

Language issues in post Independence of India

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Manifest pedagogy:

Language issue is a prominent topic in Post- Independent Indian consolidation. One of the major issues of national consolidation post independence. The issue of language has sorted itself out after a heated debate in constitutional and political fields. The resolution of the language issue clearly shows the maturity and sagacity of the Indian leadership. The trigger for this year language issue is the three language formulae in the Draft education policy.

In news

Revised draft National education policy

Issues of Language

Placing it in the syllabus

Modern Indian History: Post Independence

Static Dimensions

- Official language debate
- Constitutional provisions on official language during the independence
- Official languages commission
- Protests in South India
- The official language act of 1963

Current dimensions

- The three language formulae of education curriculum

Official language debate

- **Problems regarding Hindi being the official language:** When the Indian Constitution was being framed in the Constituent Assembly, the question of choosing one language as the official language arose in the minds of the Constitution makers. The official language of the Central government was the single most divisive official issue in the Indian Constituent Assembly. There were two problems regarding Hindi being the official language: a) the dialect of Hindi; and b) the other languages existing in India.
- **Question of adopting a Hindi dialect:** Hindi is spoken in around 13 different dialects. So debate arose as to which of the dialect was to be chosen as the official Hindi dialect. Later, Hindi dialect was adopted which was the one spoken in the Delhi-Agra region with Sanskrit vocabulary.
- **Gandhi's Dream of One National language:** Most of the members of Constituent Assembly wanted to fulfill Mahatma Gandhi's dream who had opined that there should be a national language which would give a distinct identity to the nation. They chose the most popular language of the country to be crowned as the official language of the Union of India. As soon as the proposal was laid down before the Assembly, **many members of the assembly opposed it on the ground of it being unfair for the non-Hindi speaking population** who'll suffer in terms of employment opportunities, education, and public services because of their non-Hindi background.
- **Demand for including regional languages:** Several arguments were raised for the inclusion and non-inclusion of Hindi language. Some of the members of the Constituent Assembly including L.K.Maitra and N.G.Ayyangar demanded that the regional languages should also be recognized (at State level) and the chosen national language should not be made exclusive. There were others like Lokamanya Tilak, Gandhiji, C. Rajagopalachari, Subhash Bose and Sardar Patel who

demanded that Hindi should be used throughout India without any exceptions and the states should also resort to the use of Hindi language because it would promote integration.

- **Sanskrit:** There were other members who wanted Sanskrit to become the official language of the nation due to its antiquity and rich vocabulary.
- **Urdu:** Some even proposed Urdu for the station but it was of no avail. This was so because as soon as the partition of India and Pakistan was announced, the supporters of Hindi were emboldened and since Pakistanis claimed Urdu as their language, the Hindi supporters coined the title of '**language of secession**' to Urdu and made the demand to make Hindi, written in Devanagari, the national language.
- **Two groups in the Assembly:** The whole assembly was divided into two groups, one which supported Hindi and wanted it to become the official language and the other which did not favour Hindi to become the official language. The assembly was at loggerheads.
- **Ambedkar's views:** Introducing multiple languages as official languages was not considered feasible. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar was quoted as saying, *"One language can unite people. Two languages are sure to divide people. This is an inexorable law. Culture is conserved by language. Since Indians wish to unite and develop a common culture, it is the bounden duty of all Indians to own up Hindi as their official language."*
- **Munshi-Ayyangar formula:** Ultimately, when the Constituent Assembly was on the verge of losing its unity, a compromise called **Munshi-Ayyangar formula was adopted without dissent**. It was a half-hearted compromise because no group got what it wanted. **According to this formula, English was to continue as the official language of India along with Hindi for a period of fifteen years** but the limit was elastic and the power of extension was given to the Parliament. A

statute titled '**Official Languages Act, 1963**' was **enacted** when the period of fifteen years was about to expire in an attempt to prevent agitation in the non-Hindi speaking States. But the provisions of the Act could not satisfy the views of the protestors.

- **Lal Bahadur Shastri policy:** **Lal Bahadur Shastri**, Nehru's successor as prime minister, did not pay much heed to the opinion of non-Hindi groups. He, instead of effectively countering the fears of non-Hindi groups that Hindi would become the sole official language, declared that he was considering making Hindi an alternative medium in public service examinations which meant that although the non-Hindi speakers would still be able to compete in the all-India services in English medium, the Hindi speakers would have an added advantage of being able to use their own mother tongue Hindi as a medium. This increased the fury of the non-Hindi groups and they became more anti-Hindi and later also raised and popularized the slogan of '**Hindi never, English ever**'. Thus Lal Bahadur Shastri only gave air to the blazing agitation of the non-Hindi groups against Hindi.
- **Amendment to the official languages act:** **The Official Languages Act was ultimately amended in the year 1967 by Indira Gandhi's government which provided for indefinite usage of English and Hindi as the official languages of the country.** There were subsequent agitations in 1968 as well as in 1986 but they were limited to certain states only.

