

A Historical Overview of Multilingual Education: Global and Indian Perspectives

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For a long period of time, languages have been treated through a monolingual lens and have been taught based on certain assumptions that are traced to the ‘Great Reform’ in the 19th century (Cook, 2011). Major ideas from the period include ideas that consider the skill of speaking as basic in comparison to writing, an aversion to explicit discussion of grammar, and views language to be practised as whole rather than as discrete parts. The impact of these assumptions on classroom teaching ebbed and flowed throughout history. However, the assumption of discouraging the use of L1 in the classroom and keeping languages separate has not been widely disputed in the language teaching field. The models on bilingual and multilingual education functioned with this assumption and viewed bilingual education simply as an additive or subtractive process, ignoring the other dimensions of bilinguality.

1.1 First Turn: Monolingualism to Linear Bilingualism

With the ethnic revival of the 1960s, developing bilingual proficiency of children in the classroom came to the forefront and the first turn from monolingualism to linear bilingualism emerged. During this time, Lambert and his associates developed the early immersion bilingual education programme in Canada outlining the positive cognitive advantages of bilingualism. The programme began to fulfill the requirement of English-speaking minority community in St. Lambert. Similarly, in USA, different bilingual education programmes were established keeping in mind the needs of language minorities in the country. This period saw the development of two different programs. Firstly, the maintenance bilingual education programme where the home language of the learners was used along with the common language English, and secondly, the transitional bilingual education program where the home language was used only to help the learner transition from the home language to English. Born out of the collective need of the minority community to educate their children in their own language, these programmes viewed bilingualism as static and assumed a linear relationship between the two languages – additive or subtractive.

From a sociocultural point of view, different languages have different status and valorisation in the community. Depending on the status of the two languages during the acquisition process, the individual develops different forms of bilinguality. When both the languages enjoy an equal status, the languages develop on an equal basis adding to the linguistic and cognitive development of the learner. However, if the second language is valued more in the community, the cognitive development in the first language might suffer and could get deteriorated (Blanc & Hamers, 2000). The former process is termed as additive bilinguality and the later as subtractive bilinguality. Subtractive bilinguality can most often be seen in minority communities whose language is not given space in the society and is not included in the academic setup.

1.2 Second Turn: Linear Bilingualism to Dynamic Bilingualism

The change to dynamic bilingualism began to materialize in recent times. With globalisation and technological advancement, the world became more connected and more bilingual communities began to emerge. In many countries of Europe, maintenance bilingual education had been used to teach the minorities. But with change in political settings of the world, the outlook towards bilingual education programmes began to change and such programmes strived to make use of the wide range of linguistic resources from the learners' home languages as a learning tool. This change led to the emergence of developmental bilingual education programmes in many parts of the world.

The education programs developed differently in terms of importance given to the home languages of the minorities. This difference arose because of the different level of proficiencies of the home language in the communities. If the minority people do not have claim to power, then transitional bilingual education program is used to include the students' home language in the curriculum. On the other hand, in order to revive their mother tongue, Indigenous people in power use immersion revitalization bilingual education programs were put in place. The linguistic diversity of students was taken in consideration and used as a resource in these programs. The students were not considered monolingual adding or subtracting another language, but bilingualism was considered as a complex phenomenon where learning the two languages is interconnected and has an effect on development of both the languages.

With the turn to dynamic bilingualism, language too began to be considered as an active process rather than a passive object and a new term *linguaging* emerged. Garcia & Sylvia (2011) while discussing the differences consider language as a system of rules or structure and defines linguaging as the product of social action and discursive practices of people.

1.3 Third Turn: Dynamic Bilingualism to Translanguaging

The fluid practices of dynamic bilingualism were soon termed differently depending on their usage. As quoted in Garcia & Sylvia (2011), polylingualism refers to the combination of different non-discrete features of languages. Canagrajah (2011), while discussing the writings of multilingual students, discussed the shuttling of repertoires in writing for a rhetoric effect as

codemeshing. Code-mixing is another term used in the same context. However, translanguaging is the term that became the most popular among these terms. The term translanguaging is a translation by Baker (2001) of the Welsh term 'Trawseithu' coined by Cen Williams in 1994. The original term was coined to designate a strategy of the use of two languages (Welsh and English) at the same time in a language classroom. Currently, the term has developed to form a language theory with great potential in pedagogy. The revival of the term is also aligned with the current change in the ELT field regarding the own-language use in language classrooms. Outlining the major principle behind the idea, Garcia discusses that depending upon the communicative context, the multilingual speakers chose a variety of features from their linguistic repertoire to aptly convey the message.

