

**Fundamental Concepts in Sociolinguistics**  
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**Three Languages Formula**

Welcome to class. Today we are going to talk about a very important and well-discussed concept in the language policy of India, which is referred to as the three-language formula. In continuation of our discussions on the official languages of India and the eighth schedule of the Constitution of India, three language formula is equally important topic and we are going to deal with them today.

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The slide is titled "Language Policy in Post-independent India" and features the NPTEL logo in the top right corner. It contains three bullet points:

- In the Constituent Assembly, Hindi was voted as the official language of the Union, and it also gave States the liberty to independently decide their official language for local governance.
- However, it provided that the use of English language would continue for 15 more years, and after 15 years, Parliament can enact a law to provide for continued use of English language for specified purposes.
- The Constitution also asked the government to appoint a commission at the end of five and ten years respectively to make recommendation with regards to progressive use of Hindi language.

In the bottom right corner of the slide, there is a video inset showing a man with a beard and glasses, wearing a dark blue shirt, speaking into a microphone.

Deciding on a national language or an official language post-independent India was an uphill task for the constituent assembly which was supposed to draft the constitution of the newly independent India. After long discussions and debates and deliberations of more than two and a half years, we adopted our constitution on 26 January 1950. And a very well-debated and deliberated upon topic, which was the Official Language of India came into force.


And if you look at part 17 from chapters 1 to 4, covering articles 343 to 351; that entire section of the Constitution of India is dedicated to the issues of languages, various issues of languages, recognizing them, mandating them for use in different official purposes at central and state levels. So, in the constitution assembly, Hindi was voted as the official language of the union and it also gave states the liberty to independently decide their official languages for local governance.

However, it provided that the use of English language would continue for the next 15 years from the date of enforcement of the Constitution of India on 26 January 1950 to 15 years of period that was supposed to end on 25th January 1965. The constitution also asked the government to appoint a commission at the end of 5 and 10 years respectively to make recommendations with regard to the progressive use of Hindi as a language pan India.

So this was the provision with which we started in 1950 on 26 January, so our constitution came into force and we adopted our constitution on 26 January 1950. And as I told you that the question of language, the so-called national language, and then finally Hindi being adopted as the official language of the center in Devanagari script was a long uphill task and we have witnessed a long debate and very elaborate deliberation on the issue.

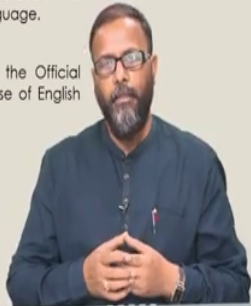
But finally, Hindi was declared as an official language in Devanagari script and English as an associate official language for the period of 15 years and it was believed that during this period of 15 years, window period of 15 years Hindi will emerge as a lingua franca pan India and will have a wider acceptability fueled by initiatives by government organizations, government, and other organizations and it did not happen that way, the way it was perceived in 1950.

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### Constitutional Provisions (India)

- The Constitution of India had a dedicated section from pages 212-217 in Part XVII, Official Language consisting of Articles 343 to 351, which are dedicated to the matters of official languages of India and the Union of States.
- As the end of the fifteen years drew closer, there were widespread protests in the southern states, particularly against promotion/imposition of Hindi Language.
- Under the mounting pressure because of the continued protests, the Official Language Act was passed in 1963 which provided for continued use of English alongside Hindi indefinitely.




So, a constitution that had dedicated articles in part 17 from pages 212 to 217, from Article 343 to 351 which are dedicated to the matters of official languages and the idea that English will continue for the coming 15 years and then gradually be replaced by Hindi, but it did not

happen that way. Almost as the end was nearing, as the end of this 15 years window period was nearing, we saw a widespread protest in the southern states and non-Hindi speaking states.

