


Fundamental Concepts in Sociolinguistics
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Language and Educational Policy

Welcome to class. Today, we are going to talk about language, and its role in education policy of India. Why this topic is so important, you will understand during this talk, in this lecture that India is a multilingual country. The linguistic ecology of India is so rich and so diverse that language becomes a prime factor in framing any such policy, which has implications for education Pan India. So, language remains a very crucial area where all these policies have a very clearly stated position.

It is also important because the ontogenesis of language as Halliday says, is the ontogenesis of learning itself. So, language plays a very crucial role in specifically early education. So, today we are going to look at the language policy adopted within the overall education policy of India post independent India. And we have three policy documents which are which are very crucial to understand the whole scenario.

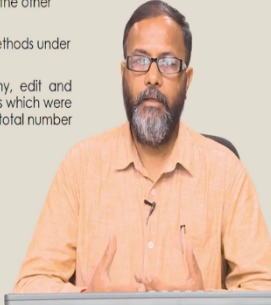
The National Policy on Education 1968, the National Policy on Education 1986, Plan of Action 1992, and recently announced stated position in National Education Policy 2022. So, these are the frameworks in which we can understand the language policy within the overall frame of education policy of India. The topic is very large shoes, but I will focus only on the language aspects of these policies. The policy on language in these policies frameworks, and I will be very brief in explaining the multilingual context, the need for such a specific focus on language and the stated position of these frameworks pertaining to language policy.

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Multilingual Character of India: Census Data

- The 1961 Census returned 1652 mother tongues and classified them under 193 languages.
- In the 1961 Census, 91% of the population spoke one of the fifteen scheduled languages and this number rose to 95.58% in the 1981 Census.
- In the 1991 Census, the raw returns of the mother tongues came to 10,400. These 10,400 raw returns were subjected to thorough scrutiny. This resulted in 1576 rationalized mother tongues, and 1796 names, which were treated as unclassified and relegated to the other mother tongues category.
- The 1576 rationalized mother tongues were regrouped following the linguistic methods under 114 languages
- Census 2011 saw 19569 raw returns, subjected to thorough linguistic scrutiny, edit and rationalization. This resulted in 1369 rationalized mother tongues and 1474 names which were treated as 'unclassified' and relegated to 'other' mother tongue category. The total number of languages arrived at is 121.



Let us understand the multilingual character of India. First, I will go by this official data, the Census of India data, and how it depicts and portrays a multilingual diverse ecology of India, and then we will also move to quickly, certain other data sources and how they predict and calculate the numbers of languages in this country.

We will also see a variation in numbers of languages, mother tongues varieties used in the country, which differ from Census to Census. Like 1961 gives you another data, 1981 gives you the data and 1991 gives you another data 2001 gives you the data and 2011 the latest Census gives you another data. So, why these variations in numbers? That is also a point of discussion. But if you could watch the video that we did on mother tongues, you can know more about it. For now, let us understand, what is the picture of overall multilingual ecology of India.

In 1961 Census we find 1652 mother tongues and classified them under 193 languages. In the 1961 Census 91 percent of the population spoke one of the languages scheduled in the Eight Schedule of languages, so 15 official languages scheduled in the Eight Schedule of Constitution of India. For the details of the Eight Schedule, you can watch the video on Eight Schedule and that talks about constitutional provisions and as a statutory acknowledgement of multilingual fabric of India.

The 1991 Census, we have 10,400 raw returns, which were further classified into 1576 mother tongues, rationalized mother tongues. So, you can see the variation, 1652 mother tongues in 1961 Census, 1576 mother tongues in 1991 Census, and you have you know 114


languages. And then the Census 2011, which is the latest one saw 19,561 returns, as mother tongue, which were classified and rationalized to 1369 rationalize mother tongues. And it gives you data of 121 languages out of which 22 are listed in Eight Schedule and 99 non-scheduled languages.

Now, look at these figures. In each census we have a different figure of mother tongues where the different figure of total number of languages spoken the country. So, 193 languages in 61 Census, 114 languages, 114, 114 languages in 91 Census, and here we have 121 in 2011 Census. Look at the variation. Total number of languages official data says, 193 languages in 61, in 91 it comes down to 114, and then 2011 it goes up to 121, and this number varies according to the census.