1.4 Studying the Education Policies of India

Since independence, the country has seen the implementation of four education policies which focused on for multilingual education, keeping in mind the complexities of the linguistic profile. Before discussing the policies, this section first discusses the common thread between all language policies – the three-language formula.

1.4.1 Three-Language Formula

The three-language formula was first devised by the Central Advisory Board of Education in 1956 as a solution to the complex issues of language education considering the needs of the country. The aim was to establish equality between the Hindi-speaking and non-Hindi-speaking regions in terms of language education. This was done by recommending that the students in Hindi-speaking regions would learn a third Indian language along with Hindi and English, whereas students from non-Hindi-speaking regions would learn Hindi along with their regional language and English.

However, the implementation of this suggestion did not go as planned. The comprehensive report by the Kothari Commission (1964) cites heavy language load, resistance to Hindi in non-Hindi-speaking regions and budgetary restrictions as difficulties in implementing the formula. The Kothari Commission further suggested a revised version of the formula, as shown in the Figure 1.

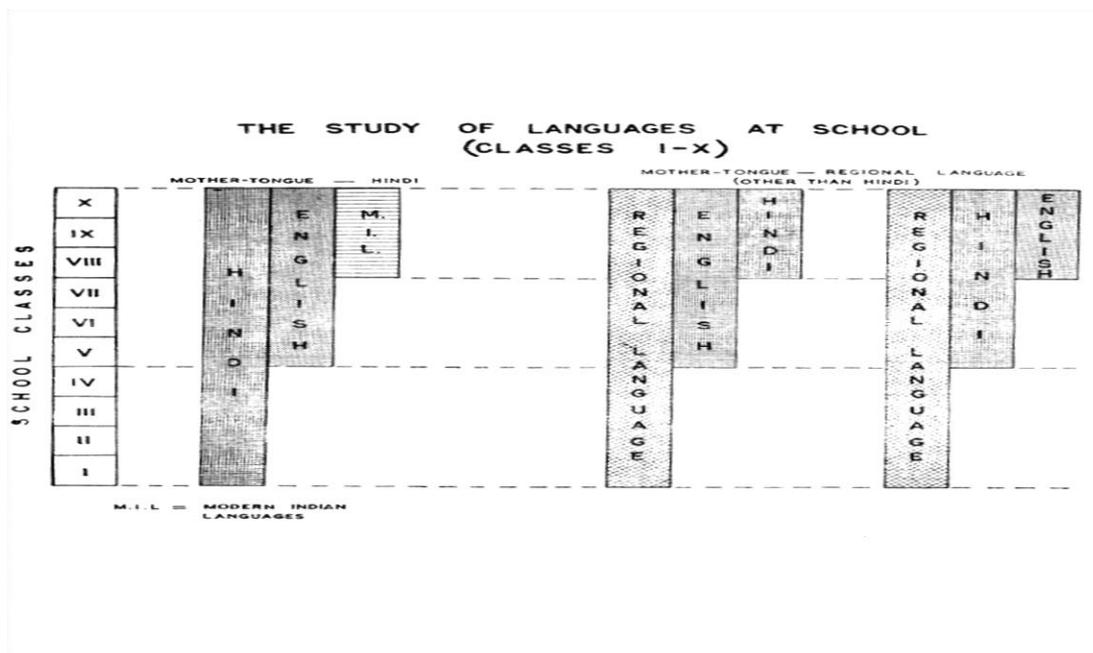


Figure 1: Three Language Formula

As seen in the figure, it was advised that the mother-tongue (Hindi, in case of Hindi areas) would be introduced from Class 1 and shall continue to be the only language taught till Class 5. In cases where the regional language is not the mother-tongue, the system provides freedom to the linguistic minorities to build school systems to teach the mother-tongue at the primary level. Though the commission advises to also introduce the regional language in Class 3, it has not been made compulsory. The aim was to build a foundational proficiency in the first language before introducing English/Hindi as the second language in Class 5: “We strongly feel that the study of three languages at the elementary stage will interfere considerably with the development of child’s mastery over his mother-tongue and with his intellectual growth.” (Pg. No. 196).

The commission finally proposed the third language to be any modern Indian language for the areas where Hindi and English have already been included as the first and second language. On the other hand, areas with regional languages as the first language are advised to incorporate Hindi and English as second and third languages as per their convenience. The commission strongly advises Hindi to be included in the curriculum all over India in order to establish Hindi as the link language of the country following the guideline from the Constitution of India. The commission leaves the decision of choosing a modern Indian language completely on the state as different groups in the state would prefer different languages according to their needs. Sighting the border areas of a state, the commission report hints that people from such areas would like to learn the language of the other state. The formula was then taken up in the first national policy of education (1968) and state

governments were advised to implement the formula, stating that the curriculum should include the study of a 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 regional language and English in the Non-Hindi-speaking States.

