

Revisiting the Three-Language Formula (TLF) in India

**Towards sustainable multilingual
educational manoeuvres in the 21st
century**

Overview Language Policy in India

Review of policy documents (1948-2016)

Problematizing Three Language Formula (TLF)

Recommendations: Reorienting Three Language Formula

Language Policy in India



- Official language – Hindi (Federal Language)
- Co-official Language – English (for non-Hindi speaking states)
- Scheduled Languages – 22 Languages (representing 90% of Indian population) that are granted legal status by the Indian government.

The Three Language Formula (TLF) in Indian Education

(1968-2017)

*In Indian federal governance, education policy is implemented in partnership by the Central and State governments.

- *First language:* Mother tongue or the regional language
- *Second language:* Modern Indian language or English (in Hindi-speaking areas) or Hindi or English (in Non-Hindi speaking areas)
- Third language (not studied as the second language): Modern Indian language or English (in Hindi-speaking areas) or Hindi or English (in Non-Hindi speaking areas)



Origins of the
Three
Language
Policy (1948)

The
Official
adoption
of TLF
(1968)

Recommendations for the use of
TLF at the
Secondary
School level
(1952)

Implementation and
reinforcement of TLF
(National educational
policy documents
1986, 1988, 2000,
2005, 2016)



The Three language Policy

Politically right viz pedagogically exclusive

- The current three language policy promotes Hindi and English languages.
- This policy fulfils the linguistic interests of dominant ethnic communities in India.
- Though TLF provides scope for mother tongue language education, the emphasis is lost due to varied implementation.
- Amidst asserting political rights of dominant ethnic groups, the TLF fails to protect various mother tongues from becoming extinct.



Language Policies

Or Contradictory Impositions?

- State governments play a crucial role in implementing the National education policies.
- The NCF 2005 and 2016 emphasise that mother tongue education as the first language is mandatory in primary education.
- However, legislative bills of Tamil (2006), Kannada (2015) and Malayalam (2017) mandate regional language education as the first or second language, and relegates mother tongue language literacy to an optional third position.



Central and state level TLF

Central

“It is imperative that we honour the child's home language(s). According to Article 350A of our Constitution, ‘It shall be the endeavour of every State and of every local authority within the State to provide adequate facilities for instruction in the mother-tongue at the primary stage of education to children belonging to linguistic minority groups’” NCF (2005).

State

“Kannada language shall be taught as a compulsory language in all classes, in all schools in the State, either as a first language or as a second language in the phased manner” (Kannada Language Learning Bill, 2015)

“...Malayalam shall taught as a compulsory language from class first standard to tenth standard in all schools starting from the academic year 2017-2018 in the state” (Malayalam Language Bill, 2017).

Nationalist and Sub-nationalist fervour

Governing factors in school level language policy

- The above mentioned contradiction in the implementation of the TLF shows how nationalist linguistic interests at the Centre and sub-nationalist linguistic interests at the State-level neglects mother tongue language literacy.



Revisiting the three-language policy for pedagogic purposes

The three language policy

- *First language:* Mother tongue or the regional language
- *Second language:* Modern Indian language or English (in Hindi-speaking areas) or Hindi or English (in Non-Hindi speaking areas)
- Third language (not studied as the second language): Modern Indian language or English (in Hindi-speaking areas) or Hindi or English (in Non-Hindi speaking areas)

Recommended changes

- *First language:* Mother tongue
- *Second language:* English
- *Third language:* Indian language of the learner's choice (listed in the list of official regional scheduled languages and Indian Constitution)

Recommendations

Working towards a sustainable
pedagogic language policy

- Schools should be granted autonomy to choose the first (mother tongue) and the third (other Indian) languages, as per language preferences of the students enrolled in the school.



Political to pedagogic

Shifting manoeuvres for linguistic ecology in Indian education

- Process of adding languages to the scheduled-language list must not solely have a political orientation.
- The new three-language policy for pedagogic purposes will allow Indian languages in educational institutions to co-exist without being limited by nationalist and sub-nationalist sentiments and language loyalties.



Creating a new three-language policy

Sustainable linguistic models for 21st century pedagogy

- Keeping in mind migration and increasing ethnic mobility within India, the government must allocate funding for research and development of mother language pedagogy.
- A revised TLF will ensure that minority languages are protected from extinction.



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