

**Fundamental Concepts in Sociolinguistics**  
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**The Eight Schedule**

Welcome, hello everyone. Today we are going to talk about a very important constitutional provision that embodies the very idea of the pluricultural multilingual linguistic ecosystem of our country. India speaks and writes in many languages and perhaps if you look at the number of languages spoken here and the diversity, linguistic diversity it is amazing.

It is widely believed that we have almost 6000 languages in the world and approximately one-fifth are spoken here in the Indian subcontinent. The Census 2011 is a gateway to understanding India's ethnolinguistic plurality. It was identified that there were 1500 mother tongues as per the respondents to the census. Which was reclassified, and tabulated through linguistic analysis by the government of India, post which 121 languages were deemed indigenous. We may debate on the parameters used for the classification and may question the categorization of mother tongues, languages, and dialects, but one thing it establishes is that India is a linguistically diverse country where people tend to assert their cultural, religious and linguistic identity given that we live in a representative democratic setup.

India is also home to many language families like Indo-European families, the Dravidian family, the Austroasiatic family, the Sino-Tibetan language family and the Andamanese group of languages. Soon after our independence in 1947, there were important debates in the constituent assembly on the matter of choosing a national language.

After much debate, discussion, contemplation and consideration Hindi and English were declared as the official language of independent India. However, the constituent assembly also mandated that other languages be given official status as per the demography of each State and be allowed to flourish and grow. Hence, a clause was inserted in the Constitution of India that very elaborately defines and details the constitutional provision for the official languages of this country.

And, today we are going to study the eighth schedule of the Constitution of India. It is important for all scholars and students who are interested in understanding linguistic diversity, to study the constitutional provisions and practices of the country, so the topic that we are going to see today, the eighth schedule, is a very significant one.

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Why the Eighth Schedule Significant?

The Constitution has twelve Schedules for detailing and specifying matters contained in the corresponding Articles. The Eighth Schedule specifies the languages recognized by the Constitution of India as official languages of the state and special provision relating to language spoken by a section of the population of a state.

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A man with a beard and glasses, wearing a dark shirt, is seated at a desk, speaking into a microphone. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

The Indian Constitution has 12 schedules for detailing and specifying matters contained in the corresponding articles. The eighth schedule specifies the language recognized by the Constitution of India as the official language of the state and special provisions relating to the language spoken by a section of the population of a state.

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Statutory Acknowledgement

The Eighth Schedule of the Constitution of India reflects the statutory acknowledgement of Indian linguistic diversity and plurality. The growing demands for inclusion of more and more languages in the Schedule represent the aspirations of other languages that require institutional support and constitutional protection. This tendency is encouraging and required to keep the multilingual fabric of India intact.


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The eighth schedule of the constitution of India reflects the statutory acknowledgement of Indian linguistic diversity and plurality of culture. The growing demands for the inclusion of more and more languages in the schedule represent the aspirations of other languages that

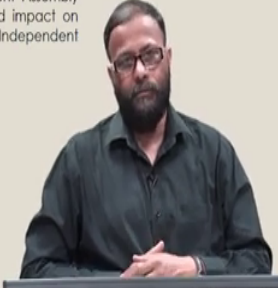
require institutional support and constitutional protection. This tendency is encouraging and required to keep the multilingual fabric of India intact.

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## Background

- Post 1835 famous McCauley's minutes and 1854 Charles Wood's Education Dispatch; it was the Constituent Assembly of India, which discussed the issues of languages and policy in India extensively.
- The Constituent Assembly Debates continued over a period of almost three years from 1946 to 1949 and culminated into the enactment of the Constitution of India on 26 January 1950.
- Given the multilingual and pluricultural context of India, the Constituent Assembly Debates and consequent language policy framing drew a far-fetched impact on administration, education and functioning of constitutional bodies in Independent India.



Now, if you look at the background of this, it can be traced to our colonial era under British Raj. In the year 1835 Lord Macaulay's Minutes were submitted and a new era in language and education policy began in India. Subsequently in 1854, Charles Woods Education Dispatch was another milestone that generated a lot of argument and discussion on language policy, and education policy in the country. The British established three modern universities, one in erstwhile Calcutta, now Kolkata, another in erstwhile Bombay, now Mumbai and Madras the third one erstwhile, now Chennai. These were three centres of learning and excellence in major British provinces hence they were termed Presidencies / Presidency colleges.

