

# INDIAN MULTILINGUALISM, LANGUAGE POLICY AND THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

## ABSTRACT

*India has many divides revolving around ethnicity, language, religion, region, social identity, rural/urban, literate/illiterate, etc. Majority of her population lives in the rural areas. The rate of literacy for the entire country in 2001 was 65.2 %, with the highest literacy in Kerala above 90%, lowest literacy in Bihar less than 50%, rural literacy at 59%, urban 80%, males 76%, and females at 54%. This position paper on Indian Languages and the Digital Divide, illustrates and describes the multilingual nature of Modern India, the challenges it has faced in language planning since independence from the British rule, and the challenges to the maintenance of language vitality in the context of digital divide, and the path ahead to bridge the divide.*

## 1.0. INDIAN MULTILINGUALISM

Modern India, as per the 1971 count, has more than 1650 mother tongues, genetically belonging to five different language families. They are rationalized into 216 mother tongues, and grouped under 114 languages by the 1991 Census: Austro-Asiatic (14 languages, with a total population of 1.13%), Dravidian (17 languages, with a total population of 22.53%), Indo-European (Indo-Aryan, 19 languages, with a total population of 75.28%, and Germanic, 1 language, with a total population of 0.02%), Semito-Harmitic (1 language, with a total population of 0.01%), and Tibeto-Burman (62 languages with a total population of 0.97%). A good number of “languages” recorded in the Indian Census could not be classified as to their genetic relation, and so are treated as Unclassified Languages. The Indo-Aryan languages are spoken by the maximum number of speakers, followed in the descending order by the Dravidian, Austro-Asiatic, and Sino-Tibetan (Tibeto-Burman) languages.

The concerns of the Indian languages during the 21<sup>st</sup> century are different from those of post-independence 20<sup>th</sup> century. The analyses of Indian multilingualism during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries looked at it as a “problem” and tried to overcome this “problem.” But, in the present 21<sup>st</sup> century, because of the systematic language policy initiatives of the past half a century (that I am going to elucidate in the next section), we have begun to look at multilingualism as an asset, consider it as a “resource” and try to make use of this “resource” for language and social development. This shift in the paradigm is due to a number of inter-connected factors, but we will not dwell on this any longer.

Indian multilingualism is unique in several ways, including the massive number of people involved in the use of multilingualism. The following are some of the important characteristics, besides the large number of people who practice multilingualism.

### 1.1. Multilingualism – States and Union Territories

India is divided into 24 States and 8 Union Territories as units of administration. Originally such territorial divisions into provinces or states were done mostly for administrative convenience during the British rule. Presidencies, states, or provinces came into being even as more territories were acquired by the British through various means and added to British India. As a result, the borders of such provinces cut across ethnic, religious, social, and linguistic lines.

Even with the linguistic re-organization of the Indian provinces after the independence, most states remained multilingual as ever. However, in each of these linguistically re-organized states, there is at least one dominant majority linguistic group, often more than fifty percent of the total population of that state. Not only India as a whole is multilingual but also each State and Union Territory within India is equally multilingual. Linguistically India is made of many mini-Indias.

The table given below gives the percentage of majority language speakers in each Indian state and union territory according to the 1991 Census.

State/Union Territory	Majority language & % of its speakers	Percentage of speakers of minority languages	
Andhra Pradesh	Telugu	85.13	14.87
Arunachal Pradesh	Nissi/Dafla	23.40	76.60
Assam	Assamese	60.89	39.11
Bihar	Hindi	80.17	19.83
Goa	Konkani	56.65	43.35
Gujarat	Gujarati	90.73	9.28
Haryana	Hindi	88.77	11.23
Himachal Pradesh	Hindi	88.95	11.05
Jammu & Kashmir	Kashmiri	52.73	47.27
Karnataka	Kannada	65.69	34.31
Kerala	Malayalam	95.99	4.01
Madhya Pradesh	Hindi	84.37	15.63
Maharashtra	Marathi	73.62	26.38
Manipur	Manipuri/Meitei	62.36	37.64
Meghalaya	Khasi	47.45	52.55
Mizoram	Mizo/Lushai	77.58	22.42
Nagaland	Ao	13.93	86.07
Orissa	Oriya	82.23	17.77
Punjab	Punjabi	84.88	15.12
Rajasthan	Hindi	89.89	10.11
Sikkim	Nepali	60.97	39.03
Tamil Nadu	Tamil	85.35	14.65
Tripura	Bengali	69.59	30.41
Uttar Pradesh	Hindi	89.68	10.32
West Bengal	Bengali	86.34	13.66
<b>UNION TERRITORIES</b>			
Andaman & Nicobar Islands	Bengali	24.68	75.32
Chandigarh	Hindi	55.11	44.89
Dadra & Nagar Haveli	Bhili/Bhilodi	68.69	31.31
Daman & Diu	Gujarati	21.91	78.09
Delhi	Hindi	81.64	18.36
Lakshadweep	Malayalam	84.51	15.49
Pondicherry	Tamil	89.18	10.82

The number of multilingual population too is also remarkable. They constitute 19.44% of the total population in India. The traditionally strong constituent of multilingual groups is further strengthened in modern times from one decade to another, as mobility within the country as well as the introduction of formal education in all parts of the country that insists on learning at least two languages until the end of high or higher secondary education. Although Kerala appears to

be the most cohesive linguistic state with a single language, Malayalam, claiming the mother tongue status for nearly 96 percent of its population, bilingualism among this mother tongue group is equally good.

