


Fundamental Concepts in Sociolinguistics
Professor. Dr. Om Prakash
School of Humanities and Social Sciences
Gautam Buddha University, Greater Noida
English in India


Welcome to class. Today, we are going to talk about English in India. In this discussion we will survey the journey of English in India, right from entering this subcontinent as the language of traders and merchants to becoming the language of powerful colonisers, and finally, as the language of the common Indian, penetrating deeply in all walks of our life. So, this journey of English is phenomenal, and we are going to survey the journey today in this talk.

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English in India

- The journey of English from entering Indian subcontinent as a foreign language to becoming the second language to the majority of the educated population in almost four centuries is extraordinary.
- Post 1991, globalization ushered a new era of liberalization of Indian economy, which further extended the reach and penetration of English in India.
- English has played a very significant role at various levels of modernization processes, and has consequently become instrumental in reconstructing identity in the discursive postmodern world.
- English occupies a very significant space and offers economic, social, and political advantages to its speakers in linguistically diverse country like India.




So, the journey of English from entering the Indian subcontinent as a foreign language to becoming the second language to most educated Indians in almost four centuries is extraordinary. And post-1991, when India opened its frontiers to global order, and when we adopted liberal policies in trade and commerce that allowed multinational corporations in India and Indian borders were opened, its status was assured.

So, this globalisation, this process of globalisation ushered a new era of liberalisation in the Indian economy, which further extended the outreach and deepened the penetration of the language to almost all corners of the country. Across all classes and across all regions, English negotiated with all the other Indian languages and settled in the university ecology of India.


English has played a very significant role at various levels of modernization processes and has consequently become instrumental in restructuring our identities in this distinctive postmodern world, and we will shortly understand what I mean by that. English occupies a very significant space in the multilingual ecology of India, and offers economic, social and political advantages to its speakers in a linguistically diverse country.

It enjoys supremacy, a high prestige value and no linguistic tension with any of the Indian languages. The reasons may be attributed to our colonial history, but the fact is that English has negotiated with other Indian languages, interacted with other Indian languages, and penetrated so deeply that it enjoys primacy and it does not stand in opposition to any of the languages of India. And we, as Indians, have accepted English as the language of upward social mobility. And this is what makes the roots of English in India deeper.

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- English entered this subcontinent with the British merchants as a language of foreign traders. The contact between English and Indian languages began with two ways mixing of the codes to suit the needs of the trade. With growth of the political and financial control of the East India Company in India, English expanded its outreach and penetration.
- The first half of the 19th century witnessed a consolidation of political power and socio-economic control of English as it gradually replaced Persian as the language of administration, trade and education.
- While tracing the history of English in colonial India we are reminded of the arrogant entries of Lord Macaulay's Minute on 02 February 1835, which clearly stated the purpose of English language in the Company Raj in India. The excerpts from the famous minutes read as:
...We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons. Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect...



In the first half of the nineteenth century, it witnessed the consolidation of political power, and socioeconomic control of English, as it gradually replaced Persian, as language of administration, trade and education. If you look at pre-British India, Persian was the court language and before that, of course, Sanskrit and other Indian languages, but Persian replaced all those languages in court, administration, and governance.

And when Britishers came in the middle of the nineteenth century, we saw a great shift and tightening grip of the company, the British East India Company on Indian territories and continuing, acquiring different princely states, controlling different princely states and these

merchants and the British traders turned this company into a political force. The colonial force occupied a major vast majority of the land of India.

And we all remember how in the 30s English was introduced to education, the Indian education system, and the arrogant entries of Lord Macaulay of 1835, how he looks at the Indian linguistic trajectory, and how he superimposes English on it. There were so many demeaning and arrogant entries in the Minutes of Macaulay, but it was very powerful and widely quoted to understand the intent and the plan of that commission.


So, he says, on second February 1835, he released the minutes popularly known as Macaulay's Minutes, and he stated the intent of the whole exercise of introducing English to the Indian education system, overall changing the Indian education system and making it a more European-like system. I quote from there, he says, "we must at present do our best to form a class, who may be interpreters between us and the millions who we govern".

