

# **Medium of Instruction in School Education in India: Policy, Status and Demand for English Medium Education**

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## **ABSTRACT**

*The linguistic diversity in India makes language planning complex and flexible. This paper presents how the medium of instruction in school education is implemented in terms of policy provisions, status of implementation, its problems and place and role of English as a language and as a medium of instruction in schools. It is based on the data collected through questionnaires and interview schedules with the state and national level agencies involved in language planning by the author at the national level during 2009-2011. It is disturbing to find that the number of languages used as medium of instruction has been reduced to 47 from 60 during the last two and a half decade. 33 of 35 states/provinces claim to offer English as a medium of instruction; this is more than any other language, but number of schools offering English as a medium of instruction is very less compared to Indian languages as medium of instruction. The paper then moves on to discuss how the language policy acts as an instrument for exclusion of languages, particular minority, minor and tribal languages as media of learning as well as a subject even in primary years of learning. The paper also suggests ways to prevent the languages being thrown out of the school system and the need for recognising the importance of medium of learning through the mother tongues while providing quality learning of English as a language in schools.*

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**Key words:** Language planning, medium of instruction, multilingualism, English language

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### ***Linguistic Scene of India***

India has now, according to 2001 Census (complete data of 2011 Census is not available), a total of 122 languages and 234 mother tongues belonging to five different language families namely, Indo-Aryan, Dravidian, Austro-Asiatic, Tibeto-Burmese and Semito-Hamitic (The 1961 Census lists 1,652 languages as mother tongues (NCERT, 2006)). The Constitution of India recognises 22 languages. About 87 languages are used in print media, 71 on radio, and the administration of the country is conducted by around 15 languages. However, as the position paper on teaching of Indian languages regrets (NCERT, 2006), only 47 languages are used as the media of instruction in schools. The number of languages used as media of instruction two decade ago was about 60 (Rao, 2008; Meganathan, 2011). Indian Constitution allots a schedule to deal with languages. Articles 343 to 351 of part XVII and the 8th Schedule of the Constitution of India are on issues of languages of the country. Hindi (though a majority language) is India's official language, not a national language, and English is the co-official or associate official and link language across the country in spite of the efforts from many quarters to contain the language in public offices and from education. English language medium is now being introduced in government run schools in many states.

### ***Language Policy in School Education***

Language policy formulations during the formative years of Indian independence took into consideration of bringing in harmony and equality among Indian languages, particularly between Hindi, the majority language, and the rest of the Indian languages and having a common language which could serve the purpose of 'cross national communication within the country'. English language found its place as an associate official language and a link language between Hindi speaking and non-Hindi speaking states. Since independence, the language policy debates in India have been a political question rather than an academic one. This can be noticed even in the recent curricular revision, the National Curriculum Framework – 2005 which states, "The level of introduction of English has now become a matter of political response to people's aspirations rendering almost irrelevant an academic debate on the merits of very early introduction" (Position Paper Teaching of English (NCERT, 2005c, p. 1)). So, there is no wonder the language-in-education policy, the three language formula was devised as a

strategy (for harmonious language development among learners in school) in various conferences of Chief Ministers of Indian states and in the meetings of the Central Advisory Board on Education (CABE) which consists of education ministers and high level officials from the states and the national government. Language-in-education strategy known as the three-language formula as stated in the National Commission on Education (GOI, 1968 p. 192) recommended a modified or graduated three-language formula to include:

- (1) the mother tongue or the regional language
- (2) the official language of the Union or the associate official language of the Union so long as it exists; and
- (3) a modern Indian or foreign language not covered under (1) and (2) and other than that used as the medium of instruction.

The language-in-education policy attempts to provide a flexible language policy in order to accommodate at least three languages in school education and assumes that learning through mother tongue is ideal for cognitively sound language development in children. The three language formula also aims at promoting national integration among young children in schools.

Thus the language planning and policy in India has been closer to status planning at the national level (the national government planning) with less of corpus and policy planning while at the state (provincial) level is more of corpus planning than status planning. The national government takes the responsibility of corpus planning of the majority language, Hindi and some minority languages like Urdu, Sindhi, Persian, etc. The national government has departments known as Hindi prachara sabha (meaning Hindi Promotion Wing) and National Council for Promotion of Urdu. This is to spread the languages in the states where they are not available and to those who migrate to the Hindi heartland for work, education and so on.

There are, however, states that chose not to implement the national government's language policy for political, social and cultural reasons. One illustration is the South Indian state of Tamil Nadu which for its linguistic national (Tamil) identity and protection of Tamil language from Hindi being imposed on it, refused to accept the three language formula and India's plural democratic policy had to accept it. In such states, status planning also takes place at the state level. In many of the north eastern states, English plays a functional role in day-to-day affairs and

Hindi, though available in the school system, does not have much to do in social and academic domains.