## **1.2. Majority / Minority language relation**

This “majority and minority language phenomenon” is only four and a half decades old. This is also the result of the creation of linguistic states, created to protect the interests of linguistic minorities and their languages. However, broadly there are two categories of minorities: some are both linguistic and religious minorities (Muslims are supposed to be both religious and linguistic minorities.) and some others are only linguistic minorities. Even among these two categories of minority groups, some of the minority groups considered minority within a state or union territory may be a majority group in another state or union territory. Their mother tongues may function as a major language elsewhere in the country (for example, the Telugu speakers settled in Maharashtra are treated as a minority group in Maharashtra, but they are the majority group within Andhra Pradesh). There are also minority groups that are found only within a single state and thus always occupy a minority position (for example, Tulu speakers of Karnataka, whose native state is Karnataka). Because of the creation of linguistic states, a new category of linguistic minorities is also being created in several states. Employment opportunities enable and encourage people to move from one linguistic state to another, especially towards the large industrialized cities such as Ahmedabad, Bombay, Calcutta, Bangalore, etc. And this migration results in the creation of newer linguistic minorities. For example, recent accretion to the Malayalam-speaking population already living in Bangalore has created a large Malayalam speaking linguistic minority in that city. This trend of people from one linguistic group moving to areas of another linguistic group is bound to increase because of industrialization and the guarantee of the freedom of mobility ensured in the Constitution of India. We see a large number of migrants to these states from other parts of the country

## **1.3. Scripts do not have language borders**

Indian languages are written in more than 14 scripts. Normal convention regarding any script is that a language often uses the same single and specific script to render itself in the visual medium wherever it is spoken. For example, we all assume that the English language should be written with the normally accepted Roman script, and not in the Devanagari script. However, the pluralistic tradition of India has broken this kind of tradition for many centuries, and introduced the practice of using different scripts to write the same language and also using the same script to write different languages. This practice is not frowned upon, and it continues unabated. The Devanagari script is used to write several languages. Kannada script is used to write Kannada, Kodagu, Tulu, Banjari, Konkani, Sanskrit, etc. Sanskrit is written using the Devanagari, Kannada, Telugu, Tamil, Malayalam and many other scripts. Similarly Kashmiri is written using the Perso-Arabic, Sharada and Devanagari scripts. Sindhi in India is written both in the Perso-Arabic and Devanagari scripts. So, by tradition, script may not be a boundary wall between Indian languages.

Since Indian traditions greatly depended upon the oral transmission, and since there were certain barriers imposed in both secular and religious contexts restricting the imparting of education, the spread of literacy was rather sporadic in the past, and the need to reduce the emerging languages to writing was not achieved in several languages in the past. As a result, many potential languages remained as oral languages without developing the scripts of their own. So, we have mass illiteracy to tackle and hundreds of languages and dialects wanting to get rendered in writing. In this context, gradually an unwritten convention was being developed since independence: Whenever an unwritten language was to be given a script, the Devanagari script was sought to be the first choice. If this was not acceptable or possible, the script of the dominant regional language of the state or union territory where the unwritten language was spoken, would be recommended. However, in practical circumstances such conventions were not really and fully practiced. For example, Rabha language uses Assamese script in Assam, in Meghalaya Roman script, and in West Bengal the Bengali script.

#### 1.4. Sharing of Linguistic Features Across language Families

One of the major linguistic discoveries of the previous century relating to Indian languages is the identification of common linguistic features across language families. Among others, we may cite Bloch's article "India and South East Asia as a Linguistic Area," (Bloch 1934), and Emeneau's work "India as a Linguistic Area" (Emeneau 1956). This sharing of linguistic features by the languages across the language families was facilitated by their coexistence for centuries together, and also by the continuing interaction of the people who speak these languages on a day-to-day basis. While Sir William Jones' declaration in 1786 of the genetic relationship between Sanskrit and other Indo-European languages revolutionized the philological studies, the fact that Indian languages (those of the Indo-Aryan and the Dravidian families) have some fundamental similarities among them was known to the Indian grammarians for centuries. A nineteenth century missionary to India, Rev. William Campbell, built his ideas of language planning and development for Indian vernaculars on this assumption. Campbell wrote in 1839,

"Whatever may be the difference in the languages, they all belong to the same great family; similar laws regulate the idiom, construction, style, and various kinds of composition, which prevail in the dialects of the north and the south; when you describe one part of India, you have, in many respects, described the whole; the manners, the customs, and the habits of the people, with trifling variations, correspond from Cape Comorin to the Himalayas; and their superstition, in all its great lineaments, is exactly the same. Whether, therefore, their present literature was originally written in Sanscrit, or in some other languages, the Vedas, the Shasters, the Pooranas, and all their classical writings are to be found in all the principal tongues of India, and are as well understood in the one as in the other (Campbell 1839, *British India*, Publishers: John Snow, 35, Paternoster Row, London)."

Some of the shared linguistic features across language families are as follows:

1. Presence of a series of retroflex consonants that contrast with dentals sounds.
2. Two to three degrees of 'you'.
3. Widespread lexical borrowing.
4. Presence of echo word constructions and onomatopoeic forms.
5. Reduplication process of nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, etc.
6. Compound verb forms.
7. Conjunctive participle.
8. Sentence structure

The geographic boundaries drawn on the basis of languages, or linguistic boundaries, or linguistic spread are simply recent innovations in some sense, and are a phenomenon of about four and a half decades. We should also recognize that the linguistic consciousness and identities of a variety of major linguistic groups in the country was a cultural and cognitive reality, but not a political reality until the linguistic re-organization of the Indian states.

Another interesting aspect of this scenario is that the people, who live in villages and towns that about the political boundaries of two or more linguistically re-organized states, may continue to use the same grammar of their own language with different vocabularies drawn from another language of the border to communicate among themselves and with the groups across the border. Such examples are not restricted to so-called tribal areas such as the areas in and around Bastar district, or in Manipur Hills, but are very common between the speakers of "cultivated or literary" languages such as Marathi, Telugu, Kannada, and Tamil, etc. Even with the wider reach and access of the audio and video media now, such behaviors across these boundaries may be obscured but not totally lost.

#### 1.4. Sharing of Languages

For ages, India has been a multi/bilingual mosaic. References to the use of a variety of languages with their own phonological accent and grammatical inflections are found in such ancient texts as *Natya Sastra*, and *Manu Smriti*. Dialectical variations in the speech behavior of characters were ably exploited for various dramatic and aesthetic purposes by Kalidasa in his plays. Multilingualism in India has been so built that every language or dialect under the Indian sun always had some role to play. No doubt that many languages and dialects were despised and looked down upon (for example consider the distinction between Deva Bhasha and Paishachi bhashas, and some were even banned and banished, but, somehow, bilingualism survived. People always had some pride in their own languages and dialects, and were ready to show their loyalty by assigning some roles or the other to their languages and dialects.