So, this is interesting. We all know that India has four major language families Indo-Aryan language families, which is the largest family. And according to 2011 census 78 percent, above 70 percent of the total population speaks one of the languages listed in Indo-Aryan family. You can watch the video on linguistic diversity of India, and you can understand in detail about languages of India.


Then, second language or largest language family is, Dravidian language family. Next is, Austro-Asiatic and Tibeto-Burman. So, there are four major language families. So, look at the linguistic diversity a multilingual country that speaks in many languages and writes in many scripts.

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Other Sources:

- Sir George Grierson's twelve-volume Linguistic Survey of India (1903-1923) – material for which was collected in the last decade of the 19th century, had identified 179 languages and 544 dialects.
- One of the early Census reports also showed 188 languages and 49 dialects (1921 census)
- People's Language Survey of India, carried out between 2010 and 2013, identifies 780 languages.
- Ethnologue, a global database, says in its 2019 report that there are 453 living languages in India, out of 7,111 in the world.
- India has the fourth highest number of languages in the world, according to that report, with Papua New Guinea topping the list with 840.



And if you look at yet another source of data, if you look at another source of data, early reference that we find is a very comprehensive survey done by Sir George Grierson that started in 1903 and ended in 1923, so 20 years of span of time he collected data and did a very comprehensive survey Pan India. And he came up with 179 languages and 544 dialects, that is a figure he gives. One of the early references. And then we have a Census report of 1921, that gives us 188 languages and 49 dialects.

So, this shows that whether it is official or unofficial data, the total number of languages is yet not known. Because the question of language, the labels assigned by the speakers to their mother tongue, it varies, and it is difficult to arrive at a single digit or a single figure that actually talks about number of languages.

This is a fluid situation. It is a very complex and fluid, and every Census gives you a different data. That is the complexity and diversity. Another source people's Language Survey Linguistic Survey of India that carried out between 2010 and 2013 identifies 780 languages, yet another data source, which is a global data source Ethnologue that says in 2019, the latest data, it says, there are 453 living languages in India, out of 7111 live language, living languages in the world.

Why I am giving you all this data is to make you sensitive towards the fact that actually mathematical counting of languages is very difficult. The question of language is so emotional, so sensitive, it pertains to the construction of identity of it as a speaker, linguistic identity of the speaker.

It refers to, it explains the linguistic elegance and ideological positions taken by speakers of these languages. If you look at the mother tongue returns, what you have in 10,400 in 1991 Census that goes up to 19,569 in 2011, Census. And that talks about the assertion, linguistic identity, assertion of linguistic identity by the speakers, so that is a complex scenario.

And in this such a complex, multilingual, multicultural, multi-ethnicity and diverse society called India, how difficult it could have been to address these questions and come up with a single framework or a comprehensive framework that accommodates the aspirations of the speakers of these languages and to come up with a single education policy. That is why the role of language, the issue of language becomes so crucial in all these education policies, and their implementations. And that is why we have chosen this topic to talk about.

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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 Daulat Singh Kothari. He was the then chairman of University Grants Commission (UGC).
- Kothari Commission was the sixth commission in post-independent India.
- 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.

NPTEL


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Now, the first breakthrough that we see in this context is the Kothari Commission constituted on fourteenth July 1964 and on twenty ninth June 1966, Kothari Commission was dissolved after submitting the recommendations. Daulat Singh Kothari was the chairperson of University Grants Commission, and this commission is named after his surname Kothari Commission.

The Kothari Commission was the sixth commission constituted post independent India, and this is credited for giving a three-language formula. It is also known as trilingual formula, and you can know more about it, you can understand more about it when you watch the video on trilingual formula. The intended motive to promote a language of a Southern state in Hindi states these three-language formula intended to promote Southern languages to known Southern language like North states like Hindi speaking states, and promote Hindi language to non-Hindi states.