### **Media of Instruction**

The three language formula envisages that the children in the primary school study through their mother tongue for a harmonious development and pedagogically sound quality education. It is evident, as reported by the Seventh All India School Education Survey (hereafter referred to as Seventh Survey) with date of reference 30th September 2002 (NCERT, 2007), that more than 90 per cent of schools at the primary and upper primary stages teach through the mother tongue or the language of the region of children. In fact, one would observe an increase in the number of schools teaching through mother tongue during the last ten years. Appendix A contains the number of languages offered as medium of instruction in the states. The following section presents the percentages of schools teaching through mother tongue in comparison with the status ten years prior to Seventh Survey as reported in the Sixth All India School Education Survey (hereafter referred to as Sixth Survey, with date of reference 30th September 1993). (NCERT, 1993)

As shown in Table 1, the Seventh Survey found that 92.07 per cent schools at the primary stage teach through mother tongue in comparison to 91.65 per cent schools in the Sixth Survey. Rural and urban comparison shows that 92.39 per cent schools in rural areas and 90.39 per cent schools in urban areas teach through mother tongue as compared to 91.70 per cent schools in rural area and 91.32 per cent schools in urban area in the Sixth Survey. As regards upper primary stage, 91.34 per cent schools teach through mother tongue. The corresponding figure in the Sixth Survey was 88.64 per cent. The rural and urban comparison shows that 92.71 per cent schools in rural areas and 87.37 per cent schools in urban area teach through mother tongue as compared to 89.49 per cent schools in rural areas and 86.07 per cent schools in urban areas in the Sixth Survey. The Seventh Survey also found that the 12.14 per cent schools at the primary stage, 14.47 per cent schools at the upper primary stage, 8.53 per cent schools at the secondary stage have two or more media of instruction. This also shows the increase when compared to the corresponding figures in the Sixth Survey the percentages which were 7.21 per cent, 12.49 per cent and 13.34 per cent respectively.

The Seventh Survey also reported the percentage of schools teaching through English medium and the percentage of increase during the last ten years. English as medium of instruction is used in 12.98 per cent schools at the primary stage, 18.25 per cent schools at the upper primary stage, 25.84 per cent schools at the secondary stage and 33.59 per cent schools at the higher secondary stage. The corresponding figures in the Sixth Survey were 4.99 per cent, 15.91 per cent, 18.37 per cent and 28.09 per cent respectively. Hindi as medium of instruction is used in 46.79 per cent schools at the primary stage, 47.41 per cent schools at the upper primary stage, 41.32 per cent schools at the secondary stage and 48.11 per cent schools at the higher secondary stage. The corresponding figures in the Sixth Survey were 42.26 per cent, 40.93 per cent, 33.94 per cent and 45.37 per cent respectively. It was also found that the increase from 30 states/UTs to 32 States/UTs are imparting education in the languages other than that of majority language at primary and upper primary stages of school education, to cater the needs of linguistic minorities. In the Sixth Survey, 30 States/UTs were having this facility.

**Table 1**  
**Percentage of Schools Teaching through Mother Tongue and Two or More Languages as Medium**

Stages of schooling	1993*			2002**		
	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban	Total
Mother Tongue as medium						
Primary	91.7	91.32	91.56	92.39	90.39	92.07
Upper primary	89.49	86.07	88.64	92.71	87.37	91.34
Two or more languages as media of instruction						
Primary	-	-	7.21	-	-	12.14
Upper primary	-	-	12.49	-	-	14.47
Secondary	-	-	13.34	-	-	8.53

**Source:** \* Sixth All India School Education Survey (NCERT, 1993)

\*\* Seventh All India School Education Survey (NCERT, 2007)

The data collected from the states (Appendix A) for the present study reveals that a minimum of two languages are available as medium of learning and the maximum of languages used as medium of learning is ten in the different school systems in the states. Number of languages used as medium of instruction

keeps increasing as one moves from primary to secondary stage. Fifteen states offer two languages as medium of instruction at the primary stage. The state of Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh offer ten and eight languages, respectively, as medium of instruction from primary to secondary stages of schooling. The state of West Bengal makes a provision for ten languages at upper primary and secondary stages. The states could be grouped on geographical and linguistic grounds in the count of number of language available as medium of instruction. The other two south Indian states, Tamil Nadu and Kerala present a different picture. The state of Kerala makes a provision for four languages as media of instruction while the state of Tamil Nadu makes it available in two languages at the primary and in five languages at upper primary and secondary stages of schooling. Table 2 shows the number of languages choices offered by the states and individual languages offered or available to learners as medium of instruction.