There was a discussion that in 1823 when English was introduced in the education system, we had so many vernacular schools, madrassas, and what they called Hindu centres of learning, and they wanted to make them English centres of learning. And there was a question, this population size was so big and resources were so limited, but Macaulay's arrogant entries and Macaulay's claims in the minutes showed the deep-seated intent of the colonisers in introducing English and making the Indian education system like the European education system.


So, we say that we cannot teach everyone English given such a huge population. So, what can we do? We can teach some of them, and then leave the millions on the mercy of these people who will be Indian in blood and flesh and British in taste, morality and principles. So, he says, we must at present do our best to form a class, who may be interpreters between us and millions, whom we govern.

A class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English, in taste, in opinions, in morals and in intellect. So, this class will work as an intermediary class, which will connect us as rulers and millions of Indians, as our subjects whom we govern. This was the intent. And this talks about the intent of British laws in implementing English curriculum and English system of learning in early education, higher education and overall, replacing the Indian indigenous education system. And this is how English enters into the formal domain of education and training.

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- Macaulay's words stand true to their intent partially, as it did create a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour; however, it maintained Indianness in their taste, in their opinions, morals and intellect.
- Today English enjoys constitutional protection, executive functionality, educational promotion, social approval, and is instrumental in capturing cultural imagination in India.
- For the last 200 years English has been negotiating with Indian languages with its conflicting togetherness.
- It happens because English in India with other languages 'stands in an opposing or paradoxical domain relation' and their mixing has resulted into 'the reconciliation of the two domains' (Bhatia, 2014: 41).




Macaulay's words stand true to their intent partially, as it did create a class of Indians who looked like Indians in blood and flesh. However, in due course of time, this class maintained Indianness in their taste and in their opinions, morals and intellect. So, now we have an educated elite Indian class, which is very fluent in English, and enjoys sociopolitical supremacy.

Today, English enjoys constitutional protection, executive functioning functionality, educational promotion, social approval and is instrumental in capturing cultural imagination in India. And for the last 200 years, English has been negotiating within Indian languages with its conflicting togetherness.

So, interestingly, language of the colonisers became the language of the masses and post-independence we continue in English accepting English, as a link language, as a lingua franca pan-India, across all nooks and corners of India, as a link language to communicate. This language marks our desperate desire to move upward in social hierarchy. This language plays a role of an instrument: it is instrumental for us in now climbing the ladders of social mobility.

And it happens because English in India stands in an oppositional or paradoxical domain relation with other languages, and their mixing has resulted in the reconciliation of the two domains: Tej Bhatia, wrote in 2014.

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English in Language Policy of India

English was the only language without any identity conflict and linguistic tension with a wider pan India presence as lingua franca for the successor government. The declaration of Hindi as an official language of the Union was received with violent protests in the southern parts of India. This declaration being perceived as hegemonic dominance of the north forced the policy makers to retain English as an associate official language for a period of fifteen years, however it did not sustain the ground and in 1963 a bill named English Language Amendment Bill was enacted to make English an associate language 'until such time as all non-Hindi States had agreed to its being dropped'.

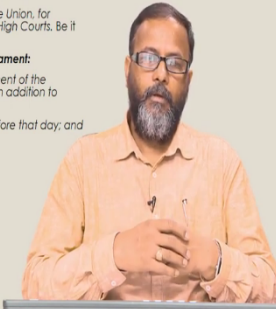
The Official Language ACT, 1963, as amended, 1967, Act No. 19 of 1963, on 10th May 1963 states as:

An Act to provide for the languages which may be used for the official purpose of the Union, for transaction of business in Parliament, for Central and State Acts and for certain purpose in High Courts. Be it enacted by the Parliament in the Fourteenth Year of the Republic of India as follows:-

Continuance of English language for official purposes of the Union and for use in Parliament:

... Notwithstanding the expiration of the period of fifteen years from the commencement of the Constitution, the English language may, as from the appointed day, continue to be used, in addition to Hindi...

... For all the official purpose of the Union for which it was being used immediately before that day; and for the transaction of business in Parliament.