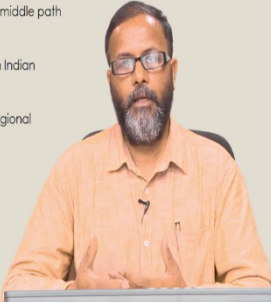
It intended to promote Hindi, English and a regional language in non-Hindi speaking states and the Kothari Commission recommended promoting regional languages, Sanskrit as well as international languages, preferably, English in early education system. So, it is the basis, the recommendations of Kothari Commission became the basis for coming up with language policy in the overall framework of education policy of India. And mind you the dates 1966 this commission submitted its report.

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Three Language Formula

- 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.




Now, quickly going through this three-language formula. As you can see, the multilingual character of the country it was difficult to maintain uniformity across India in education. Also, this diversity posed a lot of challenge in maintaining central and provincial governments' communication, because there was no let down procedure.

Of course, official language acts and subsequent amendments cleared the way, but as far as education is concerned, it was a huge task. A task commission through this three-language formula made a breakthrough to work on and to accommodate the aspirations of speakers of other languages.


Not to mention, Hindi was voted as official language of India, English as associate official language of India, and the policy was adopted on twenty sixth January 1950, when we adopted our Constitution. And if you want to know more about it, you can go to the video of official languages of India, and you can know more about it.

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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

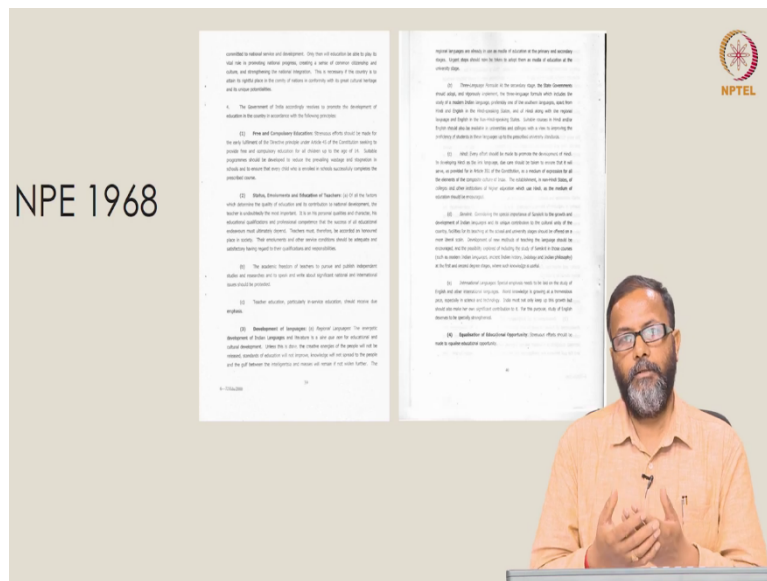


So, what was the implicit functions motive of this three-language formula? So, this three-language formula recommended by Kothari Commission sought to serve purposes like accommodating group identity, number 2, affirming national unity and increasing administrative efficiency. So, there were three motivating factors behind suggesting trilingual formula.

So, Kothari Commission report becomes a breakthrough and basis of formulating the education policy of India, so national policy on education 1968. And as far as the policy on language is concerned, it draws completely from this three-language formula where a child was subjected learn three languages, one is language Hindi, and international language English, and choices like Sanskrit as classical languages.

The motive was to promote Hindi in non-Hindi speaking states and a regional language in Hindi speaking states. So, this three-language formula became a basis for framing 1968 national policy on education framework.

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If you look at the NPE 1968, you can see, a detail of Kothari Commission recommendation. On page number 39, 4.3, which talks about development of language or languages. I would not read the entire thing, but you can find it available freely on internet.

However, if you watch the video of trilingual formula, you can understand the intent of this recommendation and its inclusion in NPE National Policy on Education 1968. So, about regional languages, it says, I quote, the energetic development of Indian languages and literature is a sinecure known for educational and cultural development.