1.4.2 NPE (1968)

The first language policy of India was drafted as a result of the recommendation of the Kothari Education Commission (1964-1966). One of the major achievements of the policies was the ideas suggested for free and compulsory education for all children up to the age of 14. The policy puts forward suggestions for especially promoting Hindi and Sanskrit apart from the regional and international languages. It should be noted that English is only mentioned in the context of the three-language formula and the policy do not recommend any measures to develop its teaching and is considered as just another international language. Regional languages are viewed as an important tool to spread knowledge to the common masses and it is suggested that it should be used as the media of education at the university stage. Hindi is promoted as the link language and is presented as the medium of expression all over India. The policy also recommends developing new methods to teach Sanskrit at university level and acknowledges its growth in the development of other Indian languages.

1.4.3 NPE (1986)

The policy advances the position held in NPE, 1968 and does not put forward any new reform. However, it discusses the practical implications of the recommendations of the previous policy and puts forward new suggestions for a smooth and better implementation. It specifically provides action points for each recommendation of the policy and lists down the role of agencies along with providing the blueprint of a monitoring setup. In order to establish regional languages in higher education, the policy proposes to prepare and produce a large number of textbooks in the modern Indian languages and also advises to begin translation of reference books from English. As part of a bigger plan of improving the primary education in India, the policy also discusses ways to improve the language competencies of school students. Although the policy does not quote definitive evidence regarding the deterioration of language proficiencies of students, it acknowledges the need for improvement.

For this effect, the policy recommends certain institutions (NCERT, CIEFL (Hyderabad), and RIE (Bangalore)) to undertake a study of language attainment of students and specify language objectives for all three languages at the school level. It also recommends the use of English proficiency test designed for Grade 12 students in collaboration with CIEFL, NCERT, RIE, and H. M. Patel Institute of English.

Apart from these major steps, the policy also proposes the development of new material keeping in mind the language objectives and continuous training of teachers in the methodology of teaching languages. Specific focus is put on advancing research of effective methodology of the

teaching-learning process with emphasis on the use of technology. The policy gives the responsibility of handling the monitoring of these processes to Kendriya Hindi Sansthan for Hindi, CIEFL for English, and the CIIL for modern Indian languages. The policy offers solutions for speeding the process of preparation of bilingual and multilingual dictionaries and raises concern over the quality of translation already produced. To this effect, the policy advises the government to outsource the work to other agencies and training more translators for the job.

1.4.4 NPE (1992)

In the NPE (1986), it was decided that a review of education policies and programmes would be undertaken every five years. The committee under the chairmanship of N. Jagnnath Reddy took into consideration these review reports along with the suggestions from the Rammurti Committee to bring out the national policy of education in 1992. Similar to NPE 1986, this policy too advances the reforms suggested in NPE 1968.

In regard to the regional languages being the medium of instruction at the university stage, the policy acknowledges the lack in finances and administration in producing and translating the books. It also remarks the low interest of students in opting for these courses due to poor employability prospects as one of the reasons in delay of implementing the change in the medium of instruction. To remedy the situation, the policy suggests the government to increase the employment of opportunities for increasing the motivation for more enrolment. The policy deems the progress in training the teachers for improving the language competencies of the students as satisfactory and advises the concerned institutions to finish the remaining teacher training programs. The policy also advises the state governments to organize regular training programmes for the language teachers.

In order to establish Hindi as the link language, the policy follows up on the bilingual and multilingual dictionary work keeping Hindi as base. It also advises the government to prepare definitional dictionaries in Hindi for the technical fields of science and humanities along with a glossary of around five lakh terms.

1.4.5 NEP (2020)

Contrary to its predecessors, the NEP (2020) does not discuss the development of language in isolation. Instead, the policy links language to art and culture and acknowledges the different ways in which language influence and forms a part of a country's culture. The policy document clearly portrays the dire condition of the linguistic diversity of the country as 220 languages have been lost in the last 50 years and 197 Indian languages have been declared as endangered by UNESCO. The policy suggests using technology and crowdsourcing to preserve the dying languages. The policy also recommends setting up academies for each of the scheduled languages comprising of scholars and native speakers of the language who will prepare dictionaries for each language to be disseminated for use in education. The policy advocates the use of mother-tongue and regional languages as medium of instruction not only during the school education but also in

university education. The suggestion of creating bilingual courses in universities and a four-year integrated B.Ed. program to help the newly recruited teachers teach mathematics and science bilingually has been put forward.

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