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THE THREE LANGUAGE FORMULA: CHALLENGES IN ITS IMPLEMENTATION IN  
MULTILINGUAL INDIA

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims at providing an overview of multilingualism, the types and the foundational principles related to the phenomenon. It also briefly looks upon some of the countries across the world where multilingualism poses a challenge in imparting language education to the learners with disparate linguistic backgrounds. It also focuses in detail on the Indian Multilingual Situation and the linguistic diversity of the learner, thereby, centering on the educational policy and The Three Language Formula (TLF). It tries to understand the challenges posed by TLF and the reasons for the failure of its proper implementation across the country. It also tries to look into the prospect solution of attaining literacy and communication competence by all learners, by stressing on the mother tongue education and creating opportunities for the official and regional languages, in the higher education system as well in the economic structure, in comparison to the market "dominated" languages.

**Key words:** Multilingual India, Multilingualism, Three Language Formula, Language Policy in India, Mother tongue Education, Multilingual Education

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INTRODUCTION

In the present world, there are around 6000 languages grouped under various language families spoken in 200 states (Grimes, 1992). The people across the world speak different languages such as Arabic, Bengali, English, French, Hindi, Malay, Mandarin, Portuguese, Russian and Spanish which act as important link languages to communicate with each other. The existence of all these languages, side by side, resulted in multilingualism because they are spoken as second, third, fourth or later acquired by their speakers. Knowing two or more than two languages became the need for communication among speech communities as well as individuals. **Therefore, "Multilingualism" is defined as an occurrence regarding an individual speaker who uses two or more languages, a community of speakers where two or more languages are used, or between speakers of two languages.** Multilingualism, basically, arises due to the need to communicate across speech communities. Multilingualism is not a rare, but a normal necessity across the world, due to globalization and wider cultural communication. Almost 25% of the world's approximately 200 countries recognize two or more official languages with some of them recognizing more than two (e.g. India, Kenya, Nigeria, Congo, Luxembourg etc.) (Edwards 1998)

### Multilingualism

In simple terms, a person who knows two or more than two languages at a time is multilingual. But what does knowing of two or more languages mean? **Can a person who knows more than one language be a multilingual? Can a person who reads more than one language, but is unable to understand them, a multilingual?** Multilingualism serves the necessity of effective communication and for that it is not necessary to have competence in all the languages. Many scholars use the notion of bilingualism and multilingualism interchangeably to refer to the knowledge of more than one language. Apart from the **natural multilingualism** (acquired generally in the early stages of childhood) and **artificial multilingualism** (when a person learns it in classroom settings; may be in childhood or adulthood, Sridhar (1996) has classified Multilingualism as **Individual Multilingualism** and **Societal Multilingualism**.

1. **Individual Multilingualism:** Individual multilingualism is the ability of an individual to have competence in two or more languages. For example, if a child has a Punjabi father, a Bengali mother and is raised by a Bhojpuri maid and he is living in a metropolitan city like Mumbai, then, the child will grow up acquiring Individual Multilingualism.
2. **Societal Multilingualism:** Societal Multilingualism is defined as the linguistic diversity present in a society. In societal multilingualism some issues such as role and status, attitude towards languages, determinants of language choices, the symbolic and practical uses of the languages and the correlation between language use and social factors such as ethnicity, religion and class are important. For example –the families from states like Uttar Pradesh, Haryana and nearby states come to Delhi and settle here, that despite Hindi being the dominant language, they continue to maintain their own language, this results in multilingualism within a particular society which is multilingual, but has an official language of its own. (Shodhganga 2013)

### Multilingualism across the world

Multilingualism prevails in society and it is very common for a child to grow up speaking one local indigenous language at home, another in market place, adding Korlai or Tok Pisin (the Creole language in Goa and Papua New Guinea, respectively) in her repertoire, and even English, if she continues her schooling. Same situations happen in many parts of the world, such as Finland or Belgium or Luxembourg or Nigeria; or even India that has 22 official languages out of approximately 1650 indigenous languages. Multilingualism predominates in countries where children are exposed to numerous languages as they move from their homes into their communities and finally into the educational system. Let's have a brief look at the language education profiles in some of the countries across the world.