If you look at English in the policy framework, the language policy framework of the country you should watch the video that we did on the official languages of India that talks in detail about all these things, how English became an associate official language. But just to bring that perspective here to understand, we all understand that Hindi was adopted as official language by the Constituent Assembly, and on twenty sixth January 1950 we adopted Hindi as our official language. Not a national language, we have to be very clear about it.

So, a window period of 15 years was given to Hindi, to replace English completely and it was resolved that English will continue, as long as it is needed. But as the time nearing the 15 years in window period was nearing, we saw a violent protest, specifically in Madras Presidency and spreading over all the non-Hindi speaking states to compete with Hindi. And they looked at Hindi as a hegemonic spread.


And we see Hindi protests in non-Hindi speaking states led by the Madras Presidency. And then, before 1965, the period that was designed for Hindi to replace English completely as an official language, the Official Language Act 1963, was amended in 1967. Act Number 19 of 1963, on 10th May 1963 states it as “an act to provide for the language which may be used for the official purpose of the Union, for transaction of business in Parliament, for Central and State acts and for certain purposes in High Courts”, which should be enacted by Parliament in the 14th year of Republic of India.

And it states the continuance of English language for official purpose for the Union and for use in Parliament notwithstanding the expiration of the period of 15 years from the

commencement of the constitution that is 1950, 26 January. The English language may as from the option appointed it continue to be used in addition to Hindi for all the official purposes of the union for which it was being used immediately before that day and for the transaction of business in Parliament.


So, this act enables English to continue, sine die, as an associated official language. So, English gets a constitutional protection, and constitutional promotion, and it deepened and consolidated the roots further.

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Journey English in India


- **1823**
English education was introduced in India.
The objectives were:
 - i) To popularize European culture and science among the Indian masses.
 - ii) To consolidate the position of the British Raj in India.
- **1835**
English was formally introduced as a medium of instruction. Macaulay's famous 'Minutes' set out the aim of this move. It was "to form a class of people who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour but English in taste, in opinions, in morals and in intellect".




Now, if you look at the journey of English in India, though it started as the language of traders and merchants, the year 1823 is very important. And why is it important? It is important because English education was introduced in India then, with two objectives. Number 1, to popularise European culture and science among the Indian masses and number 2, to consolidate the position of the British Raj in India. So, with these two objectives, the English education system was introduced to India in 1823. And this is how the formal introduction of English began.

In 1835, we all know, with the Macaulay's Minutes, English was formally introduced as a medium of instruction and Macaulay's famous minute set out the aim of this move. And you will understand the aim of the move that we talked about: to form a class of people who may be interpreters between us and the millions we govern and a class, which is Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals and in intellect.

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- **1857**
Universities were established in Madras (Chennai), Bombay (Mumbai) and Calcutta (Kolkata).
- **1869**
Lord Napier's Convocation address at Madras University spell out the objectives of European Education in India:
 - to give a new basis for national unity,
 - to give a better knowledge of India.
 - to enable self government.
 - to enable participation in the general, intellectual movement of the world.
- **1947**
Free India chose to retain English as long as it was needed.



Moving on, 1857 was another remarkable year when three universities modelled on European models were established in three metropolitan cities. One in Madras, erstwhile Madras, now Chennai, one in erstwhile Bombay, now, Mumbai and one in erstwhile Calcutta, now Kolkata. So, these three modern universities were established in three different cities.

In 1869, Lord Napier was invited, as the chief guest, to deliver a convocation at the Madras University, the newly established Madras University, and his convocation address spelt out the objectives of European education in India. And if you look at these objectives, they look very well-intended, but we know the political and ideological implications of it.

The first objective was to give a new basis for national unity, because the European mindset of our colonisers could not understand the multilingual, multicultural, plural, social way of Indian societies. The social way of living: they could not see that India has survived with all these languages through centuries.

So, multilingualism is a norm, not an exception. But they believed that, in order to have national integration and unity, we need to have one language and they saw English as being able to fulfil this need, given the linguistic diversity of the country. So, the first intent was to give a new basis for national unity.