Wherever bilingualism has evolved in India, because of given socio-political and demographic reasons, it always has remained vibrant. People acquire bilingualism in these contexts from their early childhood. They do not have to go to school to learn to use two or more languages.

The way the details of bilingualism and tri-lingualism are arrived at, in surveys such as the Census enumerations, is also important to note. In the Census, names of two other languages known to the respondents in the order of proficiency are recorded. Here, the names of languages, other than the one recorded as the mother tongue, is elicited by asking the respondent about the other languages known to him or her. These may be Indian or foreign languages. If the respondent knows only one language, the name of that particular language only is recorded. If the respondent has knowledge of more than one language, the names of two languages in the order of proficiency, self-assessed by the respondent, are recorded. These two languages are recorded one after the other. Between these two languages, that language in which the respondent can, according to his claim, speak, comprehend, and communicate is recorded first, and the other language as the second item. The individual need not know reading and writing in these languages. It is enough if he speaks and communicates in these two languages. However, the number of languages thus recorded will not exceed two.

#### 1.5. Sponsored Bilingualism

Bilingualism relating to English is a different category altogether. It is a sponsored, institutional arrangement. It is driven by formal necessities, not an acquisition in early childhood. Perhaps this explains the ambivalent attitude of Indians in general to English. They seem to like it; they seem to want it as a part of their life and career, even as they declare it to be a "foreign" language. Many families in urban areas, however, want their children to acquire English as their "first" language. This trend is getting popular even in rural areas. (William Campbell, an ardent supporter of Indian vernaculars and a committed opponent of Macaulay's Minute, actually foresaw this possibility clearly in his "prophetic" book *British India*, published in 1839. See chapters 26 and 27.) If this continues, say, for the next fifty years, we may see a different kind of bilingualism emerging in the country, one in which ethnic and religious identity may not play a crucial part.

Yet another sponsored bilingualism in the making relates to Hindi. There is bound to be some competition between Hindi and English to occupy the Indian bilingual space. It is hard to visualize the contours of this competition right now. But, if we go by the historically proven Indian mindset, Indian socio-political conditions will evolve some functional separation between the two and keep both the languages within the bilingual space.

#### 1.6. Recent Migrants

The attitude of the recent migrants, from one state to another, stands in contrast to that of the earlier migrants. The recent migrations take place under a different canvas. These migrants arrive as individuals or families, not as whole communities. These are more often job seekers, and perhaps would go back, or would like to go back to where they came from. They are aware of their linguistic rights enshrined in the Indian constitution. Means of communication between the migrant families or individuals and their original linguistic group are easily available. Reading materials are easy to get. Radio and TV programs are easy to access. Continuity is somehow ensured. With continuity come the linguistic and social identities. When some families settle down and take roots in a different linguistic environment, they still continue their language loyalties. The strong loyalty transfer that we notice in the populations that migrated a few centuries ago is conspicuous by its absence in the recent migrants.

### 1. 7. A Century of Recorded Bilingualism

For more than one hundred years, the Census of India reports have been taking notice of the bilingual situation in India. Bilingualism is often taken as a given fact. Bilingualism is also used as a denominator of the movement of various populations from one region or province to another. Bilingualism figures are often used to make political claims and seek privileges in administration, education, mass communication, and other departments of public life in general. Educational policies of the states are guided by these figures. However, the quality of bilingualism or the level of bilingualism often remains unspecified in linguistic terms in these claims.

Naturally evolved bilingualism coupled with bilingualism evolving through schooling has become a big language resource, and it is exploited mainly by the mass media for enhancing its reach across the population. What is needed is a more in depth linguistic study of bilingualism as a linguistic idea. While figures are very important, qualitative features of bilingualism as a linguistic idea need to be studied.

#### *Sharing of Languages - Speakers of Major Languages 1991 Census*

Sl. No	Languages	Total Number of speakers	Bilinguals	Trilinguals	% of Bilinguals	% of Trilinguals
1	Assamese	130,79,696	19,78,990	16,71,331	15.1302	12.7780
2	Bengali	69,595,738	58,42,675	32,66,779	8.3951	4.6939
3	Gujarati	40,673,814	53,94,439	47,14,942	13.2626	11.5920
4	Hindi	337,272,114	2,70,74,421	1,00,65,191	8.0274	2.9842
5	Kannada	32,753,676	52,12,152	26,60,215	15.9131	8.1218
6	Kashmiri	56,693	15,246	18,751	26.8922	33.0746
7	Konkani	1,760,607	5,19,715	7,86,601	29.5190	44.6778
8	Malayalam	30,377,176	27,99,555	59,65,126	9.2159	19.6368
9	Manipuri	1,270,216	1,41,773	2,78,443	11.1613	21.9209
10	Marathi	62,481,681	92,05,446	79,70,448	14.7330	12.7564
11	Nepali	2,076,645	4,09,437	4,17,651	19.7162	20.1118
12	Oriya	28,061,313	18,94,755	25,79,154	6.7521	9.1911
13	Punjabi	23,378,744	34,00,361	54,12,133	14.5466	23.1498
14	Sanskrit	49,736	19,456	6,204	39.1185	12.4738
15	Sindhi	2,122,848	7,41,797	6,05,242	34.9434	28.5108
16	Tamil	53,006,368	87,86,309	11,44,532	16.5759	2.1592
17	Telugu	66,017,615	81,68,683	54,82,348	12.3734	8.3043
18	Urdu	43,406,932	1,12,25,024	52,67,456	25.8955	12.1350

Sharing of languages by the minor language speakers is illustrated in Annexure I.

## **2.0 LANGUAGE POLICY**

The Language Policy of India relating to the use of languages in administration, education, judiciary, legislature, mass communication, etc., is pluralistic in its scope. It is both language-development oriented and language-survival oriented. The policy is intended to encourage the citizens to use their mother tongue in certain delineated levels and domains through some gradual processes, but the stated goal of the policy is to help all languages to develop into fit vehicles of communication at their designated areas of use, irrespective of their nature or status like major, minor, or tribal languages. The policy is accommodative and ever-evolving, through mutual adjustment, consensus, and judicial processes. The accommodative spirit may be dim at times, and the decisions vacillating and fidgety, but this spirit was continuously prevalent from the early days of the struggle for independence from the British rule. This was seen as a necessity in nation-building. Political awareness or consciousness relating to the maintenance of native languages has been very high, both among the political leadership and among the ordinary people who speak these languages.