**Table 2**  
**Number of Language Choices and Number of Individual Languages Offered as Medium of Instruction by States/UTs (N=35)**

School level	Language choices offered by states/UTs	Individual languages available as medium
Primary	107	31
Upper Primary	124	25
Secondary	124	24
Total	355	31

India has now 36 provinces known as the states of which 7 are centrally administered provinces known as Union Territories. The state of Telangana was not created when this study was conducted. So there were 35 states and UTs.

The states in the Hindi heartland, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Uttaranchal and the National Capital Region of Delhi make a provision of three or four languages as media of instruction from primary to secondary stage. The languages available are: Hindi, Urdu, Sanskrit, Marathi (in Madhya Pradesh), Bengali (in Jharkhand) and English. The state of Rajasthan has two languages as media of instruction from primary to secondary stage of schooling. The states of Odisha, Punjab and U.T of Chandigarh, Maharashtra and Gujarat could be categorised as one in their pattern of providing number of languages as media of instruction. These states have two or more languages as media

at the primary level and three or more languages at the upper primary and secondary levels. For example, the state of Odisha has Odia and English as media at the primary stage and Odia, Hindi, English and Sanskrit as media of instruction at the upper primary and secondary stages. Urdu is a medium of instruction in madararasas.

The states of north east region too present a pattern where some states make a provision for two languages as media of instruction and some states make a provision for four. The state of Nagaland is the state with maximum number of languages as medium of instruction. The state has seven or more languages as media of instruction at the primary stage and six languages at upper primary and three languages at the secondary stage. The states of Meghalaya, Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh make a provision for two or three language at the primary level and one or two language(s) as the upper primary and secondary level.

The state of Goa makes available five languages at the primary level and two languages at the upper primary and secondary levels. Among the union territories, Andaman and Nicobar Islands provides instruction in five languages while the UT of Daman and Diu does in two languages. The states of Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Goa ensure the provision of dual media instruction in the same school.

## **Introduction of a Language in School**

### ***Introduction of First Language***

All the states introduce the first language from class one. The first language is the mother tongue/home language of the child or the language of the region. Most of the states and union territories record the first language as the mother tongue of the child or the regional language. There are, however, debates about defining the first language. The government schools in the states make an attempt to accommodate the language of the child, the home language or the language of the region as the first language in schools.

### ***Introduction of Second Language***

Table 3 presents how the second language is introduced in schools across the country. The second language is introduced within the five years of the schooling. Twenty-two out of the thirty-five states and the union territories introduce the second language from the

first year of schooling. The rest of the states introduce the second language either from class three or five. The states which introduce the second language from the first year of schooling are spread across the country starting from Tamil Nadu in the southern part of the country to Jammu and Kashmir in the northern region. So there is no region specific pattern or trend in the introduction of the second language. The same is the case of states introducing the second language in class three or five. The state of Kerala in the south and the state of Assam of the north-east region introduce the second language in class three. The states of Karnataka and West Bengal introduce the second language in class five.

**Table 3**  
**Introduction of Second Language**

<b>Class at which the second language is introduced</b>	<b>States/UTs</b>
Class One	Andhra Pradesh (English), Arunchal Pradesh (Hindi), Bihar (Urdu, Bengali), Chattisgarh ( ),* Goa (English), Gujarat (English), Himachal Pradesh (English), Jammu and Kashmir (English), Madhya Pradesh (Gen. English / Gen. Hindi), Manipur (Hindi / one of the recognised lang. / MIL), Mizoram (English), Nagaland (MIL / Alternative English), Punjab (Hindi, Punjabi, Urdu), Rajasthan (English), Sikkim (MIL), Tamil Nadu (English), Tripura (English), Uttaranchal (English), Andaman and Nicobar Islands (Hindi / English), Chandigarh (Hindi / English), National Capital Region of Delhi (English, Urdu, Punjabi) Puducherry (English),
Class Three	Assam (Hindi / Bengali), Kerala (English), Odisha ( English)*, Daman & Diu ( Hindi) Dadra Nagar Haveli (Hindi)
Class Five	Karnataka (English), West Bengal (English)

\*Not stated clearly

The table also shows the language introduced as the second language in the states and the UTs. The second language in most cases is English. Almost twenty states have English as a second

language while Hindi is offered as a second language in ten states. Urdu, Bengali, Punjabi are the other languages offered as second languages in the states where either the language is one of the languages spoken or a language in the neighboring state. Out of the 19 states which introduce English as the second language 16 states / U.Ts introduce it from class one, one state from class three and two states from class five.

### **Introduction of Third Language**

Introduction of the third language varies from state to state (Table 4). Most states introduce the third language from Class VI while five states starts the third language from Class III and a few states introduce from the Class V. The states of Tripura and Orissa commence teaching of a language as a third language from Classes VII and VIII respectively. The Jammu and Kashmir is the only state which introduces the third language from Class IX.