#### Canada

Canada is officially bilingual under the Official Languages Act and the Constitution of Canada that require the federal government to deliver services in both official languages. Also, there is always a guarantee for minority languages, where numbers warrant. 59.3% of the population speaks English as their first language while 22.9% are native speakers of French. The remaining population belongs to some of Canada's many immigrant populations or to the indigenous population. Under the language policy of Canada, proficiency in English Language is expected by the students, along with French as a first language; both are official languages of the state. Other than these, all other non-official/non-Aboriginal minority languages, according to the Canadian Census 2001, are Chinese, Italian, German, Spanish, Punjabi, Arabic, Portuguese, Polish, Tagalog and Hindi. Korean, Russian, Tamil, and Gujarati are other minority languages studied as second language. For this, the Bilingual Dual Immersion programmes are run in the schools (Geneese 1998).

#### Morocco

Classical Arabic is Morocco's official language, but the country's distinctive Arabic dialect is the most widely spoken language in Morocco. In addition, about 10 million Moroccans, mostly in rural areas, speak Berber-- which exists in Morocco in three different dialects (Tarifit, Tashelhit, and Tamazight)--either as a first language or bilingually with the spoken Arabic dialect. Morocco's unofficial third language remains French and is taught universally. It still serves as Morocco's primary language of commerce and economics and is widely used in

education and government. Many Moroccans in the northern part of the country speak Spanish. English, while still far behind French and Spanish in terms of number of speakers, is rapidly becoming the foreign language of choice among educated youth. All public schools teach English from the fourth year on.

**Bolivia**

The languages of Bolivia include Spanish; several dozen indigenous languages, most prominently Quechua, Aymara, and Tupi Guaraní; Bolivian Sign Language (a local variant of American Sign Language); and language of immigrants such as Plautdietsch. Indigenous languages and Spanish are official languages of the state according to the 2009 Constitution. The language spoken in the areas close to Brazil is, mainly, Portuguese. Spanish and Quechua are spoken primarily in the Andes region; Aymara is mainly spoken in the Altiplano around Lake Titicaca, and Guaraní in the southeast on the border with Paraguay. The 2009 Constitution specifies 37 languages as official. The Bolivian government and the departmental governments are also required to use at least two languages in their operation, while smaller-scale autonomous governments must also use two, including Spanish. Following the National Education Reform of 1994, all thirty indigenous languages were introduced alongside Spanish in the country's schools. However, many schools did not implement the reforms, especially urban schools.

**Malaysia**

In Malaysia, nearly all people have a working knowledge of Malay and English. Malay, the official language of the country and English, are compulsory subjects taught in all public schools, and English is the language of instruction for Science and Mathematics. Chinese (Mandarin) and Tamil are spoken by the Chinese and Indian communities respectively, and are the languages of instruction in Chinese and Tamil primary schools respectively. Among the Chinese community, apart from Mandarin, several Chinese dialects especially Hokkien, Cantonese and Teochew are spoken by the respective communities. The indigenous peoples of Sabah and Sarawak speak their ancestral languages (Dayak, Iban etc.). However, it is not uncommon for the locals to be fluent in several of the above languages.

**Papua New Guinea**

About 850 languages are spoken in Papua New Guinea (PNG), where pre-school and early primary education is provided in some 350-400 languages. No other country in the world uses local languages as widely as PNG. Previously, the formal education system used English as the medium of instruction, but based on positive experiences in using local languages in non-formal education, the formal system was reformed. In the new system, the first three years of formal education is taught in the mother tongue of the learner. English becomes the medium at later grades. Elementary schools that use local languages are run by local communities. Reasons for the successful use of local languages include strong community participation, decentralization, local relevance, cost-effectiveness, and the active role of NGOs.

**Australia**

Although Australia has no official language, English has always been entrenched as the de facto national language. According to the 2011 census, English is the only language spoken in the home for close to 81% of the population. The next most common languages spoken at home are Mandarin (1.7%), Italian (1.5%), Arabic (1.4%), Cantonese (1.3%), Greek (1.3%), and Vietnamese (1.2%); a considerable proportion of first and second generation migrants are bilingual. A 2010–2011 study by the Australia Early Development Index found the most common language spoken by children after English was Arabic, followed by Vietnamese, Greek, Chinese, and Hindi. Over 250 Indigenous Australian languages are thought to have existed at the time of first European contact, of which less than 20 are still in daily use by all age groups. About 110 others are spoken exclusively by older people.

