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ABSTRACT

This article discusses the language planning problems that India faces. The distribution and usage of the various languages are outlined. There is considerable linguistic heterogeneity, with 80 languages currently being used as media of instruction at least at an elementary level, and 14 languages being used at the secondary level. Since language has become a political issue, there is a need for legislation determining the role of language in public spheres of communication such as education and administration. The main problems revolve around a confrontation between tradition and modernity concerning the role of language in education. The basic issues concern: (1) the objectives of education, (2) the role of language in education, (3) the choice of the medium of instruction, (4) requirements qualifying a language as a medium of instruction, and (5) the pace of change. The established elite generally opposes the use of regional languages and mother tongues as media of instruction; it fears a lowering of standards and wants languages of wider communication for international interaction. Defenders of the use of regional languages are in favor of cultural regeneration and cohesion at a national level. It is suggested that the implementation of bilingual education at the secondary level would contribute to the solution of India's language problems. (CLK)

DILEMMAS OF LANGUAGE TRANSITION: CHALLENGES TO LANGUAGE PLANNING IN INDIA

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Considering the linguistically heterogeneous composition of nearly half of the districts in India--where minority speech groups exceed 20% of the district population (152 out of 330 districts, at the time of the 1961 Census)--the numerical majority of twelve regional languages in respective regions does not necessarily correspond with the language communication patterns in those areas (Khubchandani 1969a; 1972). Demands for the regional languages media during the Independence struggle signified the assertive attitudes of the pressure groups aligned with the numerically dominant language in a region. During the past three decades, with the politicization of language pressure groups, attention has been greatly focused towards legislating the roles of language in public spheres of communication, i.e., administration, education, mass media, etc. (Nayar 1969, Das Gupta 1970). In this regard, national leaders show great mastery in tight-rope walking, recognizing the strengths and weaknesses of diverse pressure groups in language politics. With a view to resolve the highly sensitized issues of language privileges, several language labels--such as, home language, regional language, link language, national language, official language, literary language, library language, world language--have acquired political salience in education programs.

Medium of Education

For a nation such as India with a multilingual and federal set-up, education is made a responsibility of the states. The constitution of India provides full freedom to the states to choose a language or languages in a region as 'official' language(s) (Article 345). It also allows linguistic minority groups to receive education through their mother tongues and set up institutions of their choice for this purpose (Article 30). Hence, one finds wide variations in different states as far as the medium, content, duration, and nomenclature of educational stages are concerned. There is inevitable flexibility in the weightage assigned to different languages in the total educational programs; the framing of language curricula; prescribing textbooks; etc. A national policy of education emerges out of a consensus arrived at among the states constituting the federal polity. The role of the Union Government is, therefore, largely confined to promoting the national policies through seeking mutual accommodation from individual states, coordination of institutions for higher education and research, and for vocational and technical training, persuasion of language-elites, and offering incentives of resources at its command for specific programs. The Union Government does not exercise much control over the implementation of general education programs.

At present in the field of education, all states have the provision of teaching the students of major Indian languages through their mother tongue or through their language of formal communication (as Maithili and Rajasthani students get education through Hindi, and Kashmiri students through Urdu) up to the school leaving stage. Many universities now provide instruction in the medium of regional languages at the undergraduate and graduate stages in arts and commerce faculties; but English still continues to be the principal medium for higher education, particularly in law, science, and technology faculties.

About eignty languages are being used as media of instruction at different stages of education. A large number of them are used only as preparatory media at the primary education stage (for classes I and II, often extended up to class IV; a few are stretched up to class VII as well), before a student switches over to any major language as the medium at the secondary education stage. Some tribal languages, spoken by smaller populations, are also promoted as elementary media by private institutions (missionary schools, monastaries etc.). There are fourteen principal media languages, comprising eleven regional languages (including the pan-Indian Hindi), two languages without any region--Urdu and Sindhi, and one foreign language--English. Some prominent Indian languages--such as Hindi, Bengali, Telugu, Marathi, and Urdu--are now being extended as alternate media to English up to undergraduate and graduate levels in the universities of respective regions, depending upon their developmental stages. Foreign languages like Persian, Portuguese, and French are also retained as media in a few urban schools.