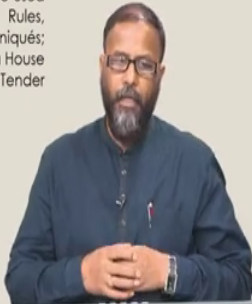
Particularly that started in Madras, then asked while the Madras Presidency against promotion and imposition in course of the Hindi language and these protests were so widespread and Hindi was portrayed as a language of hegemony and imposition on the non-Hindi speaking states and the protest was so widespread that the government of India had to convene a special session of the parliament.

And in 1963 under the mounting pressure from this continued protest, the Official Language Act was passed and it was enacted. So, under the mounting pressure of protests across non-Hindi speaking states government of India had to convene a joint session of parliament in 1963, two years before this window period was supposed to end, and pass the act called the Official Language Act.

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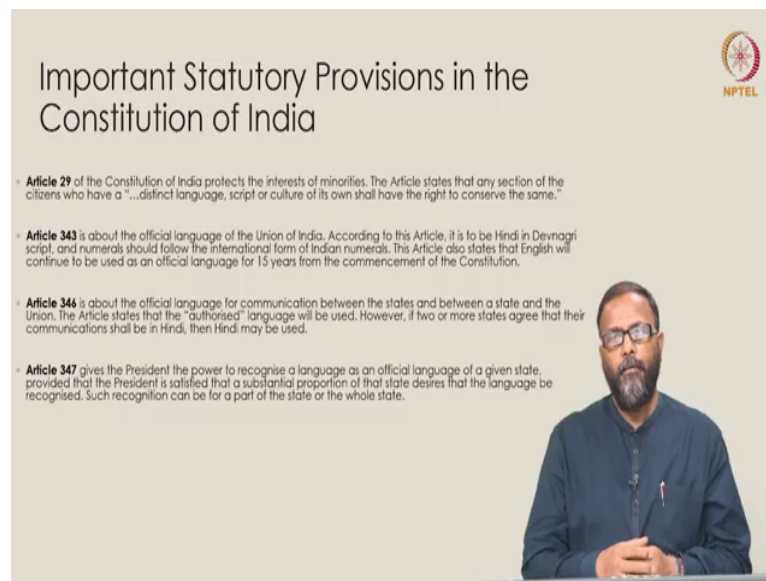
- The section 3(2) of the Official Languages Act, 1963 (amended in 1967) provides for continuing the use of English in official work even after 25 January 1965.
- The Act also lays down that both Hindi and English shall compulsorily be used for certain specified purposes such as Resolutions, General Orders, Rules, Notifications, Administrative and other Reports, Press Communiqués; Administrative and other Reports and Official Papers to be laid before a House or the Houses of Parliament; Contracts, Agreements, Licences, Permits, Tender Notices and Forms of Tender, etc.



So, this Official Language Act allowed English to continue, sine die, till further orders, so this period did not end in 1965 on 25th January as it was destined to end and as we are speaking today in 2021 it continues. So, this is how English continues to be associated official language of India. So, section 3 - 0.2 of the Official Language Act, 1963, which was amended again in 1967 provides for continuing the use of English in official work even after 25th January 1965.

The act also lays down that both Hindi and English shall compulsorily be used for certain specified purposes such as resolutions in the house, general orders by the government, rules, notifications, administrative and other reports, press, communiqués, administrative and other reports in both the houses of the parliament, all kinds of contracts, agreements, licenses, permits, tenders, notices and other forms of tenders, they all are supposed to be produced and executed in both the languages. So, this is how we operate.

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The slide features a title 'Important Statutory Provisions in the Constitution of India' and the NPTEL logo in the top right corner. It lists four articles: Article 29, Article 343, Article 346, and Article 347. A speaker is visible in the bottom right corner of the slide.

**Article 29** of the Constitution of India protects the interests of minorities. The Article states that any section of the citizens who have a "...distinct language, script or culture of its own shall have the right to conserve the same."

**Article 343** is about the official language of the Union of India. According to this Article, it is to be Hindi in Devnagri script, and numerals should follow the international form of Indian numerals. This Article also states that English will continue to be used as an official language for 15 years from the commencement of the Constitution.