By presenting these examples, the idea is to introduce and feel the existence of multilingualism in educational settings across the globe, and the way other countries on the different continents are dealing with the challenge of providing equal access and educational opportunities to its young learners in their indigenous language or the “home” language, along with the other languages (associate official languages or state languages and additional third language). This may be done due to lot of factors that help in development of the social proficiency and competencies needed to communicate and for acceptance in the society; or to fight

poverty, or to maintain national, ethnic or religious identity; or to create employment opportunities and to climb up the social ladder and attain social mobility and so on. The point to notice here is that, multilingualism play an important role in causing groups to develop programs to promote multiple linguistic proficiencies; by using native and indigenous language as the medium of instruction for L1. Now, we will see our country through the same lens of Multilingualism.

#### **Multilingualism in India**

Modern India, as per the 2001 Census, has a total of 122 languages in India out of which 22 languages are spoken by over one million people, while a remaining 100 languages are spoken by more than 10,000 people. Then again, there are languages that are not even recorded because they are spoken by less than 10,000. However, this is a serious under-reporting of the actual number of languages as well because the Census also recorded over 1,500 "mother tongues" used in India. This discrepancy can be explained by the criteria used that only languages with more than 10,000 speakers (officially) are given official recognition. (MHRD, Govt. of India)

#### **The 122 languages are presented in two parts:**

**Part A:** Languages included in the Eighth Schedule to the Constitution of India (Scheduled Languages) comprising of 22 languages; and

**Part B:** Languages not included in the Eighth Schedule (Non-Scheduled Languages) comprising of 100 languages plus the category "Total of other languages" which includes all other languages and mother tongues falling under Part B and which returned less than 10,000 speakers each at the all India level or were not identifiable on the basis of the linguistic information available.

**Table 1: Family-Wise Grouping Of The 122 Scheduled And Non-Scheduled Languages (2001)**

Language families	Number of Languages	Persons who returned the languages as their mother tongue	Percentage to total population
1. Indo-European			
(a) Indo-Aryan	21	790,627,060	76.87
(b) Iranian	2	22,774	00.00
(c) Germanic	1	226,449	00.02
2. Dravidian	17	214,172,874	20.82
3. Austro-Asiatic	14	11,442,029	01.11
4. Tibeto-Burmese	66	10,305,026	01.00
5. Semito-Hamitic	1	51,728	00.01
Total	122	1,026,847,940	99.83

(Census of India, 2001)

Table 2: Scheduled Languages in descending order of speaker's strength – 2001

S. No.	Language	Persons who returned the language as their mother tongue	Percentage to total population **
1	Hindi	422,048,642	41.03
2	Bengali	83,369,769	8.11
3	Telugu	74,002,856	7.19
4	Marathi	71,936,894	6.99
5	Tamil	60,793,814	5.91
6	Urdu	51,536,111	5.01
7	Gujarati	46,091,617	4.48
8	Kannada	37,924,011	3.69
9	Malayalam	33,066,392	3.21
10	Oriya	33,017,446	3.21
11	Punjabi	29,102,477	2.83
12	Assamese	13,168,484	1.28
13	Maithili	12,179,122	1.18
14	Santali	6,469,600	0.63
15	Kashmiri	5,527,698	0.54
16	Nepali	2,871,749	0.28
17	Sindhi	2,535,485	0.25
18	Konkani	2,489,015	0.24
19	Dogri	2,282,589	0.22
20	Manipuri *	1,466,705	0.14
21	Bodo	1,350,478	0.13
22	Sanskrit	14,135	N

\* Excludes figures of Paomata, Mao-Maram and Purul sub-divisions of Senapati district of Manipur for

2001Census.

\*\* The percentage of speakers of each language for 2001 has been worked out on the total population of India excluding the population of

Mao-Maram, Paomata and Purul subdivisions of Senapati district of Manipur due to cancellation of census results.

N - Stands for negligible

(From Census of India 2001)

Considering the perspective that one gets from the table 1 and 2, it is now even more necessary that our educational system should make every conceivable effort to sustain multilingualism (Crawhall 1992; Heugh et al. 1995 among others) rather than suppress it (NCERT 2005). Pattanayak (1981) argues how our educational system has consistently weakened the advantages of grass-root multilingualism that characterizes our society. As Illich (1981) suggests, we need to make every possible effort to empower the languages of the underprivileged and tribal and endangered languages. Affirmative action is called for in this domain (NCERT 2005). To quote Pattanayak (1981), "if participatory democracy has to survive, we need to give a voice to the language of every child." The National Curriculum Framework (NCF) – 2005 strongly advocates multilingualism in school education. Language teaching needs to be multilingual not only in terms of the number of languages offered to children, but also in terms of evolving strategies that would use the multilingual classroom as a resource.