Post-independence the constituent assembly debates continued over almost three years from 1946 to 1949 and culminated in the enactment of the constitution of India on 26 January 1950. Given the multilingual and plural cultural fabric of India the constituent assembly debates and consequent language policies framing drew a far-fetched impact on administration, education, functioning of constitutional bodies and so many other administrative domains in post-independent India.

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## Constitutional Provisions



- 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.



If you look at the Constitution of India we have dedicated articles for the official languages and language policy of the country. That is a remarkable guideline for the central government and the state governments to follow linguistic policies and practice them in reality, keeping the aspirations of the population in the mind. The Constitution of India has a dedicated section from pages 212 to 217, in part 17 official language consisting of Article 343 to Article 351, which are dedicated to the matters of official languages of India and the Union of States.

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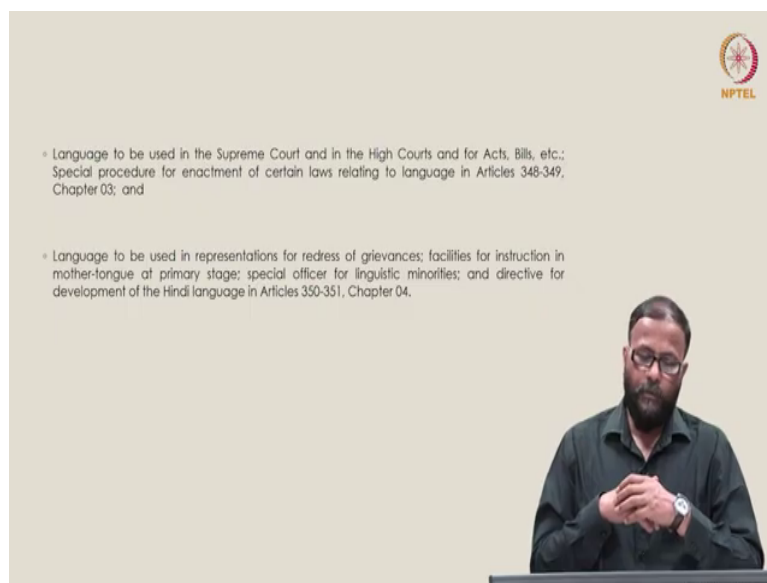
- The section is devised in four chapters addressing the issues of:
  - Official Language of the Union, and Commission and Committee of Parliament on official language in Article 343-344, Chapter 01;
  - Regional Languages covering issue of Official language or languages of a State, Official language for communication between one State and another or between a State and the Union, and Special provision relating to language spoken by a section of the population of a State in Articles 345-347, Chapter 02;



So this section has four chapters from Article 343 to 351 Article and section 17 has four chapters. In chapter one, we have the official language of the union and commission and committee of parliament on official language from Article 343 to Article 344.

Then we have chapter 2 which is original languages covering issues of official languages or languages of the state, official language for communication between one state and another or between a state and the union and the special provisions relating to language spoken by the section of the population of a state from Article 345 to Article 347.


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Language to be used by Judiciary: chapter 3 contains the provisions pertaining to language to be used in the Supreme Court and the High Courts and for acts, bills, et cetera. A special procedure for the enactment of certain laws relating to language is contained in Articles 348 to Article 349.

Chapter 4 contains language to be used in representations for redressal of grievances, facilities for instructions in the mother tongue at the primary stage, special officer of linguistic minorities and directives for the development of the Hindi language from Article 350 to 351.