**Article 346** is about the official language for communication between the states and between a state and the Union. The Article states that the "authorised" language will be used. However, if two or more states agree that their communications shall be in Hindi, then Hindi may be used.

**Article 347** gives the President the power to recognise a language as an official language of a given state, provided that the President is satisfied that a substantial proportion of that state desires that the language be recognised. Such recognition can be for a part of the state or the whole state.

Now, given the fact that India is a multi-lingual country, it has four major language families and it is also discussed about the fifth language family, the Andamanese. Indo-Aryan language family is the largest language family almost covering 70 percent of the population that speaks languages from the Indo-Aryan language family.

Then we have the major, another major family the Dravidian languages family, concentrated around the southern part of the country. Then we have Austroasiatic languages scattered in the central Indian part and then one or two regions in the northeast part of India and then Tibeto-Burman language families, such a diverse country with so many languages.

And in fact, if you go by the figures of the 2011 census of India, more than 15569, I guess, if I am not wrong, but definitely, more than 15000 varieties have been returned as mother tongue, out of which with different classifications and grouping and organizations, the government comes up with 121 languages, so that is a linguistic diversity of the country. In

such a country deciding upon one official language will definitely be an uphill task, it is an uphill task.

And to date, the questions on languages have not yet been settled. However, the Constitution of India gives us a lot of liberty and leverage to accommodate as many languages as possible and if you look at schedule 8 of the Indian Constitution, it lists 14 languages as official languages of India in 1950 at the time of enforcement of the constitution. And today as we talk there are 22 languages, and 8 have been added.


And for now, more than 31 languages are in the queue and demands are rising for inclusion as an official language in the eighth schedule of the constitution. The constitution has a dedicated section, part 17 and from Articles 343 to 351 exclusively discussing issues of language and language use. So, in that way, the Constitution of India gives us a lot of leverage to decide upon languages of our official use.

If you look at, there are certain articles that we should be very particular about and we should be aware of, Article 29 for that matter, of the Constitution of India, protects the interests of the minorities, so even if some languages have a lesser number of speakers or the communities, that particular class of the society which has lesser number of speakers and a small group of people Constitution of India also protects their language and their interests.

And it refers to Article 29 of the constitution of India. The article states that any section of the citizen who has a distinct language script or culture of its own shall have the right to conserve the same. So, lots of flexibility is there in our constitution. Of course, 343 as I have been telling you time and again and repeating, is about the official language of the Union of India and according to this Article it is to be Hindi in Devanagari script and numerals should follow the international form of Indian numerals.

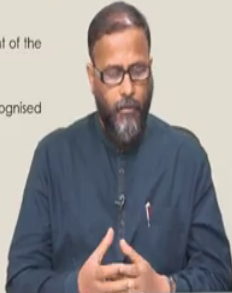
Article 346 for that matter is about the official language of the communication between states and the union, similarly, Article 347 gives the president the power to recognize a language as an official language of a given state, so when the state assemblies pass their resolutions, it comes to the president and he approves and it is gazetted and notified. Such recognition can be for a part of the state or the whole state, so depending on what kind of resolution has been adopted and sent.

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- **Article 350A** facilities for instruction in mother-tongue at the primary stage.
- **Article 350B** provides for the establishment of a Special Officer for linguistic minorities. The Officer shall be appointed by the President and shall investigate all matters relating to the safeguards for linguistic minorities, reporting directly to the President. The President may then place the reports before each house of the Parliament or send them to the governments of the states concerned.
- **Article 351** gives power to the union government to issue a directive for development of the Hindi language.
- **Eighth Schedule** of the Constitution of India contains a list of 22 languages recognised schedule languages.



Similarly, Article 350 Section A – Facilitates for instruction in the mother tongue at the primary stage. So, from here we are turning toward the three-language formula. We will move to that very soon. Article 350b provides for the establishment of a special officer for linguistic minorities in order to protect their language and their scripts, the literature scripts, and everything.