### Three Language Formula

The Three Language Formula (TLF) was the result of the adjustments made by the political leaders, w.r.t. the medium of instruction in their respective region. It was a strategy not a policy framework for language education. The All India Council for Education recommended the adoption of the Three Language Formula in Sept. 1956 (Mallikarjun 2003). According to this formula, every child has to learn the following:

- 1 The mother tongue or the regional language;
2. The official language of the union or the associate official language of the Union as long as it exists (official language of the union is Hindi and its associate official language is English);
3. Modern Indian language or a foreign language, not covered under (1) & (2) above and other than that used as the medium of instruction.

This formula was expected to be adopted by all the State Governments and vigorously implemented at the Secondary stage. It is implied from the above formula that in the Hindi speaking States such as Uttar Pradesh, Uttaranchal, Madhya Pradesh, Chattisgarh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana and Delhi at the secondary stage each child has to learn a total of 3 languages, viz., Hindi, English and a modern Indian language preferably one of the Southern languages. Similarly, in the non-Hindi areas each child has to learn again 3 languages in a different combination, viz., the regional language, English and Hindi. Also, as per this formula the mother tongue or the regional language becomes not only the first language but also the medium of instruction (Vishwanathan 2001).

Therefore, children will receive multilingual education from the onset. In the non-Hindi speaking states, children learn Hindi. In the case of Hindi speaking states, children learn a language not spoken in their area. Sanskrit may also be studied as Modern Indian Language in addition to these languages. At the later stages, the study of classical and foreign languages may be introduced (NCF 2005). It may be noted that the recent German-Sanskrit Controversy, of removing German from Kendriya Vidyalayas in middle of the term 2014-2015, was because of the stand taken by the MHRD minister, Smt Smriti Irani, and the reason given was that the states are violating the TLF by not opting Sanskrit as the third language in Kendriya Vidyalayas.

### Medium of Instruction at Different Levels in Indian School Education

According to the 7th All India Educational Survey 92.07% schools at the primary stage teach through mother tongue in comparison to 91.65% schools in the 6th Survey. Rural and urban comparison shows that 92.39% schools in rural area and 90.39% schools in urban area teach through mother tongue as compared to 91.70% schools in rural area and 91.32% schools in urban area in the 6<sup>th</sup> Survey. Therefore, one can see that an

increase has been recorded in using the mother tongue as the medium of instruction at school at primary level in comparison to 6<sup>th</sup> Survey. In this Survey, 91.34% schools at the upper primary stage teach through mother tongue. The corresponding figure in the 6<sup>th</sup> Survey was 88.64%. The rural and urban comparison shows that 92.71% schools in rural area and 87.37% schools in urban area teach through mother tongue as compared to 89.49% schools in rural area and 86.07% schools in urban area in the 6<sup>th</sup> Survey.

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

	Fifth Survey	Sixth Survey	Seventh survey
Number of Languages	44	41	34

Adapted from Mallikarjun (2003) & 7<sup>th</sup> AIES

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

Stage	Fifth Survey	Sixth Survey	Seventh Survey
Primary	43	33	26
Upper Primary	31	25	23
Secondary	22	21	20
Senior Secondary	20	18	18