Many distinct scripts are in vogue for writing these languages. Sanskrit, Hindi, Marathi, and also Nepali are written in Devanagari script; Urdu, Kashmiri, and Sindhi in Perso-Arabic script. Other major Indo Aryan and Dravidian languages (also Tibetan) have distinct scripts derived from early Nagari system. Some vernaculars and tribal languages have adopted Devanagari, Roman or regional scripts. Khampti in Arunachal uses a variation of Thai script. With the emphasis on literacy programs through mother tongue, many languages of small speech groups are now being committed to Devanagari or Roman writing, depending upon sectarian or regional pressures.

The Education Commission (1966) envisaged setting up some institutions, at both school and university levels, with pan-Indian languages--Hindi and English--and some of the world languages as media of instruc ion.[1] What this amounts to is that at every stage there will be institutions available with specialization in a particular medium and students can select a school or college with a medium of their choice.

Three-Language Formula

In a country where no single language meets all the needs of an ordinary literate citizen, pan-Indian languages like Hindi and, for some time to come, English occupy a significant functional position in the national life. Amidst sharp controversies concerning the role of different languages in education, a broad consensus has been arrived in the 'Three-Language Formula' which provides a policy base for prescribing languages in the school education (Khubchandani 1967). The definition of mother tongue, and the feasibility of teaching mother tongue to linguistic minorities in different states on the grounds of practicability have dominated the thinking of policy makers in assigning a language the first place for study during the primary and secondary stages of education. The introduction of second and third languages at the lower and higher secondary stages have remained tied up with the issues of language privileges, cultural prestige, and socio-economic mobility.

The University Education Commission in 1949 first considered the teaching of regional languages, general language (Hindi), and English in schools. The Secondary Education Commission in 1953, in a rather generous mood, suggested the teaching of five languages: mother tongue, regional language, two 'federal' languages--Hindi and English, and also optionally a classical language--Sanskrit, Pali, Prakrit, Persian, Arabic. The Council for Secondary Education (1956) settled down to the Three-Language Formula, recommending mother tongue, Hindi and English for the non-Hindi speaking population, and Hindi, any

other Indian language, and English for the Hindi speaking population. The Central Advisory Board of Education in 1957, also endorsed the Formula. But the tussle between the Hindi and English lobbies continued over the issue of second place in the education curriculum under the Three-Language Formula.

The Education Commission in 1966 recommended a liberalized version of the Formula, according to which it is expected that a student at the completion of the lower secondary stage, would have acquired sufficient control over three languages: mother tongue and two non-native modern languages, broadly, Hindi as official medium and a link language for the majority of people for interstate communication; and English as associate official medium and a link language for higher education and for intellectual and international communication. "By and large the pupils in the Hindi areas will study Hindi, English, and a modern Indian language, while the vast majority of pupils in non-Hindi areas will learn the regional language, Hindi, and English."

According to the modified Formula: (i) mother tongue or regional language will be studied for 10 years (classes I-X, age 6-15), (ii) the official language--Hindi, or the associate official language of the Union, English--will be taught for a minimum of 6 years (classes V-X, age 10-15 years), and (iii) a modern Indian or foreign language--not covered under (i) and (ii) and not used as the medium language--will be studied for a minimum of 3 years (classes VIII-X, age 13-15 years). The choice of determining the second or third places for Hindi or English was left with the states.

But the Formula has been put to different interpretations by different states. On the one hand, Hindi states like Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Himachal Pradesh provide Sanskrit as the third language, in place of a 'modern' Indian language, and on the other hand West Bengal and Orissa also favor Sanskrit at the cost of Hindi as the third language. Two states--Tamil Nadu and Mizoram--have backed out from the compulsory provision of the third language as envisaged in the Formula, thus avoiding the teaching of Hindi. For several linguistic minorities, it has virtually become a four languages formula, as many state governments insist on the compulsory learning of regional language.

Some states like Andhra Pradesh, Mysore, Maharashtra are experimenting with the teaching of 'composite' courses, by combining a modern Indian language, usually mother tongue, with a classical language--Sanskrit (or Urdu along with classical Arabic) to be offered as first language after the primary stage.