The language policy of the country is elucidated in its Constitution, implemented through various executive orders that have been issued from time to time and the judicial pronouncements since 1950. These have directed the way the languages are used in various domains.

### **2.1. Language Clustering**

The Constitution of India listed fourteen languages Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Kashmiri, Malayalam, Marathi, Oriya, Punjabi, Sanskrit, Tamil, Telugu, and Urdu, into its Eighth Schedule in 1950. Since then, this has been expanded thrice, once to include Sindhi, another time to include Konkani, Manipuri and Nepali, just this month the third time to include Bodo, Santhali, Maithili and Dogri. The 100<sup>th</sup> Constitution Amendment which added four more languages – Bodo, Maithili, Santhali and Dogri into the Eighth Schedule was supported by all the 338 members present in the Parliament. It has been stated that the claims of 33 more languages for inclusion are under consideration. This list is open-ended and has become a tool to bargain and gain benefits for the languages. Once a language gets into this club, its nomenclature itself will change, status will change, and it will be called Modern Indian Language (MIL), Scheduled Language (SL), etc.

This Schedule has emerged as the most important language policy statement. It clusters thousands of written and unwritten languages and dialects into two broad categories of Scheduled and Non-Scheduled languages. Though historically, it is not possible to find any rationale to cluster the Indian languages into these categories, the languages of the Eighth Schedule are not normally treated on par with Non-Scheduled languages. The languages of the Schedule have preferential treatment, and the languages listed in this schedule are considered first for any and almost every language development activity, and are bestowed with all facilities including facilities to absorb language technology initiatives of the government. It is needless to mention that the Technology Development in Indian Languages (TDIL) did not, and under present circumstances would not percolate beyond these languages.

The second kind of clustering is at the level of mother tongues into “languages.” Though 114 languages are arrived at by the Census Office, many of these languages are not one independent and individual entities as such. Within these, there are many mother tongues/languages/dialects. The group of “languages” is formed by clustering of the populations of many mother tongues under an umbrella called “language.” For example, Hindi is a cluster of more than 45 mother tongues, which include Bhojpuri, Magadhi, Maithili, Marwari, Rajasthani, Sadri, etc.

### **2.2. Notion of Mother Tongue**

"Mother tongue" is a concept that we all appear to understand very well and take for granted. "Mother tongue" is a very important concept or construct within the Constitution of India. Several important provisions within the Indian Constitution revolve around this concept or construct. Decisions regarding the medium of instruction and other official language policies depend on the interpretation of this concept or construct. More often than not, mother tongue becomes more a political idea than a linguistic construct or concept. Mother tongues are elevated to some superhuman and divine status, and are worshipped literally. Also, mother tongue becomes a rallying point for groups of people to unite and express their solidarity more as a political entity.

First and foremost, a language policy statement in any multilingual set up is expected to be about 'What should constitute a mother tongue for her citizens?' The first answer to this question in independent India for educational purposes is found in the Provincial Education Ministers resolution (1949) and in the Central Advisory Board of Education approved statement that "The mother-tongue will be the language declared by the parent or guardian to be the mother-tongue." But, till date no clear-cut definition/description of the characteristics of what constitutes a mother tongue that could be applied to a variety of Indian contexts is specified. It is neither possible nor is it necessary. However, we can examine some of these characteristics or features here to understand the difficulties in branding the mother tongue.

The latest Census 2001 defines mother tongue as the language in which the mother was talking to the person in his/her childhood. In case the mother of the child had died, the enumerator should find out the language being spoken in the household; in the case of small children and the dumb (physically challenged), the language spoken by the mother is to be recorded as the mother tongue. If any doubt arises, the language mainly used in the family is recorded as the mother tongue. Thus, this Census also focuses more on the language of early childhood experience and calls it the mother tongue.

The Census recognizes also the possibility that the members of the same family may have different mother tongues. For example, there are many families in which the husband may be from a different ethnic group than the wife, and both may have different, not identical, mother tongues. So, the enumerator records the mother tongue of each individual in the family.

With this background, let us see what language rights activists consider as mother tongue in their literature. According to Tove Skutnabb-Kangas (1981)

Criterion	Definition of "mother tongue"	Discipline
origin	<i>the language one learnt first (the language in which one established one's first lasting communication relationship)</i>	Sociology
competence	<i>the language one knows best</i>	Linguistics
function	<i>the language one uses most</i>	Sociolinguistics
attitudes	<i>the language one identifies with (internal identification)</i>	social psychology, psychology of the individual
	<i>the language one is identified as a native speaker of by other people (external identification)</i>	social psychology sociology
(automacy) (world view)	<i>(the language one counts in, thinks in, dreams in, writes a dairy in, writes poetry in, etc.)</i>	popular conceptions

The Indian judiciary too has debated and adjudicated on what should be considered as mother tongue. In the recent (2000) petition the Madras High Court adjudicated that "...mother-tongue of a child should only be understood for the purpose of these cases as the language which the

child is most familiar with ... mother-tongue need not be the mother's tongue or father's tongue. Generally, the parents are the proper persons who can assess and say as to which is the language, that child is most familiar with." Due to the multilingual nature of the states and the country, the notion of second mother tongue too is introduced by the judiciary. The High Court of Karnataka in its recent judgment relating to language choice for education treated Kannada as the second mother tongue of Tulu and Kodagu mother tongue speakers since they are indigenous to Karnataka.

### 2. 3. Administration

Due to their co-existence from time immemorial, the plural societies with people of multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and multi-lingual background belonging to different socio-economic strata, give birth to natural communication policies to suit their realities with a genuine understanding of interwoven relations. The language of administration is not an exception. A nation is historically evolved, hence it is essential to know about the languages that the rulers of a country used for administration of their region. Many Indian rulers ruled territories in which different languages were used for communication by their subjects. Often the language of the king and the language of those whom he ruled were different. Historically in India, the language of the people and the language or languages used to govern them used to correspond with each other. In India, though there are instances after instances wherein only one language was the Official Language, it is very difficult to find a point of time where only one language was used as the sole language of administration in a specific region. It seems that the official language was used for the purposes of rules and other interrelated activities. And these were used within the set up of the Government to a large extent. However, the languages of the people were used for all the necessary communicative purposes, and plurality was honored.