Constitutional provisions on official language during the Independence

India is a multilingual country. Thus the framers of Indian Constitution felt the need to specify the languages to be used in the state functions. Therefore, Part XVII of the Indian Constitution came into existence which contains the following provisions:

- **Article 343:** It mentions that the **official language of the Union shall be Hindi** in Devanagari script. The form of numerals to be used for the official purposes of the Union shall be the international form of Indian numerals.
- **Article 346:** It mentions the **official language for communication between the states and between a state and the Union**. The Article also states that the “authorized” language will be used. However, if two or more states agree that their communications shall be in Hindi, then Hindi may be used.
- **Article 348:** it mentions the **language to be used in the courts** and in legislative processes.
- **Article 349:** It mentions **Special procedure for enactment of certain laws relating to language**.
- **Article 351:** It mentions **directive for development of the Hindi language** accordingly, 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.

Official languages commission

It is constituted by the President of India in as per the provisions stated in the article 343 of of the Indian constitution. It was constituted in 1995. As defined in the Article-344 of the Constitution, it shall be the duty of the Commission to make recommendations to the President as to:

- The progressive use of the Hindi language for the official purposes of the Union.
- Restrictions on the use of the English language for all or any of the official purposes of the Union.
- The language to be used for all or any of the purposes

mentioned in Article 348.

- The form of numerals to be used for any one or more specified purposes of the Union.

Protests in South India

There were a series of protests regarding imposition of Hindi as official language occurred during both pre- and post-independence periods in south India and especially in the state of Tamil Nadu (formerly Madras State and part of Madras Presidency). Following are the key events related to such protests;

- In 1937, the first anti-Hindi imposition agitation was launched in opposition to the introduction of compulsory teaching of Hindi by the first Indian National Congress government led by C. Rajagopalachari in the Madras presidency schools. This move was immediately opposed by E. V. Ramasamy (Periyar) and the opposition Justice Party (later Dravidar Kazhagam).
- But after Independence Hindi was adopted as the official language of India with English continuing as an associate official language for a period of fifteen years, after which Hindi would become the sole official language.
- Efforts by the Indian Government to make Hindi the sole official language after 1965 were not acceptable to many non-Hindi Indian states, who wanted the continued use of English. The Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK), a descendant of Dravidar Kazhagam, led the opposition to Hindi. Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru enacted the **Official Languages Act in 1963 to ensure the continuing use of English beyond 1965.**
- In 1965 as the day of switching over to Hindi as sole official language approached, the anti-Hindi movement gained momentum in Madras State with increased support from college students. In the same year a full-scale riot broke out in the southern city of Madurai, sparked

off by a minor altercation between agitating students and Congress party members. Finally to calm the situation, Indian Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri gave assurances that English would continue to be used as the official language as long as the non-Hindi speaking states wanted.

- In 1967, to guarantee the indefinite use of Hindi and English as official languages the congress government headed by Indira Gandhi amended the official Languages Act.

The official language act of 1963

Accordingly, the Official Languages Act, 1963 (amended in 1967) provides for continuing the use of English in official work even after 25 January 1965. The Act also lays down that both Hindi and English shall compulsorily be used for certain specified purposes such as Resolutions, General Orders, Rules, Notifications, Administrative and other Reports, Press Communiqués; Administrative and other Reports and Official Papers to be laid before a House or the Houses of Parliament; Contracts, Agreements, Licences, Permits, Tender Notices and Forms of Tender, etc.

The three language formulae of education curriculum

Background

In 1968 the Ministry of Education of the Government of India in consultation with the states formulated the three-language formula for language learning. The formula as enunciated in the 1968 National Policy Resolution which provided for the study of Hindi, English and modern Indian language (preferably one of the southern languages) in the Hindi speaking states and Hindi, English and Regional language in the non-Hindi speaking States.

The formula was formulated in response to demands from non-Hindi speaking states of the South, such as Karnataka, Andhra

Pradesh and mainly Tamil Nadu.

Revised Draft National Education Policy

- Recently the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) has come up with the revised draft of National Education Policy (NEP) 2019, which suggests giving flexibility over choice of language under the three language model in schools after protests over Hindi imposition in non-Hindi speaking states.
- The revised draft mentions that since the modular Board examinations for language proficiency will indeed test only for basic proficiency in each language, such a change in choice in Grade 6 would certainly be feasible if the student so desires and would in such cases be supported by teachers and the schooling system.
- The revised draft further added, the additional choices of languages would therefore be offered in middle school for this purpose of choice and flexibility.
- This revised draft comes after much hue and cry over Hindi imposition in schools in the non-Hindi speaking states, Tamil Nadu being one.