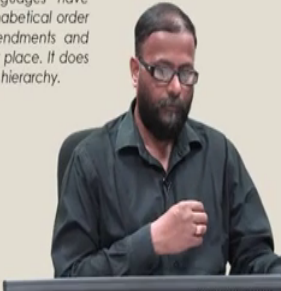
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In accordance with the Articles 344(1) and 351 there are twenty two languages included and listed in this Schedule till date. The languages included in the Eighth Schedule as on date are:

1. Assamese	12. Manipuri
2. Bengali	13. Marathi
3. Bodo	14. Nepali
4. Dogri	15. Odia
5. Gujarati	16. Punjabi
6. Hindi	17. Sanskrit
7. Kannada	18. Santali
8. Kashmiri	19. Sindhi
9. Konkani	20. Tamil
10. Maithili	21. Telugu
11. Malayalam	22. Urdu


Note: These languages have appeared in alphabetical order with various amendments and renumbering their place. It does not represent any hierarchy.



In compliance with Articles 344 1 and 351, there are 22 languages are included in the list in this eighth schedule as the official language of the country. And there are Assamese, Bengali, Bodo, Dogri, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Kashmiri, Konkani, Maithili, Malayalam, Manipuri, Marathi, Nepali, Oriya, Punjabi, Sanskrit, Santali, Sindhi, Tamil, Telugu and Urdu.

The sequencing of these languages has no hierarchical reasoning. It is purely alphabetical, so these languages appear in alphabetical order and the order of appearance does not convey any specific hierarchy and preference, which we have to keep in mind.

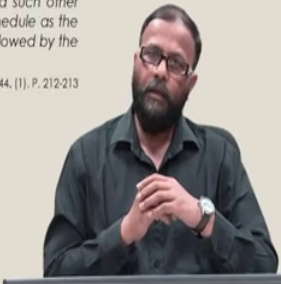
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◦ It was conceived that all the languages included in the list would qualify for the representation on the Official Language Commission and they would be the enriching sources for strengthening Hindi.

◦ The President shall, at the expiration of five years from the commencement of this Constitution and thereafter at the expiration of ten years from such commencement, by order constitute a Commission which shall consist of a Chairman and such other members representing the different languages specified in the Eighth Schedule as the President may appoint, and the order shall define the procedure to be followed by the Commission.

◦ Article 344, (1), P. 212-213




It was conceived that all the languages included in the list would qualify for the representation on official language commission and there would be enriching sources for strengthening Hindi. Article 344 Section 1 page 212 and 213, says, I quote, “the president shall at the expiration of five years from the commencement of this constitution and thereafter at the expiration of ten years from such commencement by order constitute a commission which shall consist of a chairman. And such other members representing the different languages specified in the 8th schedule as the president may appoint and the order shall define the procedure to be followed by the commission.”


It speaks about linguistic commission Article 344 1. It was believed when we adopted Hindi as our official language, Gujarati, Marathi, Bengali, Telugu, Tamil, and Kannada, so all other languages were striving to get the biggest share, and Hindi emerged as the winner as an official language. I do not want to get into the detail of constituent assembly debates but as a consequence of very long elaborate discussions and debates, a representation of other languages in this debate. The idea of an official language, not a national language was to promote and keep the diversity and pluri cultural society intact and avoid division.

It was decided that the languages which were also contesting for status and position were to be given recognition to encourage them to be represented and get their share. Hence, the eighth schedule was devised, and we had 14 languages initially included in the list. And new languages were added to the list as per the constitutional provision which allows new applicants to be added to the existing list. It takes into consideration the demand and the size of the population and representation which is seeking representation as an official language.

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- Originally the list contained 14 languages besides Hindi.
- In the subsequent amendments 7<sup>th</sup> Amendment in 1956, 21<sup>st</sup> Amendment in 1967, 71<sup>st</sup> Amendment in 1992, and 92<sup>nd</sup> in 2003 eight more languages were added to the list, which are
  - Sindhi, added in 1967 by 21<sup>st</sup> Constitutional Amendment Act;
  - Konkani, Manipuri and Nepali were added in 1992 by 71<sup>st</sup> Constitutional Amendment Act; and
  - Bodo, Dogri, Maithili and Santali were added in 2003 by 92<sup>nd</sup> Constitutional Amendment Act.




Originally in 1950, when the Constitution of India was enacted on 26 January, the 8th schedule contained, the list contained 14 languages and in the subsequent amendments, for example, the 7th amendment in 1956, and 21st amendment in 1967 and the 71st amendment in 1992, and 92nd amendment is 2003, 8 more languages were added and today we have 14 plus 8, 22 languages.