There is a distinction between the 'Official Language' and 'Language(s) used in Administration'. To illustrate this point, an example can be cited here. Though the Official Language Act of Andhra Pradesh, 1966 recognizes Telugu as the Official Language for use in its territory, it also permits the use of English, Urdu, Kannada, Tamil and Oriya in certain specified situations and regions for administrative activities. Hence, these latter ones are the Languages Used in Administration in Andhra Pradesh though only Telugu is the Official Language. Like this, each state and the union territory, including the Union Government, have honored the linguistic plurality by accommodating interests of the speakers of other languages as well, even after declaring one or two languages as the official languages of the concerned state. After the promulgation of the Official Language Acts the following 16 languages are the official languages in different states and union territories : Assamese, Bengali, English Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Konkani, Malayalam, Nepali, Manipuri, Marathi, Oriya, Punjabi, Tamil, Telugu, Urdu became Official Languages in various states and union territories of the country.

### 2. 4. Education

The Constitution of India makes provision for '... free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of fourteen years.' But the Constitution has no explicit statements regarding the language(s) to be taught in education or the language(s) through which education has to be imparted (except in the case of linguistic minorities). This may have been a tactical compromise or declaration on the part of the Constitution makers, because every one could sense the great linguistic complexity of free and democratic India.

The **National Policy on Education of 1968** spoke about the regional languages and the Three Language Formula. The 1986 Policy reiterated the earlier stand. The **States Reorganization Commission** had asked the Union Government to elucidate a policy outline for education in mother tongue at the Secondary stage. The **All India Council for Education** recommended the adoption of the Three Language Formula (TLF) in September 1956. The endorsement for this formula came from various directions. It was adopted by the Chief Ministers' conference. The

National Policy on Education 1968 recommended the inclusion of the TLF 'which includes the study of a modern Indian language, preferably one of the Southern languages, apart from Hindi and English in the Hindi speaking states, and of Hindi along with the regional language and English in the non Hindi-speaking states at the Secondary stage. This was reiterated in the **Education Policy 1986** and was adopted as the **Programme of Action** by the Parliament in 1992.

These are major attempts to arrive at a language policy for education. Since education is in the concurrent list of the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution, the language policy formulation for education and its implementation is left to the State governments under the Constitutional safeguards and broad guidelines cited above.

The **National Curriculum Framework for School Education: A Discussion Document released on January 1, 2000**, while reviewing the Three Language Formula, states,

- In a number of states/organizations/ boards, however, the spirit of the formula has not been followed and the mother tongue of the people has been denied the status of the first language ... because of the changed socio-economic scenario, the difference between the second and the third languages has dwindled. Thus, in reality, there may be two-second languages for all purposes and functions. Some states follow only a two-language formula whereas in some others classical languages like Sanskrit and Arabic are being studied in lieu of a modern Indian language. Some boards/institutions permit even European languages like French and German in place of Hindi. In this scenario, the three-language formula exists only in our curriculum documents and other policy statements.

According to this document the three languages are: (i) the home language/the regional language, (ii) English, and (iii) Hindi in non-Hindi speaking states and any other modern Indian language in Hindi speaking states.

With all these provisions for education in multiple languages and mother tongues, the Sixth All India Education Survey informs that 41 languages are taught as school languages, and 19 of them are used as media of instruction at different levels.

#### **Number of School Languages Taught as First/Second/Third Languages**

	Third Survey	Fifth Survey	Sixth Survey
Number of languages	67	44	41

#### **Medium of Instruction (Number of Languages)**

Stage	Fifth Survey	Sixth Survey
Primary	43	33
Upper primary	31	25
Secondary	22	21
Higher Secondary	20	18

As one goes up in the ladder of education, the number of languages available for him to study and the medium of instruction become less. Though many languages are media of instruction at the lower level, only English is the medium of technical and management education.

## School Languages and Medium of Instruction

Angami	Gujarati	Lotha	Punjabi
Ao	Hindi	Malayalam	Sanskrit
Arabic	Kakhbarak	Manipuri	Sema
Assamese	Kannada	Marathi	Tamil
Bengali	Kashmiri	Maithili	Telugu
Bhutia	Khasi	Mizo	Tibetan
Bodo	Konkani	Nepali	Urdu
Dogri	Konyak	Nicobaree	Zeliang
English	Laddakhi	Oriya	
French	Lepcha	Persion	
Garó	Limboo	Portuguese	

### 2. 5. Mass communication

**Print media:** Here, people's choice of languages in which they wish to read the news and related information directs the language policy to be adopted. There is no bar on starting newspapers in any language or dialect. There is no bar on any language to be written in any script in India. The print media in India got initiated in 1780. Since then it has grown enormously. Also, their growth is steady over the years. According to the 2002 Survey, newspapers and periodicals are published in 101 languages and dialects. They are as follows:

Ahirani	French	Kashmiri	Multi Lingual	Sinhali
Anal	Ganje	Khasi	Muridari	Sirayaki
Angami Naga	Garhwali	Koch-Rajbanshi	Nagaa	Spanish
Angika	Garó	Kodava	Nepali	Swahili
Anglo	Gaundi	Kokborok	Nicobari	Syrian
Arabic	German	Konkani	Oriya	Tamil
Assamese	Goani	Koshli-Oriya	Pahari	Telugu
Banjara	Gorkhali Nepali	Kuki	Pali	Thadou-Kuki
Bangali	Greek	Kumauni	Persian	Thandon
Bhojpuri	Gujarathi	Kurbi	Piate	Thankhul Naga
Biate	Halbi	Lakhar-Mara	Piate-Pau	Tibetan
Bihari	Haruti	Latin	Pitalri	Tiddinchin
Belingual	Haryanvi	Lushai	Portuguese	Tripuri
Bishnupriya	Himachali	Magahi	Punjabi	Tulu
Bodo	Hindi	Maithili	Pushto	Urdu
Burmese	Hindustani-Persian	Malayalam	Rajasthani	Vaiphei
Chakma	Hmar	Manipuri	Rongamei	Yugaslavia
Chhatisgarghi	Indonesia	Marathi	Russian	Zemi Naga
Chinese	Italian	Marwari	Sanskrit	Zokan
Dogri	Jaintal	Meetelion	Santhali	

English	Kabur	Mikir	Saurashtra
Esperanto	Kanarese	Mising	Simite
Finish	Kannada	Mizo Lushai	Sindhi

It may be seen that foreign languages are also part of this list. However, Hindi tops the ranking of the languages, according to the number of newspapers being published in any language: Hindi (2507), Urdu (534), English (407), Marathi (395), Tamil (395), Kannada (364), Malayalam (225), Telugu (180), Gujarati (159), Punjabi (107), and Bengali (103). In terms of readership in languages in various languages the Survey 2003 provides us with some very interesting figures.