The officer shall be appointed by the president and shall investigate all matters relating to the safeguards for linguistic minorities, reporting directly to the president, so no political mediation in between, an intervention in between, so this is how the Constitution of India safeguards the rights of the minority community and rights of the smaller sections of the society and the country.

The president may then place the reports before each house of the parliament or send them to the governments of the states concerned. Article 351 gives power to the union government to issue a directive for the development of the Hindi language. And the 8th schedule as we discussed lists more than 22 languages so far to be used and are being used as official languages in the Constitution of India.

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## The Kothari Commission

- Kothari Commission was formed on 14 July 1964. On 29 June 1966, Kothari Commission was dissolved. It was formed under the Chairmanship of Daulat Singh Kothari. He was the then chairman of University Grants Commission (UGC).
- It was the first commission mandated to comprehensively deal with the Education Policy of India.



Now, from where this three-language formula emerges? What is the need for that? So, if you look at, the protests that started in 1963 created a serious of concern about the unity and integrity of the union of states in India and the question of language identity and politics came to the forefront of all policy-making framework development and, in that sense, as part of the language policy and planning the Kothari Commission was constituted.

The Kothari Commission was formed on 14th July 1964. On 29th June 1966, the commission was dissolved after the purpose was achieved, objectives were achieved, and the commission submitted recommendations, it was formed under the then chairman of the University Grants Commission Mr. Daulat Singh Kothari and that is why this commission is called Kothari Commission.


So, Daulat Singh Kothari was chairman of the University Grants Commission. It was the first commission mandated to comprehensively deal with the education policy of independent India. You can recall 1835, the great Macaulay Minutes that shaped the framework for education in India pre-independence, and Wood's Dispatch, which established the role and significance of English in the Indian education system.

So, right from 1835 and then followed by Wood's Dispatch, lots of commissions were formed intermittently, but the Kothari Commission was the sixth commission and post-independent India it was given this mandate to come up with a very comprehensive framework regarding

language and education. It did not only concentrate on the language but it did make a lot of contributions and gave a wider framework in terms of language policy and education.

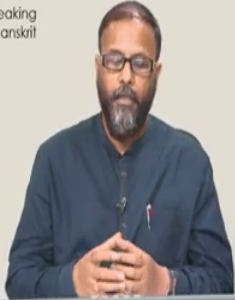
So this is called Kothari Commission and the reports are available online, you can just Google it and find the entire recommendation of the Kothari Commission if you are interested to understand the language policy. And that long report contains a particular section dedicated to language and primary education. This also forms a part of acquisition planning and corpus planning, so the recommendations of the Kothari Commissions that is why very important.

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### Recommendation regarding Languages

- Languages – The Commission recommended adopting a three-language formula at state levels.
- It intended to promote a language of the Southern States in Hindi speaking states.
- It intended to promote Hindi, English and a regional language in non-Hindi speaking states. The Kothari Commission recommended promoting regional languages, Sanskrit as well as international languages, preferably English.



So, recommendations regarding languages. The commission recommended adopting a three-language formula at the state level and from there, the Kothari Commission recommendation for this three-language formula comes into a discussion, and this terminology is used three as a language formula or trilingual formula, somewhere you can find a trilingual formula, both are the same that originates since Kothari Commission report.