Adapted from Mallikarjun (2003) & 7<sup>th</sup> AIES

We can observe from the table given above, that the languages used for the medium of instruction gradually decrease at higher Secondary Level in comparison to the Primary Level. This is the pattern that is repeated almost in every state or UT where languages are deleted or removed at the higher stages of education and the languages that are deleted are either the non-scheduled non-tribal languages or the scheduled languages that are spoken by few people (minority languages). The synchronic comparison also shows that the languages that have been discontinued as media for Higher Secondary education are languages whose speakers form a small minority (Pattanayak, 1980). For example, the languages that have been discontinued as media of instruction are Bengali, Oriya and Telugu in Bihar; Bengali in Manipur; Telugu and Bengali in Orissa; Urdu in Punjab; Hindi and Tamil in Kerala; and Telugu in Pondicherry. The use of Tamil and Malayalam in Gujarat, Tamil in Assam, and Punjabi in Maharashtra as media of instruction has been dropped. But, the diachronic comparison has also shown that the number of language speakers in a particular region has not remained constant forever, it fluctuates. And, this is not because language speakers and media of instruction in the region have decreased, but, the speakers of the same languages have increased in other states. This could have been because of migration of the different social groups from one state to other for better economic prospects and for better life options. For example, in Delhi, though the media of instruction is Hindi (Regional Language), but, the home language of the children in the schools varies a lot such as Bengali, Malayalam, Bhojpuri, Maithili, Rajasthani, Gujarati and so on. Therefore, from these different perspectives, the idea of the reduction of language could be misleading. Henceforth, some provisions should be made to include these languages as media of instruction at all levels of education and efforts should be done for the children who do not share linguistic features with the regional language. Thus, the education policy should now make provisions for making regional languages for the media of instruction at the higher secondary and university levels so that the learner could develop the cognitive and academic competency required at the higher education to develop a critical thinking and understanding. Also, lots of stress has been given by Western Linguists on the importance of mother tongue in acquisition of lexical and conceptual knowledge in the second and third language (Cummins, 2001; Kroll & Stewart, 1994). While the global experience with Multilingual education and the international research evidence show that it is highly successful as a method of effective education, it also throws special challenges in complex multilingual societies like India (Mohanty, Panda, Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas, 2009; Heugh & Skutnabb-Kangas, 2010).

#### Challenges of the Three Language Formula in Multilingual India

##### The challenge is to implement TLF successfully across all the states of India, but...

The three language formula has not been implemented effectively all over the country. Different States interpreted this formula in different ways and as a result its implementation has been uneven. In many cases, the formula has become 3 +/-1 formula. For the speaker of (linguistic) minority languages the three language

formula became a four language formula as they had to learn their mother tongue, the dominant regional language, English and Hindi. In many of the Hindi speaking States Sanskrit became the third language instead of any modern Indian language (preferably south Indian language), whereas the non-Hindi speaking State such as Tamil Nadu operates through a two language formula (Tamil and English). Some boards/institutions permit even European/ foreign languages like Spanish, French and German in place of Hindi or Sanskrit. Only some States accepted the three language formula in principle while other made some adjustments and some changed to an extent that it became impossible to implement it. Now, the question is how far is this Three Language Formula implemented in letter and spirit? And how far is this practicable? Many of the States, except Tamilnadu, have accepted the Three Language Formula in principle. Some States have made marginal adjustments such as the class from which a particular language has to be introduced, or the number of years a language has to be taught, whereas some States have made drastic changes making the formula totally crippled and impossible to be implemented. For example, look at the comparisons of TLF in different states/UTs given in the following data:

<b>TAMILNADU</b>	1. Tamil or the mother tongue when it is different from Tamil.	I-X
	2. English or any other non-Indian language.	III-X
	<b>Note:</b> Tamil has been made compulsory medium at the primary level as per GO of 19-11-99 which was quashed by the Madras High Court on 20 <sup>th</sup> April 2000.	

<b>GOA, DAMAN &amp; DIU</b>		
<b>(i) GOA</b>	1. Marathi/Konkani/Urdu/Kannada English/Marathi/Gujarati/English.	I - IV V - VII VIII - X
	2. Marathi/Konkani/Urdu/Kannada. English. Hindi.	I - IV V - X V - X
	3. Marathi/English/Gujarati/Konkani Marathi/Konkani.	V - VII VIII - X
<b>(ii) DAMAN &amp; DIU</b>	1. Gujarati. English/Marathi/Gujarati. English.	I - IV V - VII VIII - X
	2. English/Hindi. Hindi.	III - IV V - X
	3. Marathi/English/Gujarati/Konkani Marathi/Konkani.	V - VII VIII - X

<b>WEST BENGAL</b>	1. Assamese, Bengali, English, Gujarati, Hindi, Lishi, Malayalam, Marathi, Modern Tibetan, Nepali, Oriya, Punjabi, Gurmukhi, Santhali, Telugu, Tamil and Urdu.	I-X
	2. English, if any language other than English is offered as first language, or Bengali if English is offered as first language.	VI-X
	3. (i) A classical language.	
	(ii) A modern foreign language other than English.	VI-VIII
	(iii) A modern Indian language other than the first language.	