As per the National Readership Survey 2003, the top ten newspapers and their languages readership is as follows:

Rank	Name of the Publication	Readership (in 'lakhs)
1	Dainik Bhaskar (Hindi)	157.09
2	Dainik Jagran (Hindi)	149.85
3	Daily Thanthi (Tamil)	100.94
4	Eenadu (Telugu).	094.58
5	Malayala Manorama Malayalam)	087.98
6	Amar Ujala (Hindi)	086.40
7	Hindustan (Hindi)	078.99
8	Lokmat (Marathi)	078.67
9	Mathrubhumi (Malayalam)	076.46
10	Times of India (English)	074.19

According to the same study, in terms of all-India readership (urban + rural), the top ten magazines are:

Rank	Name of the Publication	Readership (in 'lakhs)
1	Saras Salil (Hindi)	93.85
2	India Today (Hindi)	59.00
3	Vanitha (Malayalam)	55.14
4	Grihashobha (Hindi)	54.14
5	Malayala Manorama(Malayalam)	54.06
6	Meri saheli(Hindi.).	42.66
7	India Today(English).	41.94
8	Balarama(Malayalam).	39.58
9	Mangalam(Malayalam).	35.78
10	Filmfare(English).	35.18

The language policy, as we said earlier, protects and preserves plurality. Though the UNESCO reports that "...about half of the approximately 6000 languages spoken in the world are under threat, seriously endangered or dying," it does appreciate that "India has maintained its extensive and well-catalogued linguistic diversity, thanks to its government policies."

### 3. 0. DIGITAL DIVIDE

Apart from the linguistic divide, India faces many other divides revolving around ethnicity, religion, region, social identity, rural/urban, literate/illiterate, etc. Majority of her population live in the rural areas. In 2001 urbanites constituted 27.24% whereas the rural population was 72.24%. The rate of literacy for the entire country in 2001 was 65.2 %, with the highest literacy in Kerala above

90%, lowest literacy in Bihar less than 50%, rural literacy at 59%, urban at 80%, males at 76%, and females at 54%. We may learn a few lessons when we study as to how India tried to bridge these divides.

India approached the rural/urban divide issue through rapid urbanization and creation of near equal infrastructure in the rural areas. Similarly, the literate/illiterate divide was approached through the movements for mass adult literacy, combined with education for all through schooling. The religious divide was sought to be bridged by declaring the nation as secular one, and by providing Constitutional protection to religious minorities, thereby to a large extent religious harmony was maintained except for some rare aberrations.

### **3.1 Information Technology**

Enter IT revolution, we see the emergence of an information society, scattered and loosely connected, and created by the rapid surge in the information and communication technologies. But the slow pace with which the Indian society is trying to absorb these technologies through its organs such as language has added one more divide to the many already in place - the 'digital divide' resulting in disparity in access to information and to the means of communication in Modern India in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Where the personal computer penetration is 7.5 per 1000 people and at the same time the internet is able to reach about one percent of the total population of the country. Actually 0.4 percentage of population are subscribers for the internet services according to the 2003 report of the TRAI. Persistent and intense maintenance of the digital divide may result in more retrograde and disastrous steps than all other divides put together, because a new generation of people with same color and blood (to play with the phrase introduced by Lord Macaulay in his Minute in 1834) but with no commitment to the locals will homogenize everything resulting in the loss of age-old pluralism that engendered freedom.

The language vitality - capacity of a language to live, grow, and develop depends upon various factors. Some of these are: social status, demography, and institutional support. Access to Information and communication technology in their own language is one of the ways to empower the people and enhance the vitality of language.

### **3.2 Current Status and Future Projection**

Though gradually internet is evolving as a mass media, the entry of computer technology in India was not mass oriented like other mass media like radio, newspaper etc., but it was elite, government oriented. Normally for any policy extension whenever the government wants a list of languages it will go towards Hindi the official language of the Union at the first instance and at the second instance to the scheduled languages. As I already mentioned earlier in this paper the TDIL initiative of the Government of India did not percolate beyond the Scheduled languages and also not uniformly to all the scheduled languages.

A recent report(2003) by the MAIT-COILTech group about reach of computer/internet technology to Indian languages gives fairly good idea about coverage as well as projections for the future. It is absurd that the report calls Indian languages as local languages. But some of the findings and projections are of interest to us. According to the report the government has spent Rs.970 to Rs.1455 crores to spread IT among masses and undertaken more than 1000 projects with success rate around 40%. The market growth is expected in: Introduction and promotion of new web based technology solutions and applications to cater to the growing needs of the end users; Increasing content creation in Indian languages for the web; Initiatives in local language projects being undertaken by vendors, central and state governments; Initiatives revolving around commercialization of products and applications being developed in the numerous research labs in India. Some of the projections of the report are in the annexure II.

So, since what people want in the digital world is not available in their languages, both the government and the people are fast moving towards introducing English at the earliest level in

education. Though much is said as done, very less is delivered to the end user. A lot needs to be done and languages other than major once are yet to be approached.

I would like to look at information technology as a tool of empowering Indian languages and their speakers and localization of software as a small part of the process of empowerment. Only localization per se may not be successful to bridge the digital divide. The digital divide has to be discussed in the context of not only linguistic issues but also in the context of other technical issues since it involves convergence of many related technologies; the economic resources available with people to take steps to cross the digital divide and so on. The speed with which the technology changes or gets updated is enormous and hence the immediate and long term strategy to cope up with the same too are to be thought out.