Number 2, to give better knowledge to India. And if you recall they had a strong opinion about it, and Macaulay said that he knows the total trajectory of knowledge of Arabia and India. Arabia indicated knowledge in the Persian language, and for India it was in Sanskrit. He said that all the knowledge in these two languages could only be worth one shelf of books


in English. This is how he saw the knowledge trajectory and education system of India, and this 1835 commission report believed so deeply in this idea, that it discarded the indigenous trajectory of knowledge, and believed that India can be enlightened only through the European knowledge system.

Then, you should read the words self-government, governance, in quotes here, because he said that English education will enable self-governance. That means, they believed that English would educate and make the Indian population mature enough to take decisions on their own, and that no other language was capable of doing so. And the fourth objective states that the European model of education will enable common Indians to participate in the general intellectual movement of the world.

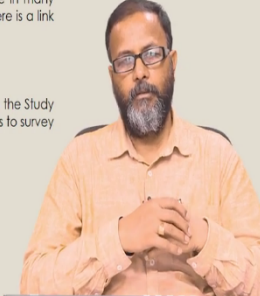
So, they saw English and European models of education, as an instrument, as a tool, to enlighten and empower Indians. This is what Lord Napier outlines in his convocation address at Madras University. And that spells out the intent of the whole endeavour. In 1947, we received freedom and the free and independent India chose English to continue as long as it was needed.

Later, there was no compulsion to do so, but because of certain political developments and certain ideological conflicts and perceptions, English continued even after we got independence in 1947. So, the free and independent sovereign India willfully chooses English to continue, as long as it was felt needed. And this is a history because we all know how this official language decision was taken, how Hindi was voted as the official language of the union, and how English was adopted as the associate official language of India.

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- **1948**
The Radhakrishnan Commission - free India's first education commission- was set up. It was also known as the University Education Commission. It was recommended that English should continue to be studied in high schools and universities
- **1958**
The Central Institute of English (CIE, later known as CIEFL) and now EFLU was set up. The objectives were to train teachers of English to produce teaching material and to improve the standards of English teaching in India.
- **1961**
Jawaharlal Nehru pointed out the need for a link language. He said, "the tendency of the regional language to become the medium for university education, though desirable in many ways, may well lead to the isolation of such universities from the rest of India, unless there is a link in the shape of an 'All-India' language."
- **1963**
The Regional Institute of English was set up in Bangalore. 1967 A Study Group Report on the Study of English in India was prepared by the Ministry of Education, Govt. of India. The aim was to survey the nature of the study of English in India.



In 1948, the Radhakrishnan Commission was constituted, which was free India's first education commission, and it was also known as the University Education Commission. It recommended that English should continue to be studied in high schools and universities. So, English gets a lot of promotions and support, institutional support not only in British India, but also post-independence. Radhakrishnan Commission or University Education Commission (the other name is University Education Commission) recommends English to continue, and at the level of high schools and higher education, that is what we still are doing.

In 1958, the Central Institute of English (CIE), which later became CIEFL—Central Institute of English and Foreign Language. And now, as we are talking in 2021, it has turned into the EFLU—English and Foreign Languages University. It was set up in 1958. The objectives of this new institution which was set up, were to train teachers of English to produce teaching material and to improve the standards of English teaching in India.


In 1961, the Prime Minister was Nehru. In 1961, Prime Minister Nehru pointed out the need for a linked language. He said, the tendency of the regional language to become the medium for university education, though desirable in many ways, may lead to isolation of such universities from the rest of India. Unless there is a link language, then there is a link in the shape of an all-India language. And the implied intent was English, as a link in the shape of an all-India linked language.

In 1963, the Regional Institute of English was set up in Bangalore, and in 1967, a group report on the study of English in India was prepared by the Ministry of Education, Government of India, and the aim was to survey the nature of the study of English in India.

So, if you see, we have just reached up to 1963, something that was started in 1823 for introducing English in the education system, promoting English in the education system continues till the 1960s, as far as we have traced.


So, it was not only British Raj, which consolidated the position of English, but also post-independent India, guided by multiple linguistic, political, and ideological compulsions continued with English, and year after year, it was consolidated further.