Source: Vishwanathan (2001)

<b>ASSAM</b>	The three language formula is being implemented only in Classes V to VII. <b>First:</b> Mother tongue or Regional language. I-X <b>Second:</b> English. V-X <b>Third:</b> Hindi (for Assamese mother tongue speakers) or Assamese (for non-Assamese speakers). V-VIII
<b>JAMMU &amp; KASHMIR</b>	1. Urdu or Hindi. I - X 2. English. VI - X 3. Urdu in case of Hindi medium schools & Hindi in case of Urdu medium schools. VII - X
<b>DELHI</b>	1. Hindi or any other modern Indian Language. I-X 2. English. VI-X 3. Hindi/Sanskrit/Craft. VI-VIII
	<i>Languages included under the Three Language Formula</i> Hindi, English Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Kannada, Marathi, Malayalam, Manipuri, Oriya, Punjabi, Sindhi, Tamil, Telugu, Urdu, Sanskrit, French, German, Russian, Arabic, Persian, Nepali, Portuguese, Lepcha, Dimpu and Tibetan.

Source: Vishwanathan (2001)

There are 500 Central Schools with the bilingual medium consisting of English and Hindi. There is also a compulsory language, Sanskrit, in addition. There are 500 Navodaya Vidyalayas where some competence in English and Hindi is imparted simultaneously. But, the students who pass from these schools go to the English medium colleges, because there is no college in the country that offers a bilingual medium of instruction, especially, in regional language. The Indian education system does not accept multilingualism as one moves into higher education.

In states such as Arunachal Pradesh, Goa, Haryana, Jammu and Kashmir, Meghalaya, Nagaland, and Sikkim, the mother tongue is the medium of instruction in less than 50% of the schools. Sikkim 1.95%, Arunachal Pradesh 2.89%, Goa 14%, Jammu and Kashmir 19.45%, Meghalaya 42.03%, and Nagaland 43% used mother tongue as media of instruction at the upper primary stage. Major languages such as English and Hindi and the other Scheduled 8th languages occupy a place of importance even in the states where the speakers of the non-scheduled language are in a majority (Subhash 2013).

The reasons for non-implementation of three language formula effectively could be:

- › It was not properly implemented as it was meant to be implemented. The southern states such as Pondicherry and Tamil Nadu and Tripura were not ready to teach Hindi and Hindi-speaking States did not include any south Indian language in their school curriculum.
- › The fear of heavy language load in the school curriculum.
- › All the languages are not being taught compulsorily at the secondary stage.
- › Duration for compulsory study of three languages varies.
- › To opt deliberately for the 'dominant' language that is more relevant in getting higher technical and professional education that enhances one's market value; and, therefore, the 'third language' seems useless (e.g. Hindi in Non-Hindi state like Tamil Nadu follows Two Language Formula, as stated above).

- The States, most often, do not have adequate resources for provision of additional language teachers and teaching -learning materials.
- Due to the inability of the teacher to understand, speak and use the first or second language of the students.
- Due to the incomplete, incompetent and ineffective training of the teacher so that they are not able to adapt the teaching learning material as per the requirement of the targeted learner and the target language.
- Inability of the central and state government in creating educational, social, cultural and economic opportunities for minority and tribal languages.
- The lack of parental and community support and their involvement in creating a learning environment with one's socio-cultural context.