Sindhi was added in 1967 by the 21st Constitutional Amendment Act, then Konkani, Manipuri, and Nepali were added in 1992 by the 71st Constitutional Amendment Act and Bodo, Dogri, Maithili, and Santali were added in 2003 by 92nd Amendment Act.

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- The inclusion of languages in the Eighth Schedule mandated the Government of India to promote Hindi along with other languages included in the list as Official Languages. The Official Language Resolution 1968 states:
  - **"WHEREAS** under article 343 of the Constitution, Hindi shall be the official language of the Union, and under article 351 thereof it is the duty of the Union to promote the spread of the Hindi Language and to develop it so that it may serve as a medium of expression for all the elements of the composite culture of India;
- Thus, it becomes imperative for the Government of India to work towards promotion and development of the languages listed in the Eighth Schedule.





Why there is a need to be enlisted in this schedule? Why do languages or speakers of any particular language or representation strive to be listed in the 8th schedule?

We need to understand the reason why this aspiration is to be listed in the 8th schedule, why all these languages are competing to be enlisted, the languages which are left out are also striving and fighting to be included.


There must be some special status, provision or benefit of being included in the list right? What is that?

The inclusion of languages in the 8th schedule mandates the government of India to promote Hindi along with other languages included in the list as official languages and if you look at the resolution of the official language, 1968. It says, I quote, “whereas under Article 343 of the constitution Hindi shall be the official language of the union and under Article 351 thereof it is the duty of the union to promote the spread of the Hindi language and to develop it so that it may serve as a medium of expression for all the elements of the composite culture of India.”

Thus, it becomes imperative for the government of India to work towards the promotion and development of languages listed in the eighth schedule. So for institutional promotion, for getting better and being patronized, for getting support, the resources to flourish, the other languages which are not included in the eighth schedule are striving to be included in the list because it mandates the state government and the central government to promote and use these languages in official purposes through financial and institutional support.

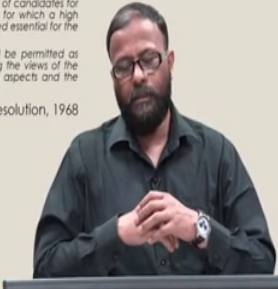
Hence, all these languages which were not included in the 8th schedule are striving to be included, as we have seen through a lot of agitations, demands and demonstrations.

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- The importance of the Eighth Schedule also gets underlined as it offers equal opportunity to the speakers of other languages listed in the Schedule as the 1968 Resolution mandates the same.
- "... AND WHEREAS it is necessary to ensure that the just claims and interest of people belonging to different parts of the country in regard to the public services of the Union are fully safeguarded:
- This House resolves –
  - that compulsory knowledge of either Hindi or English shall be required at the stage of selection of candidates for recruitment to the Union services or posts except in respect of any special services or posts for which a high standard of knowledge of English alone or Hindi alone, or both, as the case may be, is considered essential for the satisfactory performance of the duties of any such service or post; and
  - that all the languages included in the Eighth Schedule to the Constitution and English shall be permitted as alternative media for the All India and higher Central Services examinations after ascertaining the views of the Union Public Service Commission on the future scheme of the examinations, the procedural aspects and the timings."


◦ Excerpts from The Official Language Resolution, 1968



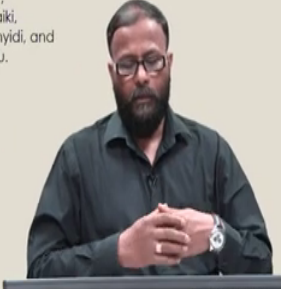
The Eighth schedule also underlines equal opportunity to the speakers of other languages other than Hindi as mandated by the 1968 resolution. I will read some excerpts for you from the official language reservation, 1968 resolution, I quote, “And whereas it is necessary to ensure that just claims and interests of people belonging to different parts of the country in regard to the public services of the union are fully safeguarded. This house resolves that compulsory knowledge of either Hindi or English shall be required at the stage of selection of candidates for recruitment to the union services or posts except in respect of any special services or post for which a high standard of knowledge of English alone or Hindi alone or both as the case may be, it is considered essential for the satisfactory performance of the duties of any such services or post. This house resolves that all the languages included in the 8th schedule to the constitution and English shall be permitted as alternative media for all India higher central services examinations after ascertaining the views of the Union Public Service Commission on the future scheme of examinations the procedural aspects and the timings,” I unquote.