**Table 4**  
**Introduction of Third Language**

<b>Class at which the third language is introduced</b>	<b>States/UTs</b>
Class III	Manipur, Mizoram (Hindi), Nagaland (Hindi), Uttaranchal.
Class IV	Punjab (Hindi, Punjabi, Urdu, any MIL), Sikkim (Hindi)
Class V	Dada Nagar Haveli, Goa (Marathi, Konkani, French, Portuguese), Kerala (Hindi),
Class VI	Andhra Pradesh (Hindi) , Arunachal Pradesh(Sanskrit, Assamese, Butia), Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh (Urdu, Sanskrit, Marathi or any MIL), Rajasthan (Sanskrit, Urdu, Sindhi, Gujarati, Punjabi, any MIL), Uttar Pradesh ( Sanskrit, Urdu, any MIL), West Bengal ( Sanskrit, Hindi), Orissa, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Daman & Diu (English) National Capital Region of Delhi (Sanskrit, Urdu, Punjabi, any MIL).
Class VIII	Tripura (VII- Sanskrit, Hindi)
Class IX	Jammu and Kashmir (Dogri, Boding, Punjabi, Arabic, Sanskrit, Persian)

The third language in most non-Hindi speaking states happens to be Hindi, wherever it is not introduced as a second language and in Hindi speaking states it is Urdu, Sanskrit, Punjabi, Persian or the language of neighbouring state.

### **Duration of Study of Languages within Ten Years of Schooling**

#### ***Duration of Study of Second Language***

Since the first language is introduced from class one, the study of the language lasts for ten years of schooling. Second language as has been shown in the previous section is introduced from different classes by different states. Table 5 shows that in a majority of the states a student has to undergo the study of a second language for ten years. Twenty-two states ensure the study of second language for ten years while in five states a student has to undertake the study of second language for eight years. Two states, Kerala and West Bengal make a provision of five years of study of a second language.

**Table 5**

**Duration of the Second Language Studied within Ten Years of Schooling States in which children study the Second language for**

<b>Ten years</b>	<b>Eight years</b>	<b>Five years</b>
Andhra Pradesh (English), Arunachal Pradesh (Hindi), Bihar (Urdu, Bengali), Chhattisgarh ( )*, Goa (English), Gujarat (English), Himachal Pradesh (English), Jammu and Kashmir (English), Madhya Pradesh (Gen. English / Gen. Hindi), Manipur(Hindi / one of the recognised lang. / MIL**), Mizoram (English), Nagaland (MIL / Alternative English), Punjab (Hindi, Punjabi, Urdu), Rajasthan (English), Sikkim (MIL**), Tamil Nadu (English), Tripura (English), Uttaranchal (English), Andaman and Nicobar Islands (Hindi / English), Chandigarh (Hindi / English), National Capital Region of Delhi (English, Urdu, Punjabi) Puducherry (English),	Assam (Hindi / Bengali), Kerala (English), Odisha ( )*, Daman & Diu (Hindi) Dadra Nagar Haveli (Hindi)	Karnataka (English), West Bengal (English)

\*Not stated clearly

\*\*Modern Indian Language (which is one of the 22 recognised languages)

#### ***Third Language***

Thirteen states/UTs make a provision of five year of study of third language (Table 6). In the three states/UTs, Darda Nagar Haveli,

Goa and Kerala, the study of third language spans for duration of six years while the state of Punjab and Sikkim provide its learners a duration of seven years to study the third language. Children are offered the study of third language for a period of eight years in the states/UTs of Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland and Uttaranchal. The states of Tripura and Odisha introduce the third language from class VII and VIII respectively making a provision for a period of three and four years respectively. The only state which has a provision of only two years for the study of a third language is Jammu and Kashmir.

**Table 6**  
**Duration of Study of Third Language within Ten years of schooling**

States in which children study the Third language for	
Eight years	Manipur, Mizoram (Hindi), Nagaland (Hindi), Uttaranchal.
Seven Years	Punjab (Hindi, Punjabi, Urdu, any MIL), Sikkim (Hindi)
Six Years	Dadra Nagar Haveli, Goa (Marathi, Konkani, French, Portuguese), Kerala (Hindi),
Five Years	Andhra Pradesh (Hindi), Arunachal Pradesh (Sanskrit, Assamese, Butia), Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh (Urdu, Sanskrit, Marathi or any MIL), Rajasthan (Sanskrit, Urdu, Sindhi, Gujarat, Punjabi, any MIL), Uttar Pradesh (Sanskrit, Urdu, any MIL), West Bengal (Sanskrit, Hindi), Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Daman & Diu (English) National Capital Region of Delhi (Sanskrit, Urdu, Punjabi, any MIL).
Four / Three Years	Tripura (VII- Sanskrit, Hindi), Odisha (VIII)
Two Years	Jammu and Kashmir (Dogri, Boding, Punjabi, Arabic, Sanskrit, Persian)

Table 7 shows the frequency of languages offered as first, second and third language in different school systems. One minority language (Urdu), one classical language (Sanskrit), the majority language (Hindi) and English are shown in the table. English stands as a natural choice for the second language while other languages are also making a case for second and third language. What is interesting or unbelievable to notice is that English is considered and offered as first language in many systems. Urdu which has blurred territory now (once a language of power and a dominant language in today's Hindi heartland) and Sanskrit (which does

not have any territory) can be chosen as third language while the vibrant languages, English and Hindi are offered more as first and second language in the system.