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1964-1966 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).
- Languages – The Commission recommended adopting a three-language formula at state levels.
- 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.




Then 1964: we all understand the Kothari Commission, which is a very significant commission apart from other British-time commissions. 1964 Kothari Commission is equally significant and important in the education system of India. The initiative that started in 1823, and formally established in 1835; through different commissions and committees, it got consolidated, and this continues in 1964 with the Kothari Commission.

Kothari Commission was formed on 14th July 1964, and it submitted its report on 29th June 1966. Regarding languages, Kothari Commission recommended adopting a three-language formula at state levels. And just to remind you, that education in independent India is a matter of state, not the union of states, nor the centre, but the state.


It intended to promote Hindi, English and original language in non-English speaking states. The Kothari Commission recommended promoting regional languages like Sanskrit, as well as international languages, preferably English. So even in the 1964 Kothari Commission Report which was submitted in 1966, we find a policy framework that does not rule out English but further consolidates its position in education: early education, mid-level education, and higher education.

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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

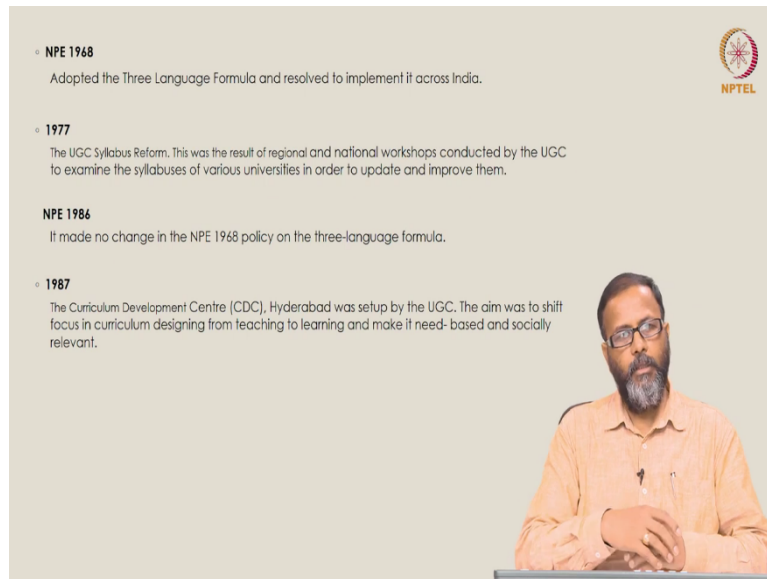


And what is the three-language formula? For the three-language formula or the trilingual formula, please watch the video that we did on the three-language formula for details. However, I will just give you a brief idea about this three-language formula. Kothari Commission felt that there was no uniform system of education in the country, and we had a multiplicity of languages and the claims of the speakers, which acted as a hindrance or barriers in arriving at a single uniform policy of education across India.

And the three-language formula was seen as a mediating mechanism to work out this linguistic tension in this multicultural and diverse multilingual India. So, it says, whereas Hindi was a general medium of instruction in the north, regional languages and English were the medium of instruction in other parts, and it led to chaos. And therefore, in order to uniformize the system in 1968, the New Education Policy was announced; formulated and announced. And it adopted the trilingual formula as suggested by the Kothari Commission.

And what was it? In Hindi speaking states the formula translated into learning Hindi, English and a modern Indian language, preferably, a South Indian language, a language from southern states. For the students of non-Hindi speaking states, this formula mandated lessons in Hindi, English and regional language. So, even in this formula, followed by the National Education Policy in 1968, English occupies a central position in our education system.

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The slide contains a list of educational reforms and a video inset of a speaker. The list includes:

- **NPE 1968**
Adopted the Three Language Formula and resolved to implement it across India.
- **1977**
The UGC Syllabus Reform. This was the result of regional and national workshops conducted by the UGC to examine the syllabuses of various universities in order to update and improve them.
- **NPE 1986**
It made no change in the NPE 1968 policy on the three-language formula.
- **1987**
The Curriculum Development Centre (CDC), Hyderabad was setup by the UGC. The aim was to shift focus in curriculum designing from teaching to learning and make it need-based and socially relevant.