There are many minority languages confined to small pockets in almost every state; some of these languages are proliferated widely in the state or are spread in more than one state. Generally the number of languages provided for teaching at the elementary stage is higher, and the number gets reduced as a student moves upward on the educational ladder. Various criteria are applied in different states for selecting languages as a subject of study: number of speakers, spread of the speakers in different areas, cultivation of language, etc. Because of the prevailing antagonism over the language issue, many state institutions dodge the compulsory provision of teaching second and third languages (Hindi and English) by making "passing" in these languages optional.

In addition to the compulsory teaching of three languages under the Formula, many states provide for the teaching of one or two additional languages on an optional basis. Optional languages are usually the additional regional language(s) for linguistic minorities or a classical language (Sanskrit, Pali, Ardhamagadhi, Avestha, Persian, Arabic, Hebrew, Sriac, Greek, Latin), or Hindi, or English, or any other modern Indian or foreign language (French, German, Italian, Spanish). These are usually studied at the terminal stages of school education, stretching from three to six years. Some institutions manipulate the choice of other subjects in favor of studying optional languages, e.g., Rajasthan allows the study of three optional languages at a time. Most popular among the classical languages as optional languages are Sanskrit, Arabic, and Persian. In eastern states, Maithili, Nepali, Santali, Khasi, Garo, Manipuri, Mizo, Bodo, are also offered on optional basis. Khasi is offered as a subject of study up to the B.A. in Meghalaya. Recently Dogri has also been introduced as a subject of study in the Jammu and Kashmir state.

In spite of heavy weightage given to language learning in the education curriculum one notices general devaluation of language instruction, because of the lack of motivation and also of coordination. So far the general structure of language instruction has not been studied objectively and the linguistic content is not spelled out adequately. The allotment of more or less time to the teaching of particular language is judged as a prestige or status issue for that language. In absence of a clear objective of learning a language, one notices many political pressures--literary prestige of a language, socio-political privileges of language speakers--being applied for incorporating specific languages in the curriculum. At places language programs are allotted out-of-proportion share in the total teaching priorities, in order to suit the climate of language privileges.

Different weightage is assigned to different languages in the total instructional program. Generally schools in different states devote between one-quarter to two-thirds of the duration of total teaching periods to the teaching of languages.

Tussle Over University Medium

When the British left the country in 1947, there were many schools in which education up to primary and secondary stages was given in major Indian languages of respective regions. But at the higher education stages, the universities recognized only English as the medium with no alternatives.[2] During the Independence struggle, in thrust for language autonomy and language privileges, many political and educational organizations had built up strong pressures to extend Indian languages as media at the university level.[3]

Initially, the new Congress Government showed a good deal of enthusiasm for rapid change in the medium policy, and some universities expressed their willingness to introduce Hindi, Urdu, and other regional languages as media in five years time (India 1948). The University Education Commission in 1949 also endorsed the view that the switch over to mother tongue education should be achieved within next five years in all universities so as to promote cultural renaissance and social integration. But soon it became evident that due to the conflicting ideological pressures among the national leaders and also due to the unenthusiastic response from the education experts who operated within the 'established' system, the government had to face an uphill task as far as the fulfillment of such aspirations was concerned.

In this tussle for leadership among the 'established' and the 'rising' elites, various language interests groups adopted rigid stands regarding language policy at the university stage:

1. The supporters of English claimed the virtues of having an 'advanced' medium for technological and scientific progress.

2. The supporters of Hindi were motivated by the interests of cultural regeneration and cohesion at the national level.

3. The supporters of regional languages emphasized the facility of expression for students, and were guided by the claims of equal privileges and autonomy for their languages.

National leaders like Nehru, Azad, and Zakir Hussain (1950) were the early champions of common medium. Moderating over the rigid postures in medium controversy, they suggested the alternate media policy, where Hindi serving the national interests could be adopted as the university medium along with English as a universally developed medium of knowledge. But the Tarachand Commission (1948) rejected Hindi as common medium for universities and suggested regional media in the states for administrative and academic purposes, restricting the common medium for the federal government.

The Official Language Commission in 1956 spelled out the criteria for the choice of medium at the university stage on the basis of the facility of expression, and the usefulness of such medium for students. It endorsed the alternate media policy with regional language as the major medium. A variety of solutions cropped up in the dissenting notes:

1. English with alternatives (Hindi, or dominant regional language).
2. Hindi with alternatives (English, or regional languages).
3. Sole Hindi medium.
4. Sole regional language medium.