**Table 7**  
**Languages Most Frequently Offered by States / UTs as L1, L2 and L3 (N=35)**

Level of schooling	L1/L2/L3	English	Hindi	Urdu	Sanskrit
Primary (N=33)*	L1	10	18	7	2
	L2	23	5	1	0
	L3	1	4	2	2
Upper primary (N=34)*	L1	16	16	11	3
	L2	27	14	0	2
	L3	8	18	6	15
Secondary (N=34)***	L1	17	18	10	3
	L2	21	14	1	3
	L3	8	12	6	12
Total	131	119	44	42	

\* Two states did not furnish data for primary level.

\*\* One state did not furnish data for upper primary level

\*\*\* One state did not furnish data for upper primary level

## Discussion

### *The Fallacy of Mother Tongue Based Multilingualism*

India's language-in-education policy aims at promoting mother tongue based multilingualism at least in the primary years of schooling as delineated in the three language formula. This vision of 'mother tongue based multilingualism' is in question because the very intention of establishing linguistic equality in school education is flawed. There is an inherent inequality which could be seen in the way the language policy has been implemented.

Firstly, the mother tongue based multilingualism is not realised as many minor or tribal languages have not been able to find their place in school education while many of the languages which are in the school system are being thrown out of the systems. As Panda (2009, p.122) describes official languages of the states in India are treated as 'default mother tongues of all children and tribal and minority languages are stigmatised as dialects.' This has been illustrated well by many researches. Mohanty (2010, p.165) says,

*In most of the multilingual societies, only a few are languages of power and privilege; the rest are marginalised and weakened in the hierarchical power relationship among languages. With English as the dominant language in post-colonial India, as in South Asia and other parts of the world, the linguistic hierarchy has created major power gaps in society which can be seen as a double divide between English and major languages and between major languages and the indigenous and tribal minority languages.*

The 'double divide' that happens in Indian education system is not a recent phenomenon; it started the day India had begun to think of language planning for its administration and in education. This is from the days of Macaulay's famous minutes in 1835 which records the linguistic enormity, in other words the diversity, of India as a problem. Even today the policy planners think on the same lines while (not) making provisions for accommodating tribal and minor languages in school education in spite of constitutional and legal provisions. At the planning level the language policy accommodates tribal and minor languages. But in the implementation / practice level it is a matter of convenience. The increase in the mother tongue medium (Table 8) is due to an increase in the number of schools being opened as the country has enacted a law, The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act -2009 (RTE), which ensures the right to schooling for every child. This is due to the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), which has created one primary school in each habitat in the country. This does not mean that all children belonging to tribal and minor languages get their initial years of schooling in their mother tongue. Rather it is the language of the state that is thrust upon such children as their first language. Mother tongue is conveniently taken to be synonymous with the language of the state or the regional language.

### ***Role and Place of English as a Medium of Schooling***

A closer look at the analysis in this paper would reveal that Hindi and English are the most offered or opted media of education in the school system (Table 9). Hindi language is used as a language of administration and judiciary in about eight states and the language is used as an additional language in the day-to-day language use in public sphere (this means most people can understand and

**Table 8**  
**Schools with Hindi and English Medium Policies in India**  
**(percentages)**

Policies	Primary (Class I to V)		Upper Primary (Classes VI to VIII)		Secondary (Classes IX to XII)	
	1993	2002	1993	2002	1993	2002
Hindi as medium	42.26	46.79	40.93	47.41	33.94	41.32
English as medium	4.99	12.98	15.91	18.25	18.37	25.84

communicate in Hindi) in another five states. So, Hindi serves as a medium of instruction in about forty percent of the schools. The case of English as a medium is to be seen from the cross national point of view i.e. the increase in English medium schools across the country. These schools include private English medium schools, schools run by the national government for its employees who are on transferable basis and the special schools for rural talents, the Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas. We can notice the steady increase in the number of schools having English as the medium from the primary to the secondary levels.