**The challenge is to establish Hindi as the National Language as well as the link language through TLF, but.....**

Regarding language, one thing has caused greater division within India than vote-seeking politicians could ever have done: the fact that Hindi was imposed on regions which did not speak it. In 1965, when the Madras State Anti-Hindi Conference resulted in violent agitations and suicides by self immolation by the students, the Congress working Committee had to pass a resolution of making English an official language and also stated that it would not change until all the states consented to it. Pt. Nehru himself declared in Parliament "that it was the over-enthusiasm of the leaders of the Hindi groups which came in the way of the spread of Hindi" (Das Gupta 1970). Perhaps if people had been simply encouraged to learn Hindi, it would be more widely spoken today. Another thing which appears to have blocked Hindi was the decision, after independence, to organize the states of India according to linguistic boundaries and the unwillingness of the government to phase out English from all the government communication. However, because of English's importance worldwide and the many advantages are gained by those who could speak it, the study of English continued with even greater strength than before, whereas Hindi suffered in many regions where people perceived little need for it. This ensured that a large section of the educated population who went into government services needed to use English in performing their jobs. In Delhi also, all the important communication by MHRD is done in English in the Universities and schools. Only Local body run schools sometimes (sometimes!!) communicate in Hindi (MCD/NDMC). The people living in non-Hindi speaking regions don't learn Hindi as they feel it doesn't give them any leverage in getting jobs in the government as well as private sector (globally also). They know that even if the official language is Hindi, all the government communication is done in English. The repercussions of this linguistic divide can be seen clearly in terms of the wide communication gap between the people of Non-Hindi speaking states and people from Hindi speaking states. They can't communicate as they lack the competence required for a fruitful communication; there is no verbal connection; no link between the two language families. Consequently, the intent with which the TLF was formulated, i.e., to establish a communicative link across the country, has been lost in the way, somewhere, because of lack of interest of people as the opportunities for Hindi in the Economic sector, that helps a person in social mobility, are paltry.

**The challenge of providing multilingual education in a meaningful manner from the onset, but.....**

The provision of TLF was to ensure that the early 8 years of the medium of instruction will be in the mother tongue; that the academic competency will develop better in the regional or first language, so that the learner can easily transfer the concepts learnt in the mother tongue to the first language and then later to the second language (Kroll & Stewart 1994). But, this could not be done in isolation; the cultural context plays an important part in it. If the curriculum or the content to be taught is not in consonance with the child's immediate culture and environment, the whole point of imparting education in the mother tongue will be useless. The problem lies in making such provisions for the education of the child so that whatever he listens to is meaningful for him. Even if he is not able to understand, there should be the provision of assistance in form of a trained and well equipped teacher, with which he can negotiate the process of meaning making.

In the words of D. P. Pattanayak (1981),

*"Language is a tool of communication. But, communication is neither naming classroom objects and objects in the immediate environment of the child.....Communication entails much more than mere passing*

information. It involves conceptualization of objects and experiences, their identification and classification, argumentation and disputation about the nature, processes and relationship among objects, thoughts and expressions, and comprehension of the realities and rules governing them.”

This dilemma of a child and her/his inability to communicate her/his home knowledge with school knowledge has been beautifully portrayed through a cartoon strip in “Tribal Education: A Fine Balance” by Dasra (2009).



Excerpts of conversations between a tribal child and his/her parents

Dasra (2009)

The multilingual experience that the TLF promises to give can't work until it is well supported by community resources and knowledge systems with an objective to help the students to develop an attitude that motivates them to question and challenge domination and the belief systems of the dominant (Freire 2005). The absence of involvement of the so called SMC's with the community, the absence of tracking the individual child; and the lack of involvement on part of the community leaders have led to the failure of the TLF and multilingual education and experience (Panda & Mohanty 2009)

#### **The challenge of Proper and effective Teacher Training Programme and Pedagogy but...**

When in 2003, the Government of India, under SSA, approached states with substantial tribal population to introduce mother tongue based MLE for tribal children, the same year, the Andhra Pradesh Government decided to start an experimental pilot project to provide MLE in eight tribal languages in 1000 schools (Mohanty et al.,2009). Under the required MLE framework new curriculum, textbooks, teaching learning material and teacher training programmes were prepared; and the teachers were trained extensively to handle the issues of multilingual education. The tribal languages were written in the script of the state or the regional language with some modifications to accommodate the linguistic features that were not common among the two languages. Then, special efforts were made to incorporate the cultural and daily life experiences of the children and indigenous knowledge systems, games, songs and stories from the tribal communities into the curriculum, textbooks, pictures and illustrations, teaching-learning materials and children's learning activities. I remember such a project on Early Literacy Programme headed by Kirti Jayaram in the schools of MCD. Many such innovative programs are: Neelbagh in Karnatka, Prashika in Madhya Pradesh, Kerala Sashtra Sahitya Parishad (KSSP) in Kerela, Digantar in Rajasthan, the Organic Reading Programme in Phaltan, Maharashtra and the Rishi Valley Programme in Andhra Pradesh which has been further adapted on a large scale as systemic interventions by the Nali Kali Programme in Karnatka and the Activity Based Learning (ABL) Programme in Tamil Nadu (Jayaram K 2008). Some of these programmes have clearly articulated the theoretical perspectives within which they are located, while in the case of others this remains an ambiguous area and decisions regarding content, materials and classroom pedagogies which have been designed to promote initial and early reading and writing, are based more on field practicalities than on understandings based on children's learning processes.

