph 4.8 states:

Some minority groups are educationally deprived or backward. Greater attention will be paid to the education of these groups in the interest of equality and social justice. This will naturally include the constitutional guarantees given to them to establish and administer their own educational institutions, and protection to their languages and culture. Simultaneously, objectivity will be reflected in the preparation of text books and in all school activities, and all possible measure will be taken to promote an integration based on appreciation of common national goals and ideals, in conformity with the core curriculum (quoted in Government of India 1991: 76).

This provision under the section on scheduled tribes, was not addressed as an issue of language or titled bilingual education, but was introduced as follows: "The socio-cultural milieu of the scheduled tribes has its distinctive characteristics including, in many cases, their own spoken languages. This underlines the need to develop the curricula and devise instructional materials in the tribal languages at the initial stages, with arrangements for switching over to the regional language" (quoted in Annamalai 1990:2). Primers were to be prepared for tribal languages with over 100,000 speakers by the end of 1990.

- 1992 – The National Policy on Education issued another revision of the Three Language Formula. Up to the present the Indian Parliament remains busy on the theme of language in education as seen in a listing of recent bills passed (Parliament of India).