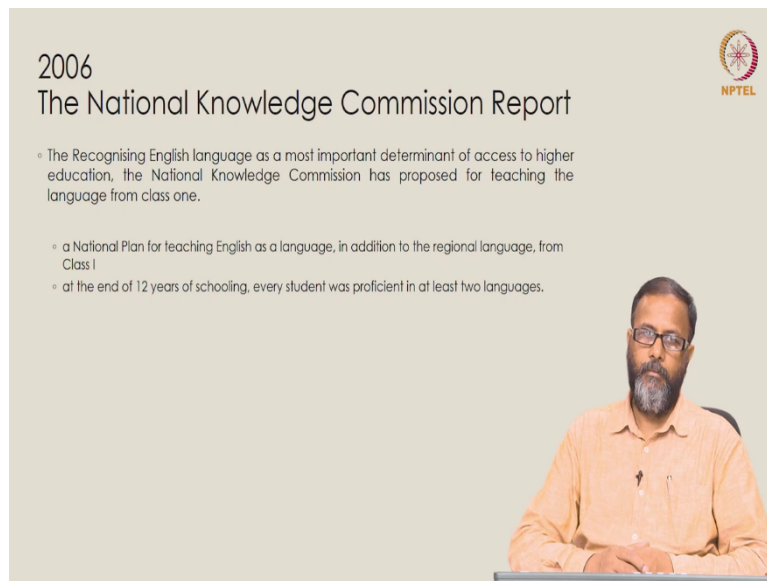
The video inset shows a man with a beard and glasses, wearing an orange shirt, speaking at a podium. The NPTEL logo is visible in the top right corner of the slide.

Interestingly in 1968, and in 1986, another educational policy was formulated and announced. But like 1968, the NEP, National Policy on Education 1986 also adopted the three-language formula verbatim, and it resolved to implement the provisions of this formula as adopted in 1968 in letter and spirit. So, hardly any change, or no change.

In 1977 the UGC Syllabus Reform happened, and this was a result of regional and national workshops conducted by the UGC to examine the syllabus of various universities in order to update and improve them. In 1987, the Curriculum Development Centre was established at Hyderabad by the UGC.

The aim was to shift focus in curriculum designing from teaching to learning and make it a need-based and socially relevant syllabus. So, all these exercises, initiatives, commissions committees, what we see, English, the permission of English, as a language of instruction and language of content gets consolidated which hardly changes.

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2006
The National Knowledge Commission Report

- The Recognising English language as a most important determinant of access to higher education, the National Knowledge Commission has proposed for teaching the language from class one.
- a National Plan for teaching English as a language, in addition to the regional language, from Class I
- at the end of 12 years of schooling, every student was proficient in at least two languages.

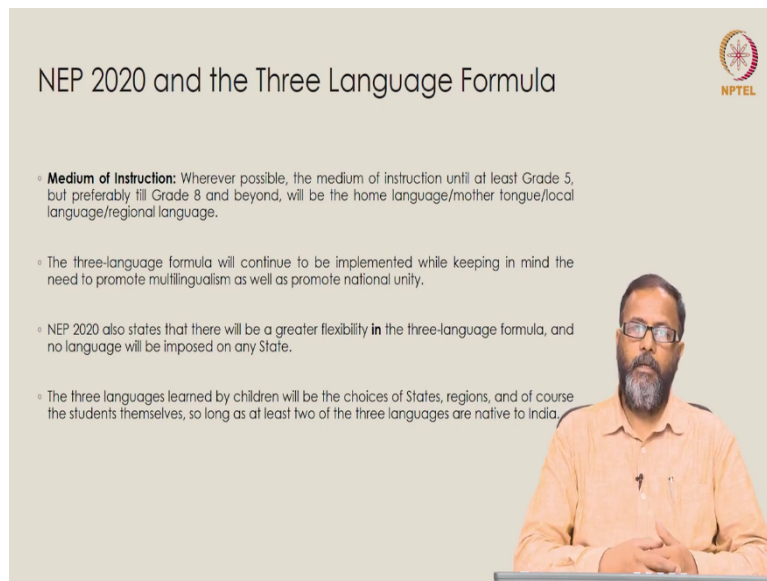
The slide features the NPTEL logo in the top right corner and a photograph of a man with a beard and glasses, wearing an orange shirt, sitting at a desk in the bottom right corner.