Therefore, unless teacher's pedagogies include the language practices of the learner, and unless all the learners are taught in a manner that is in consonance with their cultural and language practices, the education

system cannot expect the involvement of the student in the teaching learning process in the classroom and the objective of an active and aware learner, w.r.t. social justice and political participation across India cannot happen. For that, the heteroglossic multilingual approaches and plurilingual pedagogies (Garcia 2009) have to be developed to tackle the dynamic and complex multilingualism found in the classroom, that draw from the different interlocutors and contexts in which communication takes place. The multilingual pedagogies depend on the curricular arrangements of the different language practices such as strict separation, flexible separation and flexible multiplicity (Garcia & Flores 2012). Out of these three, the last one seems more appropriate in Indian context where the dominant language is ultimately learnt from the rich inputs provided by the students with diverse linguistic backgrounds in a bilingual or multilingual class. **Code switching, co-langaging, trans-langaging and plurilingual scaffolding** play an important role in the mixing up of different linguistic codes and these codes offer significant resource for learning (Martin Jones & Saxena 1996; Ferguson, 2003; Gajo 2007; Lewis 2008; Li and Wu 2009) so that the educational system and the curriculum are able to meet the language demands of the multilingual learners, with due help by constructing better teacher training programs and equipping our teachers with dynamic plurilingual pedagogies. The projects (Govt. or NGO) that are done in some of the tribal areas of Maharashtra, Orrisa, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and so on, should not become only the interventions; they should not die out as just like any *"we want to help the tribals"* kind of project. But, they should be spread indeed from one cluster to several other clusters to support and promote multilingualism so that it becomes the power of the learners not their weakness in acquiring the academic, cognitive and language production skills.

#### Conclusion

As stated in the International Consultative Meet and Strategy Dialogue on Mother Tongue Based Multilingual Education: Framework, Strategies and Implementation (2011) held in Mysore,

*"Challenges and issues confronting the practitioners of MLE in India are many. The complex socio-political relationship between languages affecting gross differences in the attitudinal orientations for different mother tongues, the nuances of framing policies in respect of languages in education, scheduling (and timing) of languages to be introduction in the MLE programmes and within-classroom diversity of languages are some of the major issues in development of a suitable MLE framework in India."*

Therefore, if we consider the multilingual characteristics of the classrooms across India, one can easily understand the importance of MLE in the development of the linguistic and social competency required by every child to avail the equal education opportunities at every stage of education. The government should try to formulate such a policy that is not an outcome of some political strategy to pacify the language politics of few "dominant people", but the policy should have some serious implications for how to fulfill the needs and requirements of child according to her/his social, cultural and linguistic practices. For sorting this "Impossible situation" (Dua 1990) which involve a lot of variables such as students, teachers, community, schools, languages, material and goals and objectives, the basic need will be to develop a whole new approach to change the curriculum, textbooks, material, pedagogy and the training programme from a critical point of view and as per the requirement of the learner. Therefore, the reality of multilingualism has to be accepted in terms of creating allocations for the mother tongues (specially minority and tribal languages) as media of instruction in the school setups, so that the linguistic abilities of the learner's mother tongue could be exploited to develop metalinguistic skills in his mother tongue and could be transferred to other languages to develop and acquire the requisite skills of second and third language. This cannot happen until the teacher training programs doesn't equip our teachers to address the continually changing needs of diverse multilingual populations and should start preparing large number of bi-lingual and multilingual teachers, so that adequate support can be given to the MTI and the other additional languages. Along with that, the challenge of the acceptance of Hindi, Sanskrit and other regional languages could be resolved in a better way if the market forces create economical opportunities for these languages in the same way as for English, French and Spanish; so that the self esteem of the person, who is proficient in Hindi, Sanskrit, Urdu, Maithili, Tulu or any other "non-dominated language", can climb up the socio-economic ladder. This will create the required

amount of motivation and interest in learning a particular language and will, consequently, promote and preserve multilingualism at every level of formal education. The objective and the goal are very difficult but half the battle will be won, if the right policy is chosen and implemented; along with supportive infrastructure required for an effective implementation of TLF across the disparate cultures and diverse linguistic regions of India.

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