**Table 9**  
**Languages Most Frequently Offered by States/UTs as the Medium of Instruction (N=35)**

Stage	English	Hindi	Urdu	Tamil	Sanskrit
Primary	27	21	7	6	3
Upper Primary	32	24	9	7	6
Secondary	33	24	9	7	7

There are schools in some states which offer dual medium or mixed medium within one school system. For example, the states of Tamil Nadu and Kerala offer Tamil and English, Malayalam

and English as media of instruction, respectively. This mixed or dual medium is also in response to the demand of the parents who cannot afford to send their wards to private English medium schools. So the schools in the government run systems have opened one English medium section in each class. Another trend is that the English language is considered as a language of science and mathematics for the two national level school systems, the Kendriya Vidyalayas (KVs) and Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas (NVs) with about one thousand and five hundred schools, respectively, teaching science and mathematics through English medium in quite a number of their schools (particularly in the Hindi speaking states). This is because of the wash back effect as the science stream courses at the higher secondary level and almost every course at the university level is offered only in English medium. What needs to be explored in these English medium courses is that the actual transaction, particularly in rural settings, may take place in the regional language. Added to this is a known fact that majority of the graduates from which universities and university colleges do not possess minimum proficiency in the English language. In other words, what the market economy would call it, 'they are unemployable' because of lack of proficiency in English. Mohanty (2010, p.168) describes how this 'mixed medium within a school and within a classroom' works in this category of schools with the government school system.

*English is used to teach 'prestigious subjects' like mathematics and science whereas Hindi or other languages are used to teach the 'less prestigious' subjects like history and social sciences. Hindi used to be the second language subject in most of the non-Hindi states in India. Now it has been replaced by English and it is relegated to the position of a third language subject in most states.*

Today English language has attained a place where it is both admired and envied, and hated for varied reasons from different quarters. The elite and urban class as well as the socially disadvantaged groups like the dalits (who were once at the bottom of the Hindu caste system and still face disadvantages) feel that the English language is an instrument of development and upward mobility, while a section of political class and ethnic groups from cross sections of the society feel that English may act as an instrument of eliminating the indigenous languages from

the school system leading to their endangerment. This dilemma of 'to have it' or 'not to have it' as a medium of instruction is felt in day-to-day discussions in every part of the country. What is worrying in processes of language education is the lack of resources for teaching-learning of English as a language in most Indian schools. These are the state run native medium schools. While most school systems are not able to ensure resources (in terms of teacher's language proficiency, materials and effective assessment strategies), the demand for English medium keeps increasing. This demand comes from every section of the society. This puts the children from the rural areas and children from socially disadvantaged groups and tribal groups at a disadvantage. Graddol (2010, p. 120) brought this out well in his 'English next India' when he observes,

*Throughout India, there is an extraordinary belief, among almost all castes and classes, in both rural and urban areas, in the transformative power of English. English is seen not just as a useful skill, but as a symbol of better life, a pathway out of poverty and oppression. Aspiration of such magnitude is a heavy burden for any language, and for those who have responsibility of teaching it, to bear.*

There are also counter reactions to the 'over stated demand for the English language'. English today is simultaneously sought after and suspected (Tickoo, 1996) phenomenon. The motives, generally, are not only social-political and but academic too. While the demand increases on the one hand, the quality of English language education in our state run schools, more particularly in rural schools, presents an abysmal picture. The 'divide' between the urban and rural is further contributed by the way English language education is making its way as a medium of instruction. The paradox of demand and suspicion (Tickoo, 1996) mentioned above could be further reflected through the paradox of access depicted by the report of the National Knowledge Commission (NKC) (GOI, 2007, p. 47), India as:

*There is an irony in the situation. English has been part of our education system for more than a century. Yet English is beyond the reach of most of our young people, which makes for highly unequal access. Indeed, even now, more than one per cent of our people use it as a second language, let alone*

*a first language ..... But NKC believes that the time has come for us to teach our people, ordinary people, English as a language in schools. Early action in this sphere would help us build an inclusive society and transform India into a knowledge society.*

### **From Additive Multilingualism to Subtractive Bilingualism**

The three language formula is aimed at creating multilinguals within the ten years of schooling. But what happens in reality is subtractive bilingualism where the dominant languages of the states and the English language are taking a ride over the minor and tribal languages. These minor and tribal languages face double disadvantage for they are dominated by the language of the state as well as by the English language. Indian languages bear the burden of the English language while they act as an instrument of exclusion of tribal and minor languages. A child with his/her tribal mother tongue has to undergo schooling in another language which is not their language. In the process they lose their mother tongue. Instead of increasing the number of languages known, the language policy (the way it is practised) plays a role in reducing the number of languages known to children. Though this may be contested, the loss is on the part of tribal and minor languages. This happens faster when the medium of schooling becomes English. There is a general complaint from teachers in the high schools that children do not possess any proficiency in any of the languages when they reach Class VI. Children are made, in a way, semi-linguals, not even monolinguals because of the faulty language policy in practice and classroom processes of language education in schools. Even before the first language is acquired well the second language, an alien language, is imposed on them. In the absence of evidence in large scale, this needs to be examined seriously.