Localization has two aspects - language localization and localization of culture specific aspects, standardization where two or more variants are in use, the question is to allow the variations to remain or bring them in through standardization where in the community opinion is involved.

India's strength is in its oral tradition. The reason for its mass illiteracy is its age old belief that the knowledge can be transferred from generation to generation through oral tradition. And that is how Vedas came from generation to generation for centuries until they got rendered into writing. Many of the languages do not have their own scripts since they adopted the one of the existing scripts or continued to transmit the knowledge through oral tradition. This mode, needs to be explored.

#### Annexure I

##### BILINGUALISM AND TRILINGUALISM OF SPEAKERS OF MINOR LANGUAGES - 1991

Non-scheduled Languages		Number of persons knowing two or more languages	Percentage of people knowing two or more languages	Number of persons knowing three languages	Percentage of people knowing three languages
Name	Total speakers				
1	2	3	4	5	6
1 Adi	158,409	57,294	36.17	33,257	20.99
2 Anal	12,156	7,471	61.46	2,601	21.40
3 Angami	97,631	42,995	44.04	24,442	25.04
4 Ao	172,449	51,763	30.02	21,625	12.54
5 Arabic/Arbi	21,975	11,737	53.41	4,201	19.12
6 Bhili / Bhilodi	5,572,308	1,075,929	19.31	207,298	3.72
7 Bhotia	55,483	33,814	60.94	12,537	22.60
8 Bhumij	45,302	22,485	49.63	5,829	12.87
9 Bishnupuriya	59,233	39,765	67.13	14,169	23.92
10 Bodo/Boro	1,221,881	462,686	37.87	161,791	13.24
11 Chakhesang	30,985	12,517	40.40	6,638	21.42
12 Chakru/ Chokri	48,207	13,079	27.13	6,842	14.19

13 Chang	32,478	6,293	19.38	2,664	8.20
14 Coorgi / Kodagu	97,011	83,878	86.46	47,535	49.00
15 Deori	17,901	12,322	68.83	4,093	22.86
16 Dimasa	88,543	41,415	46.77	19,904	22.48
17 Dogri	89,681	46,674	52.04	26,695	29.77
18 English	178,598	119,638	66.99	49,120	27.50
19 Gadaba	28,158	16,216	57.59	943	3.35
20 Gangte	13,695	4,848	35.40	1,284	9.38
21 Garo	675,642	123,958	18.35	42,896	6.35
22 Gondi	2,124,852	899,567	42.34	134,156	6.31
23 Halabi	534,313	131,861	24.68	22,454	4.20
24 Halam	29,322	12,282	41.89	2,867	9.78
25 Hmar	65,204	19,913	30.54	8,280	12.85
26 Ho	949,216	302,167	31.83	74,072	7.80
27 Jatapu	25,730	16,333	63.48	1,025	3.98
28 Juang	16,858	8,673	51.45	83	0.49
29 Kabui	68,925	29,734	43.14	8,163	11.84
30 Karbi / Mikir	366,229	170,939	43.68	51,426	14.04
31 Khandeshi	973,79	398,028	40.88	153,195	15.73
32 Kharia	225,556	128,054	66.77	22,287	9.88
33 Khasi	912,283	114,920	12.60	30,126	3.30
34 Khezha	13,004	5,127	39.43	3,470	26.68
35 Khiemnungan	23,544	2,740	1.64	1,429	6.07
36 Khond / Kondh	220,783	81,885	37.09	6,793	3.08
37 Kinnauri	61,794	37,219	60.23	7,961	12.88
38 Kisan	162,088	93,735	57.83	14,670	9.05
39 Koch	26,179	10,363	39.59	5,362	20.48
40 Koda / Kora	28,200	13,319	47.23	989	3.51
41 Kolami	98,281	59,391	60.43	6,217	6.33
42 Kom	13,548	6,497	47.96	1,979	14.61
43 Konda	17,864	10,324	57.79	1,934	10.83
44 Konyak	137,722	28,532	20.72	12,628	9.17
45 Korku	466,073	274,718	58.94	35,692	7.66
46 Korwa	27,485	13,819	50.28	1,195	4.35
47 Koya	270,994	147,320	54.36	1,419	0.52

48 Kui	461,662	243,568	37.96	22,493	3.51
49 Kuki	58,263	27,646	47.45	11,753	20.17
50 Kurukh / Oraon	1,426,618	768,169	53.85	98,043	6.87
51 Lahauli	22,027	14,946	67.85	3,979	18.06
52 Lahnda	27,386	15,364	56.10	7,699	28.11
53 Lakher	22,947	6,660	29.02	807	3.52
54 Lalung	33,746	20,762	61.52	6,074	18.00
55 Lepcha	39,342	23,044	58.57	7,746	19.69
56 Liangmei	27,478	10,123	53.84	3,898	14.19
57 Limbu	28,174	16,907	60.01	3,810	13.52
58 Lotha	85,802	31,347	36.53	18,569	21.64
59 Lushai / Mizo	538,842	53,253	9.88	11,823	2.19
60 Malto	108,148	41,561	38.43	15,523	14.35
61 Mao	77,810	24,475	31.45	14,153	18.19
62 Maram	10,144	3,675	37.12	2,187	21.56
63 Maring	15,268	9,400	61.57	1,242	8.13
64 Miri / Mishing	390,583	202,365	51.81	48,171	12.33
65 Mishmi	29,000	12,523	43.18	7,516	25.92
66 Mogh	28,135	9,770	34.73	467	1.66
67 Monpa	43,226	11,895	27.52	3,469	8.03
68 Munda	413,894	181,812	43.93	43,034	10.40
69 Mundari	861,378	414,472	48.12	46,519	5.40
70 Nicobarese	26,261	10,963	41.75	4,503	17.15
71 Nissi / Dafla	173,791	45,571	26.22	26,160	15.05
72 Nocte	30,441	12,007	39.44	6,669	21.91
73 Paite	49,237	11,828	24.02	2,971	6.03
74 Parji	44,001	25,309	57.52	6,119	13.91
75 Pawi	15,346	4,917	32.04	465	3.03
76 Phom	65,350	19,483	29.81	10,291	15.75
77 Pochury	11,231	4,923	43.83	2,683	23.89
78 Rabha	139,365	79,906	57.34	17,297	12.41
79 Rengma	37,521	9,622	25.64	6,316	16.83
80 Sangtam	47,461	13,141	27.69	6,798	14.13
81 Santali	5,216,325	2,087,805	40.02	279,416	5.36
82 Savara	273,168	122,131	44.71	1,647	4.26
83 Sema	166,157	47,827	28.78	27,447	16.52
84 Sherpa	16,105	10,979	68.17	3,170	189.68