In 2006, The National Knowledge Commission Report was submitted, and this commission also emphasises the role of English in the Indian education system, and it recommends English language as a most important determinant of access to higher education. The National Knowledge Commission has proposed for teaching the language from class one.

Even at primary level, English was introduced at the primary level, which was not in the British period. But it was introduced at primary level and a national plan for teaching English as a language in addition to regional language from class one was put in place: these were the main recommendations pertaining to language.

And it was believed that at the end of 12 years of schooling, by the time you finish school and get into undergraduate mode, every student will be proficient, it was believed that you will be proficient in at least two languages. One, home language or regional language, and the other—English. And I am talking about 2006.

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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. A speaker is visible in the bottom right corner. The main content consists of four bullet points:

- **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.

As we are talking, now we have National Education Policy 2020. And National Education Policy 2020 does not make any major shift in language policy, and it maintains the three-language formula with a little tweak. So, medium of instruction, wherever possible this policy document says, wherever possible, the medium of instruction until at least grade 5, but preferably till grade 8 and beyond will be the home language or mother tongue or local language or regional language, whichever is applicable.


Maybe cases where your mother tongue may not be the language of the local government, maybe the case that your mother tongue may not be the language of the local population. So, we have multilayer identities, mother tongue, home language, local language, regional language so, that will be the medium of instruction. It advocates the medium of instruction to be the home language or mother tongue or other regional language until class 5 and it desires to continue on to the standard 8, class 8, and then it becomes optional.

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 greater flexibility in the three-language formula, and no language will be implemented in any state. And you will understand the ideological compulsion for announcing this. Otherwise in practice, no language has been imposed.


And Tamil Nadu for that matter, one of the states in India has only a two language formula, with Tamil and English. The three-languages learned by children will be the choices of states because education is a state subject, and the choices are with the regions, and of course, the

students themselves. So long as at least two languages out of the three are native to India. And still it gives third language to be, and opted out is English. So, we hardly see any shift in any of these policies. And English continues to have a central position, the entire language to develop the country of India.

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- Works by Kachru, B. 1978; Singh, 2012; Agnihotri, 2007; Bhatt & Mesthrie 2008; conclude that English, in India symbolises a reflection of modernity, higher social prestige and 'believed' to be instrumental in upward social mobility.
- Indian English has now developed as an independent language and certainly not as a deviant form of its 'original one'. The most important thing about English is that people have accepted it with opened arms and customized it to capture their socio-cultural imagination.



And many people have worked on Indian English, Indianness of English, Indigenization of English, and the claims about Indian English to be a distinct variety of English, not a subverted/perverted variety. Works by Kachru Brij Kachru (1978), Rajendra Singh (2012), Ramakant Agnihotri (2007), Rakesh Bhatt, and Mr. Rajan Mesthrie (2008), and many of these works conclude that English in India symbolises a reflection of modernity, higher social prestige and is believed to be instrumental in upward social mobility.

Indian English has now developed as an independent language and certainly not as a deviant form of its original one. And the most important thing about Indian English is that people have accepted it with their open arms and have customised it to capture the sociocultural imagination. English arrived in this country as a foreign language, now enjoys a local flavour, blended with local flavour and is almost like native to the linguistic ecology of India.

It has merged within the linguistic fabric in such a beautiful way, that now, it has become the most preferred second language of all educated Indians, and a vast majority of the population speaks English and understands English. The competence in English may vary. We do not have equal competence the way we have another language competence, but an average Indian

understands English so well, and the revolution in IT technology and digital technology has ensured penetration of English in Indian ecology even more deeper.

We will talk about the impact of globalisation and the IT revolution on English in India in the next video. We will also talk about certain grammatical characteristics of English, Indian English, and we will talk about the nature and character of Indian English in our next video. This is it for now. Thank you very much.