The latter two suggestions were later dubbed as 'Hindi imperialism' and 'language chauvinism' respectively by the opponents of these solutions in the controversy.

During the fifties many socio-political and legal battles were fought over the university medium issue concerning Bombay, Gujarat, and Madras universities. The state governments' enthusiasm for switching over to Hindi (for Bombay University), Gujarati (for Gujarat University), and Tamil (for Madras University) were frustrated by professional bodies. Hence, by and large, the states had to compromise their position, and leave the program of switch over in universities largely unimplemented. At the time of linguistic reorganization of states in 1956, it was strongly felt throughout the country that language tensions were undermining the national unity. The demand for a nation-wide common medium got into momentum on the pleas that national loyalty requires free and rather intense communication within the nation, and regional languages as sole media will damage the administrative, judicial and academic integrity and scientific pursuits of the country.

The University Grants Commission (UGC) in its 1960 Report pointed out the difficulties of students when moving from a mother tongue-medium school to the English-medium university education, leading to parrot-learning and the crippling of original thought. It strongly pleaded that the sole dependence on English was widening the gulf between the educated few and the uneducated masses, which cannot be nourished in a democratic society. Earlier the Official Language Commission (1956) had also emphasized the deteriorating effects of English-medium education, such as, 'a wearisome burdening of the memory, a sacrifice of the faculty of independent thinking, and a blunting of intellect (p. 89).'

Hence from early catholic stands of sole English, Hindi, or regional language, by 1961 a new approach promoting a link language had gained favor among national leaders. English and Hindi enthusiasts again seized the opportunity for claiming the 'new' link status. Some southern and eastern states showed preference for English in place of Hindi as a common medium. The Link Language Formula was evolved by the Central Advisory Board of Education in 1962, suggesting that regional language medium would be necessary for removing the gap between the masses and the intellectual elites; and English as the 'transitional,' and Hindi as the 'eventual' link languages will promote national unity, mobility among teachers and students, and the standards of education. The timing of the switch over to the new system was left open. Concerning the eventual adoption of Hindi as the link language, a veto was given to the states, and also to the professionals for gradual and well-prepared change from English to regional languages and Hindi.

Many professionals continued to emphasize the utility of a highly cultivated media as a precision-instrument of thinking and communication through which students can be trained in logical thought and in the disciplined use of words. A UGC Committee reporting on Standards of University Education (1965) went to the extent of saying: "A change is justified only when the university is confident of raising standards by doing so. Unless an Indian language has grown up to its full stature, with a good literature in science and other subjects, the move for its acceptance as the medium of instruction immediately would be a

retrograde step" (p. 71). It is interesting to note that this argument against Indian languages has been held by some Indian elite for over a century. The objection of the Lahore Indian Association in 1876 against establishing a vernacular university at Lahore is couched in almost the same phraseology that the vernacular medium will be a 'retrograde and reactionary' step as there being 'in the vernacular languages a sad want of textbooks for the higher examinations' and 'the English being dispensed with, the standard to instruction must necessarily be lower than that of other universities' (Naik 1963: pp. 283-296).

After the unsuccessful attempts of the fifties, the forces of hypersensitive language chauvinism are now considerably weakened, and rapid change in shifting the media of education at the university level is ruled out. The status quo of English as a compulsory medium for some time to come is now being widely accepted in most of the university campuses, on the pleas that knowledge is more important than the medium, and standards are more important than the time tables. By hard struggle the Indian languages are now proving themselves increasingly practicable and acceptable for a wider range of study in the 'elitistic' framework of education. Today after the lapse of over a quarter century, the citadels of higher learning have yielded only in providing an alternate medium of regional language usually associated with the 'ordinary' tradition in education, for humanities and commerce courses up to graduate level.

The quality and prestige of 'advanced' tradition still rests with the English medium.[4] There are over twenty universities, which still maintain their unilingual character, and provide education only through English. These are the universities in the metropolitan areas--Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta, Madras; many southern universities such as Bangalore, Kerala, Sri Venkateswara (Tirupati); and also those imparting professional education such as agricultural and technological institutions, where there is no alternative to English. At the same time, many universities of Hindi and Bengali regions have been relatively more enthusiastic about providing regional language as an alternate medium along with English.