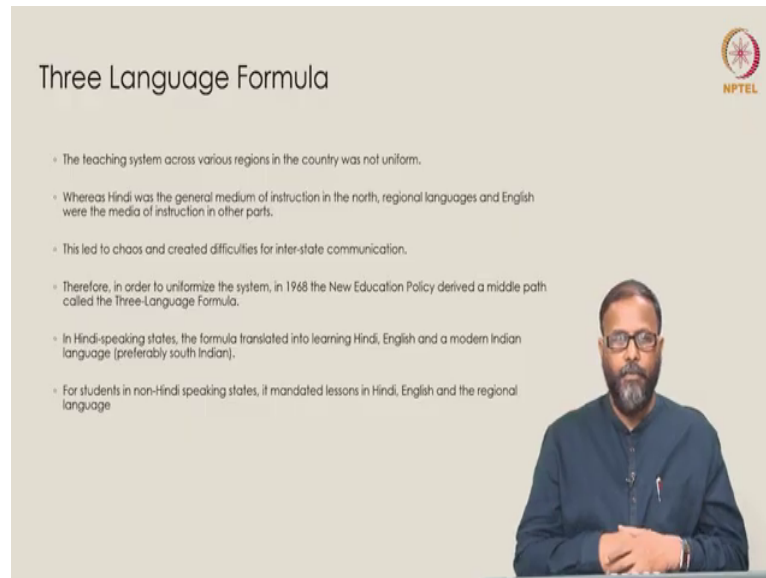
And it intended to promote the language of the southern states in the Hindi-speaking states and vice versa. So, in order to build consensus on national integrity and minimize the apprehensions of non-Hindi states, this recommendation was very important. It intended to promote Hindi, English, and a regional language in non-Hindi-speaking states.

The Kothari Commission recommended promoting regional languages, Sanskrit as well as an international language preferably English, so three language trilingual packaging of



languages at school level, this is how this phrase three language formula or trilingual formula comes into discussion.

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The slide is titled "Three Language Formula" and features the NPTEL logo in the top right corner. It contains a list of six bullet points explaining the historical context and implementation of the formula. A video inset in the bottom right shows a man with a beard and glasses, wearing a dark blue shirt, speaking.

- The teaching system across various regions in the country was not uniform.
- Whereas Hindi was the general medium of instruction in the north, regional languages and English were the media of instruction in other parts.
- This led to chaos and created difficulties for inter-state communication.
- Therefore, in order to uniformize the system, in 1968 the New Education Policy derived a middle path called the Three-Language Formula.
- In Hindi-speaking states, the formula translated into learning Hindi, English and a modern Indian language (preferably south Indian).
- For students in non-Hindi speaking states, it mandated lessons in Hindi, English and the regional language.

So, what is that free language formula? It is a long section in the Kothari Commission report but we will quickly look at a few salient important points. So, a very important point, one of the important point, salient points of this recommendation in three language formula was the teaching system across various regions in the country was not uniform.


So, this report of this commission tried to formalize and develop a kind of uniformity across the country for primary education. Whereas Hindi was a general medium of instruction in the north, regional languages and English were the media of instruction in other parts of the country, this led to chaos and created difficulties for interstate communications, therefore in order to draw uniformity, in the system in 1968 New Education Policy derived a middle path and in that this three-language formula was a very important factor.

So, in Hindi states the formula is translated into learning Hindi, English, and a modern Indian language and preferably a southern language. So, language from the south, so in the north, Hindi, English, and the third language, any language from the south. For students in non-Hindi-speaking states, it mandated lessons in Hindi, English, and the regional language.

So, Hindi, English, and the regional language and perhaps whenever you travel, even today whenever you travel you might have seen the notations on railway stations, if you look at


across the window of your train, you can find the name of the station in Hindi, English and also in the local language, script.

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### Implicit Functions and Implementation

- The three functions which the three language formula sought to serve, were
  - Accommodating group identity
  - Affirming national unity
  - Increasing administrative efficiency
- Incidentally, the NPE 1986 made no change in the 1968 policy on the three-language formula and the promotion of Hindi and repeated it verbatim.



But depending on which state has adopted what language as the official language apart from Hindi, and English, you might find in UP for that matter, or in Bihar, Urdu is the official language, in Delhi for that matter Hindi, Urdu, English, and Gurmukhi, Punjabi, so depending on which state assembly has adopted what language as an official language, one of the official languages.

And we have multilingual official languages, and multilingual official policies everywhere in the country, so it is not monolingual. So, nowhere do we get only Hindi or English or in any one language, you usually get a minimum of three, in Delhi for that matter you have four, and Punjabi is added one. So, the three functions that the three language formulas sought to serve, were number one, accommodating group identity.