85 Tangkhul	101,841	41,199	40.45	10,742	10.55
86 Tangsa	28,121	14,528	51.66	8,826	31.39
87 Thado	107,992	40,917	37.89	9,772	9.05
88 Tibetan	69,416	35,678	51.40	19,125	27.55
89 Tripuri	694,940	310,818	44.73	33,555	4.83
90 Tulu	1,552,259	1,069,290	68.89	250,181	16.12
91 Vaiphei	26,185	8,887	33.94	2,278	8.70
92 Wancho	39,600	9,203	23.24	4,805	12.13
93 Yimchungre	47,227	9,813	20.78	4,057	8.59
94 Zeliang	35,079	11,034	31.45	4,346	12.39
95 Zemi	22,634	7,719	34.10	2,608	11.52
96 Zou	15,966	4,087	25.60	1,211	7.58
97 Other languages	565,949	354,874	62.70	128,516	22.71
Total	31,126,324	11,872,532	38.14	2,577,195	8.28

## Annexure II

### MAIT-COILTech Report extracts

Local Language Software Market: Revenues in Rs. Crores by Product Type (India), 1998-2005

Challenge	1-2 Years	3-4 Years	5-7 Years
Lack of standards	High	Medium	Low
Limited availability of software, fonts	High	High	Medium
Low Availability of Local Language Content	High	Medium	Low
Slow technology progress	Medium	Medium	Low
Users Need for evaluation and certification	High	Medium	Low

Local Language Software Market: Market Drivers Ranked in Order of Impact (India), 2003-2009

Rank	Driver	1-2 Years	3-4 Years	5-7 Years
1	Newer areas of applications for Local Language IT	High	High	Medium
2	Government initiatives	High	High	Medium
3	Bundling of multi-lingual software	High	Medium	Low
4	Advanced research	High	Medium	Medium

Local Language Software Market: Market Restraints Ranked in Order of Impact (India), 2003-2009

Rank	Restraint	1-2 Years	3-4 Years	5-7 Years
1	Lack of formal language-based IT training	High	High	Medium
2	Limited usage of available local language applications	High	Medium	Medium
3	Lack of spending	High	High	Medium
4	Low connectivity	High	High	High

Local Language Software Market: Revenues in Rs. Crores Forecasts (India), 1998-2005

Year	Revenues (Rs. Crores)	Revenue Growth Rate (%)
1998	1.9	
1999	9.7	400
2000	16.5	70
2001	29.1	76
2002	53.4	83
2003	97.0	82
2004	174.6	80
2005	310.4	78
Compound Annual Growth Rate (2002-2005): 79.9%		

Local Language Software Market: Revenues in Rs. Crores by Product Type (India), 1998-2005

Year	Word Processing	Packages	DTP	Video
1998	1.4	0.2	0.4	-
1999	5.8	1.5	1.9	0.5
2000	8.2	3.3	3.3	1.6
2001	14.0	5.8	5.8	3.5
2002	25.6	10.7	9.6	7.5
2003	43.7	22.3	15.5	15.5

2004	78.6	43.7	21.0	31.4
2005	139.7	77.6	37.2	55.9

Local Language Software Market: Revenues in Rs. Crores by End User (India), 1998-2005

Year	E-governance	Publish	Enterprises/factories	SOHO	Multimedia	Others
1998	0.2	0.9	0.7	0.1.....	0.0	0.1
1999	1.5	4.1	2.4	0.6.....	0.4	0.8
2000	4.0	5.9	3.5	1.0.....	1.2	1.0
2001	9.6	9.3	5.2	1.5.....	2.0	1.5
2002	20.3	14.4	9.1	2.7.....	3.7	3.2
2003	41.7	23.3	13.6	3.9.....	7.8	6.8
2004	89.0	36.7	19.2	7.0.....	12.2	10.5
2005	180.0	55.9	34.1	9.3.....	18.6	12.4

Local Language Software Market: Total Spend on e-Governance in Rs. Crores by States (India), 2002

Project	AP	Maha	MP	Guj	WB	Karn	Ker	UP	Raj	TN	Pun
LR	30.3	30.3	30.3	-	30.3	30.3	15.2	15.2	15.2	30.3	-
LA	50.0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
eseva	5.0	5.0	-	0.7	-	-	6.1	-	-	-	-
trans	0.5	-	-	1.0	1.0	1.0	-	1.0	-	-	-
Muni	2.0	-	-	-	1.0	3.1	-	1.0	-	-	-
Gov	21.2	21.2	-	64.7	64.7	-	21.2	21.2	21.2	-	-
Olpt	2.0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Fin	4.6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Proc	-	-	-	-	-	2.0	-	-	-	-	-
Hr	1.0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Welf	1.0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Police	16.2	-	-	-	16.2	16.2	-	-	-	-	-
vadodra	-	-	-	1.2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
treas	-	-	-	1.0	-	1.0	1.0	1.0	-	-	-

website	-	-	-	1.0	1.0	1.0	-	-	-	-	1.0
tax	-	-	-	-	-	1.0	-	-	-	-	-
insurance	-	-	-	-	-	1.0	-	-	-	-	-
environ	-	-	-	-	-	1.0	-	-	-	-	-
SSI	-	-	-	-	-	1.0	-	-	-	-	-
griev	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1.0	-	-	-

Local Language Software Market: Percent of Revenues by State (India), 2002

<b>State</b>	<b>Revenue (%)</b>
Andhra Pradesh	23.6
Gujarat	12.9
West Bengal	12.4
Karnataka	10.3
Maharashtra	9.9
Kerala	8.3
Rajasthan	6.4
Uttar Pradesh	5.5
Madhya Pradesh	5.3
Tamil Nadu	5.3
Punjab	0.2