Thus the English status quo supporters have won the battle of time, and the Hindi and regional language supporters have felt contented with the formal recognition of their viewpoint, and also with their claims over large funds for language development.

Linguistic Minorities

It is rather amazing to find in a large nation committed to the gigantic task of eradicating illiteracy, its intellectuals, with their political power and educational expertise to get entangled in the web of language privileges at the university level under the pretexts of the range and quality of education. During the British rule the English medium indisputably remained a mark of superior 'advanced' education, and the regional languages media were conceded a role of somewhat inferior 'ordinary' education in rural and urban areas (for details, Khubchandani 1971; 1975a).

With the professed policy of the Indianization of 'alien' education system, the administrators were soon confronted with the demands of mother tongue education by the linguistic minorities. Initially the administrators approach was of 'harassed bureaucrats trying to impose a workable system on linguistic chaos' (Dakin 1968: p. 31). Eighty-seven per cent of the country's total population is aligned with 12 major regional languages: 76 per cent residing in their home states, and 11 per cent staying outside their home regions. Once the dominant groups' right to mother tongue education was fully assured in their respective states, the new governing class did not lose much time in focusing its attention on the practical objectives of economy, utility, communication, and political cohesion, as far as it was concerned with the demands of the remaining 13 per cent linguistic minorities, comprising a total of over fifty million speakers (at the time of the 1961 Census).

The first President of India, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, pointed out in 1961 that the costs of making separate arrangements of mother tongue education for different linguistic groups

would be 'colossal' and it 'is feasible only if the linguistic group is of an appreciable size and forms a compact region. It cannot be reasonably demanded by those who are very small in number or are scattered in different parts of other linguistic regions' (India 1961). The Secretary to the University Grants Commission also pointed out: "A child bred in an area where the regional language is something other than its own mother tongue acquires the regional language with almost the same facility as that with which he acquires (his) mother tongue (Mathai 1959: pp. 9-10)."

After initial reluctance, the narrow interpretation of mother tongue[5] was conceded in favor of linguistic minorities who identified with a major language outside the region--languages which 'transcended provincial barriers' (Azad 1949). But major languages without any specific region, such as Urdu and Sindhi, had to face initial discrimination in certain states like Uttar Pradesh in getting the facilities of mother tongue education.[6] The concessions to the tribal and other such minority languages were slow in coming. The All-India Language Development Conference in 1953, and the Congress Working Committee in 1954 accepted tribal languages as media in the primary school stage. The Second Five Year Plan in 1956 also mentioned, under the tribal welfare programs, about the facilities for preparing special textbooks in different tribal languages (pp. 589-590).

In 1956 Articles 350A and 350B were inserted in the Constitution by the Seventh Amendment Act according to which: "It shall be the endeavour of every State to provide adequate facilities for instruction in the mother tongue at the primary stage of education to children belonging to linguistic minority groups." But the Constitutional provisions for safeguarding the interests of the linguistic minorities being recommendatory and not mandatory, one notices lack of enthusiasm on the part of state authorities in their implementation of such programs. Authorities still have not given up their hope that in practice the linguistic minorities will come to accept the advantages of the regional languages.

Polarization of Issues

Many of the issues generating acrimonious debates at the national level, sometimes erupting into campus skirmishes, do not seem to have much relevance to the quality of education. Prominent axes over which the medium controversy have become polarized during the past one hundred and fifty years are indicated in Table 1.

In long-drawn socio-political and legal squabbles over the medium, one notices various shades of opinions moderating between the two extremes. Eventually the status quo experts seem to have temporarily succeeded in their strategy by their insistence that the Indian vernaculars should first be cultivated through translations from advanced languages and, before even undertaking this task, they must equip themselves with the scientific terminologies appropriate for different subjects. Because of the 'high brow' elegant values in the formal language behavior, the task of cultivating urban-based standards has been the prerogative of the so-called 'purists' of language. Ironically, in the elite parlance, the modern languages saturated with the instant derivation of terms from non-native classical and neo-classical sto ks--Sanskrit, Perso-Arabic or classical Tamil--are regarded as shuddha 'pure' languages. But those mixed with the everyday life terms borrowed from other living languages--such as English, Bengali, Marathi, matching with the newly acquired concepts from different cultures--are regarded as khichRii 'hotchpotch, pot-pourri' languages (Khubchandani 1968; 1969c).