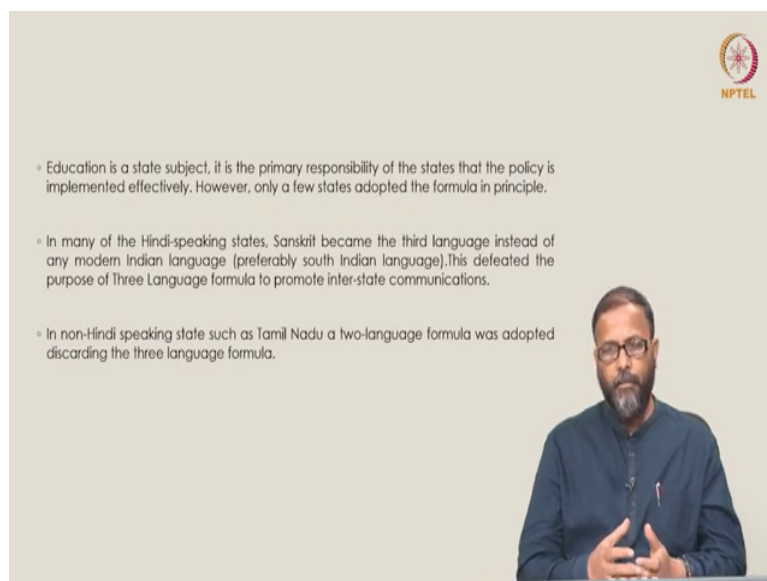
So, minimizing the apprehension and fear of non-Hindi states, that Hindi will not be imposed and in resonance with Article 29, the linguistic rights, culture and heritage will be protected, so this three-language formula tried to subside such apprehensions, tried to address such kind of apprehensions or any kind of linguistic hegemony and apprehension. So, number one, it was accommodating group identity.

Number two, affirming national unity, so mandating north Indian classrooms to have lessons and a particular language from the south as a subject and mandating non-Hindi states to have

Hindi and any other language from across the country as a third language; was conceived to protect and integrate national unity. The third point is increasing administrative efficiency, so the documents, the everyday businesses could be carried out in the regional local language and accessible to the wider population in that particular region.

So, this is what are the implicit functions of the three-language formula. Incidentally, another commission was formed, and NPE, 1986. So, one was in 1968, this is 1986. It made no changes in the 68th policy of this three-language formula and it continued.

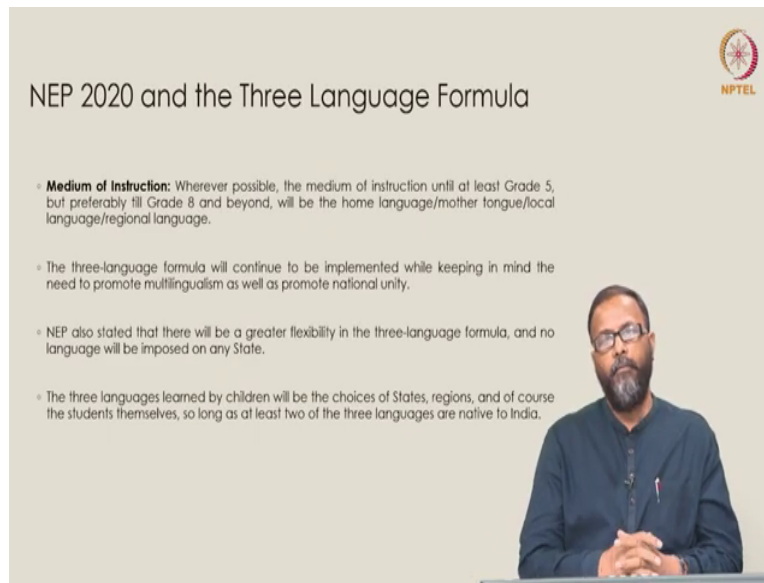
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Because the state has education as a subject, education is state subject, it is the primary responsibility of the states that the policy is implemented effectively in its true spirit. However, only a few states adopted the formula in principle. In many of the Hindi-speaking states Sanskrit became the third language instead of any modern Indian language from the southern part and it in some way defeated the purpose of the three-language formula.