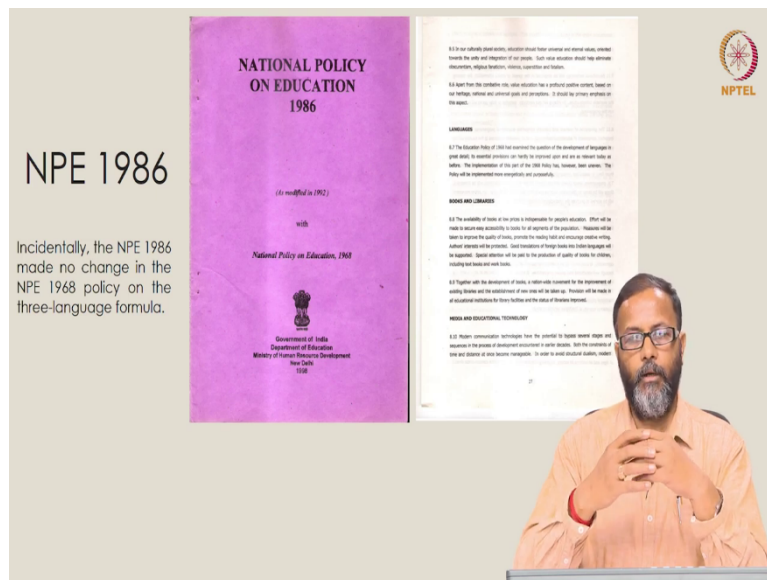
Unless this is done, the creative energies of the people will not be released. Standards of education will not improve, knowledge will not spread to the people, and the gulf between the intelligencia and masses will remain if it widens further. If not widens I am sorry further. The regional languages are already in use as media of education at the primary and secondary stages. Urgent steps should now be taken to adopt them as media of education at the university level. The university stage it says.

In 4.3 B, it says, three-language formula at the secondary stage their state governments should adopt and vigorously implement the three-language formula, which includes the study of modern Indian language, preferably, one of the Southern languages apart from Hindi and English in the Hindi speaking states, and of Hindi along with the original language and English in non-Hindi stage.

Suitable courses in Hindi and or English should also be available in universities and colleges with a view to improve the proficiency of students in these languages up to prescribe

university standards. And it talks about Hindi, it talks about Sanskrit, it talks about international language preferably English, on page 40. So, in NPE 1968 from 4.3, Section 4.3, a b, c d, e 5 points talk about language policy in education. And you can see, very clearly and comprehensively, it adopts Kothari Commissioned report and suggestions of three-language formula in this education policy framework.

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Now, the next important policy framework comes up in 1986, which is called NPE 1986 National Policy on Education 86. And if you can see, page number 27, 8.7, point number 8.7, which talks about languages. And a very small reference to policy on language. And why? Because the NPE 1986 made no changes in the NPE 1968 language policy framework, and it adopted three-language formula verbatim without any change.

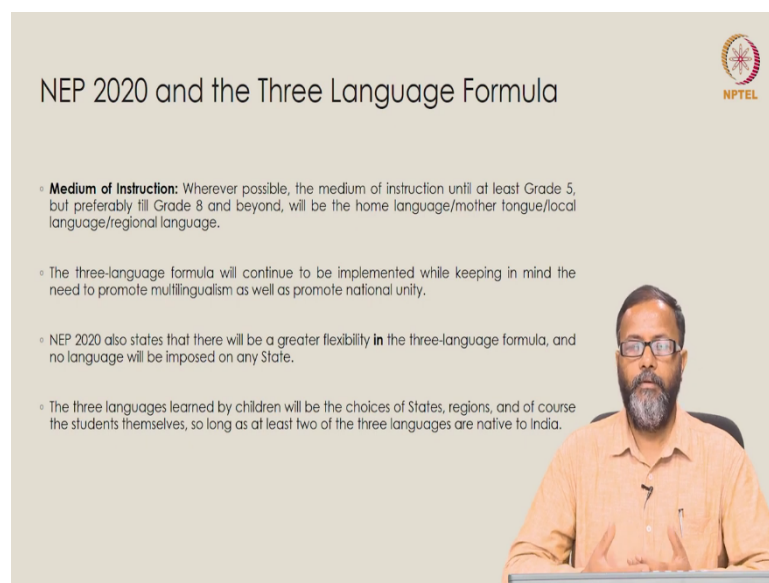
And that is why you have just two sentences in this column, and I quote from there, and read for you. It is there on the screen, I read for you. The education policy of 1968 had examined the question of development of languages in great detail. Its essential provisions can hardly be improved upon, and are as relevant today as before. The implementation of this part of 1968 policy has, however, been uneven. The policy will be implemented more energetically and purposefully. It ends here unquote.