The preparation of textbooks for teaching technical subjects at the higher education stage is guided by the values set by ideological and literary leadership, and not by the exigencies of individual subjects, of professionals, and of the recipients of education. Thanks to the purists' antagonism towards endowing new concepts with expressions borrowed from real life, many scholars in various fields, finding the lofty coinages forbidding, are discouraged from making meaningful contributions through their native language.

TABLE 1

Conflicting issues	Extreme stands professed by the 'established' elites	Extreme stands professed by the 'emerging' groups
1. Objectives of education	universal values of knowledge	knowledge in consonance with cultural background
2. Role of language in education	autonomy for mother tongue as a full-fledged medium (from primary to advanced stages)	language hierarchy with multi-tier media (preparatory, auxiliary, and major media--linked with the relevance of education)
3. Choice of medium	common medium (national or universal)	plural media (regional and minority languages)
4. Requirements qualifying medium languages	(a) advanced languages, with 'tradition-inspired' literary standards.	vernacular languages, with prevailing 'situation-bound' implicit propriety controls
	(b) cultivated with 'elegant' terminologies and translations	endowed with uninhibited convergence resulting from pidginization, hybridization, code-switching
5. Pace of change	status quo or, if change at all, only after adequate preparation	rapid change from dominating language(s) by creating 'vacuum' in favor of vernacular languages

Various programs of change in the medium policy pay scant regard to the reorientation limitations of the professionals, who in turn adopt the 'obstructionists' attitude in implementation. Teachers who could play pivotal role in implementation programs are consequently reluctant to join in the processes of language shift, as most of them regard the issues concerning language policy being politically motivated and falling short on the test of practicability. One often notices a strong bias among them for leaning towards the rigid political stands concerning the functions and the content of different languages in the education curriculum. Against this background, teachers particularly of the advanced stages of education, who are themselves the product of select education system remain, by and large, uninvolved in the developmental processes of language media, demanding the cultivation of Indian languages on a platter and waiting conveniently till the 'developed' textbooks are produced by the language experts.[7]

The actual beneficiaries in this game seem to be the multilingual elites who adopt language postures according to the ideologies prefering cultural resurgence, language autonomy in education, common medium, elegant styles, and 'vacuum' theory; but in actual usage, they feel at home in the prevailing patterns in education--cherishing universal knowledge, language hierarchy, alternate media, hybridization, code-switching, and status quo. One is confronted with an interesting characteristic of regional 'neo-elites' who have succeeded in manipulating the colonial education system to their advantage by aligning themselves with the masses through the demands of cultural resurgence and rapid change in the education system, but at the same time professing the 'elitistic' values of language autonomy, uniform medium, and elegant styles of 'school' language. Hence in everyday verbal communication one notices enormous fluidity and diversity of codes dealing with informal situations, whereas in the formal situations, particularly in the written form, one demands compartmentalized 'appropriate' and 'correct' usage according to the professed language policy.

One of the serious handicaps in implementing language education policies by different education agencies at the central and state levels is the continuance of the inherited dichotomies of 'ordinary' and 'advanced' traditions, and the urban-biased system of education as shaped during the colonial rule. From the administrative point of view 'language diversity, differentiation, distribution, and development all intensify difficulties of eradicating illiteracy' (Dakin 1968: p. 18). Amidst the conflicting ideologies concerning language, the administration tends to override the difficulties by short-cut means, promoting ad hoc solutions. On the grounds of feasibility, many programs remain unimplemented because of the paucity of monetary and human resources, and the administrators content themselves with the plugging of holes in the functionally out-dated system, which does not show much consonance with the developing aspirations of the new nation.

Plural Media

The heterogeneity of communication patterns in many regions, unequal cultivation of different languages for their use as media, demands of 'high brow' elegant versions of school mother tongue, non-availability of personnel with adequate command over the textbook language, and the switching over to another medium in the multi-tier media system without adequate preparation are some of the difficulties faced by learners initiated to education through the mother tongue medium.