And this defeated the purpose and the whole idea to promote inter-state communication because by default Sanskrit appeared to be the third language, so Hindi, English, and Sanskrit in north Indian schools. In non-Hindi speaking states such as Tamil Nadu, a two-language formula was adopted, the Tamil Nadu assembly rejected the three-language formula and a two-language formula was adopted where you have Tamil and English as official languages.

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The slide features a title 'NEP 2020 and the Three Language Formula' at the top left. In the top right corner, there is a circular logo with a red border and a white center, containing a stylized 'NPTEL' logo. Below the title, there are four bullet points. In the bottom right corner of the slide, there is a video inset showing a man with a beard and glasses, wearing a dark blue shirt, sitting at a desk with his hands clasped.

**NEP 2020 and the Three Language Formula**

- **Medium of Instruction:** Wherever possible, the medium of instruction until at least Grade 5, but preferably till Grade 8 and beyond, will be the home language/mother tongue/local language/regional language.
- The three-language formula will continue to be implemented while keeping in mind the need to promote multilingualism as well as promote national unity.
- NEP also stated that there will be a greater flexibility in the three-language formula, and no language will be imposed on any State.
- The three languages learned by children will be the choices of States, regions, and of course the students themselves, so long as at least two of the three languages are native to India.

Now we have National Education Policy 2020. What about NEP 2020 and three language formulas? We hardly find a major departure from 1968 to 1986 and now to 2020. The trilingual formula or three-language formula continues but in 2020 a little more flexibility has been added. So the salient points of NEP 2020, we can summarize wherever possible, so that is the flexibility that NEP 2020 gives.

It says wherever possible, it does not mandate. So, wherever possible the medium of instruction until at least grade 5 should be in the mother tongue, lessons in the mother tongue, but preferably till grade 8 and beyond will be the home language or mother tongue local language original language, so primary education in the mother tongue or any local language and it should be it is mandatory till five, it can go beyond till eight.

And then the students can continue learning and studying that language and literature beyond grade eight as a subject. Number two, the three-language formula will continue to be implemented while keeping in mind the need to promote multilingualism as well as promote national unity, so hardly any departures here. NEP also stated that there will be greater flexibility in three language formula and no language will be imposed on any state.

So, perhaps, the first time this National Education Policy, 2020, declares no imposition of Hindi, so the apprehension and the fear of non-Hindi states about hegemony of Hindi and about Hindi being imposed on them is addressed in this policy. And the three-language

learned by a child will be the choices of the state, regions, and of course, the student themselves, so long as at least two of the three languages are native to India.

So, out of three one will be a foreign language and it is majorly English although all the places and two languages should be native to India, Indian languages. So, this whole discourse on three languages continues right from the beginning and it mandates states because education is a state subject, the policy has to be implemented by the states, but NEP 2020 gives greater flexibility to the states to work upon, have an action plan and implement it effectively.

The three-language formula basically was a mediated, negotiated position taken by the government of India, recommended by the Kothari Commission and subsequent education policies where three languages were mandated, states were given, the Constitution of India gave states to decide on their official language and we see non-Hindi states like Gujarat, so Gujarati is the third official language there.

Let us say Punjab, Punjabi is a third official language there, in Bengal, Bangla, in Tamil Nadu, Tamil, in Andhra Pradesh it is Telugu, Kannada is in Karnataka and Malayalam in Kerala, Assamese in Assam, and so on and so forth. So, that is the story of three language formulas and the good thing is that the Constitution of India gives us a lot of flexibility and leverage to be multilingual.

It promotes multilingualism and subsequent education policies have taken and doing the same line and this is how these statutory provisions in the constitution make it mandatory for any government to maintain the multilingual fabric of the country. Article 29 gives us the right to preserve our language, culture, heritage, and scripts and it is up to the government of the states to adopt more than one language or language as an official language.

So, we will continue talking about language policy and planning in India in our next video. For now, this is it and in case you have questions post it in the forum. Thank you very much.