So, in 86 policy framework, what we see, the original Kothari Commissioned report adopted completely in 1968 policy, remains unchanged and verbatim repeated with a resolve to implement it. Of course, it highlights the lacunas and flaws in implementation policy remains the same, only it talks about purposeful and energetic implementation of this policy.

So, till 1986, we find no change in the language policy, and it continues the way it was recommended in 66 by Kothari Commission, adopted in 68 policy framework and repeated in 1986 framework. Till 2020, National Education Policy the name changed, it was National Policy on Education in the two earlier framework 68, 86 in third policy document what we see and little change in the name and it is called, now it is called, National Education Policy. And this is a minor change.

However, even this policy document 2020, does not make major change in three-language formula. And what it talks about, as far as language is concerned, let us see.

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The slide features a title 'NEP 2020 and the Three Language Formula' at the top left and the NPTEL logo at the top right. Below the title are four bullet points. On the right side of the slide, there is a video inset showing a man with a beard and glasses, wearing an orange shirt, speaking.

- **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 2020 also states 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.

So, NEP 2020, and how it looks at three language formula, and what is the language policy. In this policy framework of education, it says, wherever possible, the medium of instruction until at least grade 5, but preferably till grade 8 and beyond. So, what does it say about medium of instruction? It says, I quote, 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 or regional language.

So, it talks about mother tongue education, and gives you the levels until grade 5 it makes it mandatory, till grade 8 it should be used preferably and beyond it should be at the choice of the learners. Education is the state subject, so each state in the country has no right to frame and implement these policies. Same rules and implement these policies because education is state policy.

So, this policy of framework becomes a guideline for them. It says further, I quote, 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, alike 86 documents this document also talks about willful, purposeful and energetic implementation of three-language formula.

NEP 2020 also states that, there will be a greater flexibility in the three-language formula and no language will be imposed on any state. So, a little variation here from the two earlier frameworks, where it was clearly stated Hindi in non-Hindi states and a regional language preferably Southern language in Hindi speaking states.

Here, in order to avoid political conflicts and unrest, this policy framework makes it open and flexible, saying, that NEP 2020 will not impose a particular language on any state. So, states are free to maintain three-language fabric formula, the original intent of the formula, however, they are free to determine and decide like Tamil Nadu has only two languages, Hindi, English and Tamil.

So, different states have, majority of the states have these three-language formula implemented competing aspirate and later aspirate, however, Tamil Nadu is an exception. So, it gives you greater flexibility in implementing this three-language formula in a particular state.

And the three-languages it further clarifies the three languages learned by children will be the choice of states' regions' and of course, the students themselves solong, as at least two of them are native to India. So out of three, two languages should be native languages of India and of course, one can be any language preferably international language, English and any other European language.

What do we understand out of these policy frameworks? That the question of language is very sensitive and crucial. In this multilingual diverse society like India, it is difficult to arrive at a uniform policy. And this three-language formula suggested and recommended by Kothari Commission in 1966 continues to dominate and give guidance, as far as, language policy is concerned. And what we would see in 1968 policy framework in 1986 policy framework and in 2020 framework, it more or less remains the same and three-language formula is still practiced till-date.

If you want to know more about three-language formula and the actual practice communication between central government and state governments, domain of use and the regulations framed for implementation of this three-language formula plus Hindi, as official language, English as it should official language and how did it become instrumental in promoting national unity.

You should watch our lecture our video on official languages, three-language formula and linguistic diversity of India. These three videos will tell you more about it. And I hope that now, you become clear about the language policy in three most important policy frameworks of education in the country. This is it for now. We will continue our lecture on related themes in forthcoming videos. Thank you very much.