### **Planned Policy and Practised Policy Gap**

Table 3 lists the languages available or offered as medium of instruction in the states. This is what the national government or state governments mention in their language policy statements. This does not ensure that all the languages mentioned in the policy documents are taught/studied in schools. Even if all the languages mentioned are available in schools, this again does not mean that children whose mother tongue is one of those minor or tribal languages are learning in their mother tongue as medium of

learning. However, Spolsky (2007) argues that 'policy and practice need not be seen as distinct and that there is a policy within language practices themselves'. In the Indian context, this needs serious examination for the practised policy may inform much more than the 'political' and 'intellectual' understanding of language policy making. Added to this is the question of '*Is mother tongue based multilingualism far removed from reality?*' This question arises because people belonging to the tribal and minor language groups themselves feel that there is necessity to impart education to their wards in English in light of the new market based economic activities and for development. The question often posed by those who advocate English as a medium is, "When other groups (upper caste and urban elites belonging to any category) can study through English medium and still continue to keep their identity and culture, why do you want us (rural socially and economically disadvantaged, tribal and minor groups) to study in 'our' mother tongue which may not take us anywhere?"

### **Conclusion**

Language-in-education policy in India culminated as a result of political consensus keeping in view the linguistic and other diversities. Policy provisions and practices show that the majority and regional languages are offered both as a language and as a medium of instruction. Hindi is a language with the highest percentage of schools offering it as the medium of instruction and this is followed by English. The sufferers are the minor and tribal languages as mediums of instruction. Many of these languages are mentioned as languages available or offered as medium of instruction. In reality many are either not available or not opted (but available) as medium of instruction. The demand for English as a language and as a medium from all sections of society puts the pressure on Indian regional languages and doubly on the tribal and minor languages. This linguistic imperialism is seen both as a threat and as an unavoidable necessity by policy planners and parents as well. The very objective of bringing equality among languages is challenged as the way the English language is demanded as a language and as a medium of instruction for upward mobility. English as (more or less) the sole medium of instruction at the university level has a wash back impact on school education, particularly on science and mathematics education in schools.

This would pave way for the divide between science and technology courses and social science courses in the school education too.

While on the one hand the demand for English language education in schools is increasing, the quality of English language teaching at the school level (Kurrien, 1997; Meganathan, 2011) is not so encouraging. Majority of the state run schools lack resources including teacher's English language proficiency. Teacher development, materials for teaching-learning of English and resources for English as a medium of learning demands serious attention. Language across curriculum (LAC) as a strategy, though advocated by the National Curriculum Framework – 2005 (NCERT, 2005a), is yet to be accepted in all seriousness by teachers and the school systems because of lack of resources in equipping the teachers and school administrators.

Linguistic diversity in school education in India today is in a way under threat as the number of languages offered / available as mediums of instruction is slowly receding. This has led to the exclusion of indigenous Indian, minor and tribal language. Some of the languages can face endangerment sooner or later, if they do not find their way out at least in school education. Though there are constitutional and legal provisions at the policy level to study through one's mother tongue up to class VIII, this is not practised for reasons very complex. People themselves prefer to study through some other language medium, the dominant regional language or English medium. It is high time the country seriously thought of revisiting the language policy in school education and thought of a national language policy which addresses the language use at all levels from school education to judiciary to higher education. The policy question should also address the business of recognising or declaring languages as 'recognised languages'. A country of 121 million people with 122 full-fledged languages recognises only 22 languages. This could be described as an inability of the nation to protect and benefit from her linguistic diversity. First step in this direction is to ensure that children in the formative years of learning have their schooling in their mother tongue with English as a second or third language.

There is also an urgent necessity to understand the demand for English both as a language and as a medium of instruction through research based evidences in India. This would answer the question, whether the demand for English is meaningful? Or is it an irrational demand (whether the demand is over stated)? We also need to listen to the consequences of policies which promote

English language from other Asian and African contexts. In the words of Hussain (2010, p. 236) from Ethiopia,

*The view that education through mother tongue and political elevation of mother tongues being detrimental to the promotion of English is either mere linguistics chauvinism or linguistic self-denial founded on irrational theory about language, education and cognition. As a position, it runs counter to the well-established fact that if they are properly planned, native languages and their cultures can become helpful resources when learning a different language. Therefore, disentangling the problem of English requires addressing the misconstrued deficit view of native languages.*

Thus, medium of instruction in language-in-education policy in India is caught in the vicious circle of first the post-colonial and now post-national (moving from nationalistic perspective to 'from the periphery' perspective) in which the minor and tribal languages are put under the survival question while the dominant Indian languages and English compete among themselves to retain their status and English with its popular demand has an edge over the others.