The issues regarding the content, the spread, and the medium of instruction have been matters of great concern to educationists for a long time. Contemporary thinking on the subject has come a long way from the early phase of selective education through the media of classical languages (such as, Latin, Greek, Sanskrit, Persian-Arabic) and colonial languages (such as, English, French, Spanish, Portuguese) to the later phase of universal education through the media of the student's mother tongue. But the multiplicity of mother tongues in various regions has led to the re-examination of the supremacy of mother tongue medium stretched over the entire education career. In recent years, many political and academic agencies have lent their support to the claims of imparting education through either a single dominant language in the region, or through some sort of compartmentalized or selective bilingual media, in order to keep pace with the socio-economic demands of rapid modernization.

In the background of multiple-choice medium policy, the three stages of education have acquired distinct patterns of choice in the Indian education system:

1. Primary stage:

   Dominant regional language,
   Pan-Indian language--English/Hindi,
   Other major languages, or
   Newly cultivated languages (as preparatory media).

2. Secondary stage:

   Dominant regional language,
   Pan-Indian language--English/Hindi, or
   Other major languages

3. Higher education stage:

   English as developed medium, or
   Hindi and regional languages as emerging media.

In recent years some multilingual states, mostly in eastern India, have introduced as a state policy, bilingual education in which a developing language in a region is used as a partial medium, together with English, Hindi, or the neighboring regional language as the

major medium. Some states are initiating bilingual schooling for their tribal populations; various minority communities, particularly in urban areas, also prefer bilingual media as shown below:

TABLE 2

Bilingual Media at Primary Stage	State
A. Manipuri - English	Manipur
Khasi - English	Meghalaya
Garo - English	Meghalaya
Mizo - English	Mizoram
Assamese - English	Arunachal
Hindi - English	Andaman & Nicobar Islands
B. Santali - Elementary Hindi	West Bengal
Tibetan - Elementary Hindi	West Bengal
Kuvi - Oriya	Orissa
C. Kashmiri - Urdu	Jammu & Kashmir
Urdu - English	Jammu & Kashmir
Sindhi - English	Maharashtra
Sindhi - Hindi	Delhi
Panjabi - Hindi	Chandigarh
Malayalam - English	Lakshadveep Islands

Though the policy of bilingual media is, by and large, not encouraged in 'prestigeous' institutions, in actual practice one notices a good deal of code-switching and hybridization of two or more contact languages in informal teaching settings. In spite of the overwhelming state patronage to respective regional language media, there are many multilingual institutions with multilingual teachers catering to the needs of diverse populations spread in every state. Many minority institutions in every state impart education through minority languages, and/or pan-Indian languages like English and Hindi, depending upon the availability of textbooks, teachers, and the trends of language maintenance in a community.

Types of media are very much diversified in character. Though many states have a policy of promoting the 'exclusive' use of mother tongue as medium of instruction, in actual practice many students experience a shift in language medium at the one or the other stage of their educations career, depending upon the context, domain, and channel:

1. Passive and active media: Students listen to lectures in one language and write answers in another.

2. Formal and informal media: Formal teaching in the classroom is conducted in one language, but informal explanations are provided in another language.

3. Multi-tier media: Elementary education is initiated through mother tongue as the preparatory medium, but when a student moves upward in the education ladder, he has to shift to a more cultivated medium.

In the present set-up of education, a majority of students, mostly after high school stage, face the problem of switching over from their mother tongue to a common existing medium--English or, in a few cases, Hindi at the university stage. Success of the multi-tier system lies in the adequate preparation for shifting from one medium to another. To achieve this it will be useful to formally introduce bilingual education at the higher secondary stage (classes XI-XII), based on a combination of the mother tongue and common language(s)--English or, in some cases, Hindi, the proportion of the latter gradually increasing till English, Hindi or both become the media at the postgraduate stage (Khubchandani 1968).

Experiments on bilingual and bicultural education conducted in the United States (Chicano, American Indian, Micronesian bilingual education programs), Canada (English and French), Soviet Union, Yugoslavia (Serbo-Croatian, Hungarian and Albanian programs), Philippines (Tagalog and English) and other countries have shown favorable results among linguistically heterogeneous communities. But so far, little attention seems to have been paid in evaluating the differentiating roles of mother tongue and non-native languages as media of instruction. Bilingual and bicultural education requires a degree of planning, a proficiency in the language of the classroom and in the language(s) of learners, and a high level of skill in teaching.