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This is the reason that has fuelled demands for inclusion of more languages to the Eighth Schedule and 'at present, there are demands for inclusion of 38 more languages in the Eighth Schedule to the Constitution'. These languages include:



(1) Angika,	(11) Garhwali (Pahari),	(21) Kumaoni	(31) Pahari
(2) Banjara,	(12) Gondi,	(Pahari),	(Himachali),
(3) Bazika,	(13) Gujjar/Gujjari,	(22) Kurak,	(32) Pali,
(4) Bhojpuri,	(14) Ho,	(23) Kurmai,	(33) Rajasthani,
(5) Bhoti,	(15) Kachachhi,	(24) Lepcha,	(34)
(6) Bhotia,	(16) Kamtapuri,	(25) Limbu,	Sambalpuri/Kosali,
(7) Bundelkhandi	(17) Karbi,	(26) Mizo (Lushai),	(35) Shaurseni
(8) Chhattisgarhi,	(18) Khasi,	(27) Magahi,	(Prakrit),
(9) Dhatki,	(19) Kodava (Coorg),	(28) Mundari,	(36) Seraiki,
(10) English,	(20) Kok Barak,	(29) Nagpuri,	(37) Tenyidi, and
		(30) Nicobarese,	(38) Tulu.



Now, do you understand why other languages are striving to get included in this eighth schedule? Because the eighth schedule safeguards the interest of speakers of those languages who are included, through education and employment opportunities. The languages included in the list get institutional support, get promotional schemes and a wider spectrum to be used for official administration purposes.

Therefore other language speakers are also striving, agitating, demonstrating, demanding constitutional status and representation, and demanding greater inclusion. And this has fueled demands for the inclusion of more languages to the 8th schedule and at present, if you look at the government of India records, there are demands for the inclusion of 38 more languages.



So, in addition to 22 languages that are already there in the 8th schedule, 38 languages are demanding to be included in the list and these languages include Angika, spoken in parts of Bihar, Banjara, Bazika, Bhojpuri, Bhoti, Bhotia, Bundelkhandi, Chhattisgarhi, Dhatki, English, Garhwali or you can call Pahari, Gondi, Gujjar or you can call Gujjari, Ho, Kachachhi, Kamtapuri, Karbi, Khasi, Kodava or Coorg, also known as Coorg.

Kok Barak, Kumaoni, Kurak, Kurmai, Lepcha, Limbu, Mizo, it is also called Lushai, Maghi, Mundari, Nagpuri, Nicobarese, Himachali, Pali, Rajasthani, Sambalpuri or Kosali, Shaurseni or Prakrit, Seraiki, Tenyidi, and Tulu. So, these are 38 languages which are demanding their inclusion in the eighth schedule.

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Now, I hope you all understood the importance of the eighth schedule.

It is not just an important one but a very beautiful novel provision given by our constituent assembly which decided to allow multilingualism in our official deliberations and education and employment, so the languages which are included get institutional support, mandatory support from both, state government and central government for their growth.

And the languages which are left out and hundreds of dialects and languages that aspire, the 38 languages that are currently looking for official status, serve as a roadmap and hope for equal participation and representation in the governance.

Therefore we need to understand that the 8th schedule is an acknowledgement of the fact that India is a multicultural, pluricultural, multilingual country and even the state or the nation-state gives equal opportunity, and state-sponsored support to grow and flourish.

The constitution mandates the government to support these languages and we have devised constitutional provisions in such a way that in future we will have more languages listed in the eighth schedule and more languages in which the official works will be carried out, be it education, parliamentary affairs, state assemblies, lower courts, high courts and other formal domains. We will be able to see these languages present, growing and flourishing. So, thank you very much for watching.