As already pointed out, in actual practice one notices a wide gap between the professed language policies and actual practice in a classroom in the Indian situation. It is not unusual to find institutions with anomalous patterns of communication where the teacher and taught interact in one language, classrooms are conducted in another, textbooks are written in a third, and answers are given in a fourth language/style.

Thus one finds the linguistic needs and the capacity of learners are the greatest casualities in the present language education programs. They aim at replacing the easy-going folk multilingualism of illiterate masses by the elegant bilingualism (or trilingualism) with standardization pulls from different directions; e.g., neo-Sanskritic Hindi, Perso-Arabicized Urdu, BBC or AIR English, medieval literary Telugu, and classicized modern Tamil. One finds that even though considerable time is spent on the second and third languages in school, these languages are either restricted for 'library' use or find no application at all in meaningful communicative tasks during the entire school career. Thus, the rigid demands on education turn the effortless gift of social verbalization among the illiterates into a strenuous, time-consuming task of learning the elite-acceptable diction of their own speech. This results in a depicting of I.Q. and other talent indices through a skillful competence in a particular 'tradition.'

In the so-called 'advanced' speech behavior, language boundaries become sacred, and spontaneity and creativity leading to hybridization gets rationed through the standardization processes. The contextual and functional fluidity in speech, which manages to go across the boundaries of languages or diction, is deprecated by the custodians of language (through prescriptive manuals, style sheets, authorizing terminologies, etc.)

Language identity in the present Indian situation is characterized by the demands of language privileges in different walks of life and consequently the 'high brow' content of privileged language is cherished for its 'ornate' functions. But language as a means of communication in a plural society and as a means of social mobility acquires significantly different characteristics under the pressures of modernization. It is mostly the students who bear the total brunt of the imbalances arising out of the emphasis on language privileges and language elegance at the cost of communicability.

Various constraints in the spread of education are attributed to the multiplicity of languages, whereas the real issues to cope with are the confrontation between 'tradition' and 'modernity' concerning the role of language in education, and dogmatic rigidity in claiming privileges for different languages in the education curriculum. When dealing with the education for plural societies we shall do well to realize the risks involved in uniform solutions.

FOOTNOTES

[1]The federal government has introduced a Central Schools system in major towns throughout the country for the children of those employed in all-India services and those belonging to mobile occupations in business and industry, where education is imparted through Hindi, or English, or both languages.

[2]Except the Osmania University located at Hyderabad, in the Telugu-speaking princely state of Nizam, which taught through the Urdu medium for catering to the traditional Muslim education.

[3]The All-India Universities Conference in 1939 had recommended that the mother tongue of students should be the medium of instruction at different stages of education up to the degree course. It was again endorsed by the Fourth Conference of Indian Universities in 1943 and by the Central Advisory Board of Education in 1946 (India 1960: p. 156).

[4]In a survey conducted at Nagpur University, it was found that although Hindi and Marathi were compulsory media for undergraduate arts and science courses, 88 per cent of the science students in 1955 obtained 'special permission' to study through the English medium. Failures in both arts and science faculties were higher among the regional medium students. This reveals that the better students prefer English, and are able to cope with it. Quoted in Dakin (1968: pp. 28-29).

[5]In the controversy over language privileges, particularly in the sphere of education, two diverse interpretations of mother tongue have been emphasized by conflicting pressure groups. According to the narrow interpretation, the home language of each child--'the language spoken from the cradle' (1951 Census of India 1954: p. 1)--was accepted as mother tongue. Whereas, the broad interpretation regarded all minority languages not having any written tradition as 'dialects' of the dominant language in the region, by which there was implicit denial of equal rights to linguistic minorities on the ground of practicability (Khubchandani 1974a; 1975a).

[6]The exclusion of Urdu, one of the 15 major languages recognized in the Constitution, from the Uttar Pradesh schools, was justified on the grounds that the use of the Urdu script would handicap the children who learnt it, since Hindi (in the Devanagari script) and English were the languages they would require at the university and in the services (India 1960: pp. 222-223).

[7]In 1952, university teachers in the Madras state expressed their reluctance to make any change until 'a large variety of books and journals in the national and regional language become available.' Annual Conference of University Teachers Proceedings, 1952.

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