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**Appendix 1****Media of Instruction in the Indian States**

Sl. No.	Name of the State / Union Territories <sup>2</sup>	Media of Instruction		
		Primary	Upper Primary	Secondary
1.	Andhra Pradesh	Telugu, Urdu Oriya, English Hindi, Marathi Kannada Tamil	Telugu Urdu Oriya, English Hindi, Marathi Kannada Tamil	Telugu Urdu Oriya English Hindi, Marathi Kannada Tamil
2.	Arunachal Pradesh	English Hindi	English	English
3.	Assam	Assamese Bengali Bodo English	Assamese Bengali Bodo English, Hindi Others	Assamese Bengali Bodo English Hindi Others
4.	Bihar	Hindi, Urdu, Sanskrit English	English Hindi Sanskrit Urdu	English Hindi Sanskrit Urdu Others
5.	Chhattisgarh	Hindi Others	Hindi Others	English Hindi Others
6.	Goa	English Konkani Marathi Urdu Kannada (Dual Medium)	English Marathi	English Marathi
7.	Gujarat	Gujarati Others	English Gujarati Hindi Others	English Gujarati Hindi Others

<sup>2</sup>India has at present 29 states (provinces) and 7 specially administered regions called Union Territories (UTs). Some of the UTs are directly governed by the national government with a special administrator and some of them function like any other state. All the UTs get special attention from the national government on financial matter and welfare schemes.

Medium of Instruction in School Education in India...

8.	Haryana	English Hindi Others	English Hindi Sanskrit Others	English Hindi Sanskrit Others
9.	Himachal Pradesh	English Hindi Others	English Hindi Others	English Hindi Others
10.	Jammu & Kashmir	Dogri English Hindi Kashmiri Urdu Others	Dogri English Hindi Kashmiri Urdu Others	Dogri English Hindi Kashmiri Urdu Others
11.	Jharkhand	English Hindi Sanskrit Others	Bengali English Hindi Sanskrit Others	Bengali English Hindi Sanskrit Others
12.	Karnataka	Kannada English Hindi Marathi Tamil Telugu Urdu Malayalam Sanskrit Arabic	Kannada English Hindi Marathi Tamil Telugu Urdu Malayalam Sanskrit Arabic	Kannada English Hindi Marathi Tamil Telugu Urdu Malayalam Sanskrit Arabic
13.	Kerala	Malayalam English Tamil Kannada (Dual Medium)	Malayalam English Tamil Kannada (Dual Medium)	Malayalam English Tamil Kannada (Dual Medium)
14.	Madhya Pradesh	Hindi English Urdu Marathi	Hindi English Urdu Marathi Others	Hindi English Urdu Marathi Others
16.	Manipur	English Hindi Manipuri Others	English Hindi Manipuri Others	English Hindi Manipuri Others
17.	Meghalaya	English Garo Khasi Others	English	English

Medium of Instruction in School Education in India...

18.	Mizoram	English Mizo	English Mizo Others	English Mizo Others
19.	Nagaland	Angami Ao English Hindi Konyak Lotha Sema Others	Angami Ao English Hindi Konyak Sema Others	Angami English Hindi Others
20.	Odisha	English Odiya	English Hindi Odiya Others	English Hindi Odiya Sanskrit Others
21.	Punjab	English Hindi Punjabi	English Hindi Punjabi Others	English Hindi Punjabi Others
22.	Rajasthan	Hindi Others	Hindi Others	Hindi Others
23.	Sikkim	English Others	English Others	English Others
24.	Tamil Nadu	English Tamil	Tamil Telugu Malayalam Urdu Kannada	Tamil Telugu Malayalam Urdu Kannada
25.	Tripura	Bengali Kakbarak English Others	Bengali English Others	Bengali English Others
26.	Uttar Pradesh	Hindi Others	English Hindi Sanskrit Others	English Hindi Sanskrit Others
27.	Uttaranchal	Hindi Others	English Hindi Urdu Others	English Hindi Urdu Others
28.	West Bengal	Bengali Others	Bengali Hindi English Urdu Odiya Tamil	Bengali Hindi English Urdu Odiya Tamil

Medium of Instruction in School Education in India...

			Telugu Gujarati Tibetan Nepali	Telugu Gujarati Tibetan Nepali
29.	Andaman & Nicobar Islands	Bengali English Hindi Tamil Telugu	Bengali English Hindi Tamil Telugu	Bengali English Hindi Tamil Telugu
30.	Chandigarh	English Hindi Punjabi Others	English Hindi Punjabi Others	English Hindi Punjabi Others
31.	Dadra Nagar Haveli	English Gujarati Hindi Marathi	English Gujarati Hindi Marathi Sanskrit	English Gujarati Hindi Marathi Sanskrit
32.	Daman and Diu	English Gujarati	English Gujarati	English Gujarati
33.	Delhi	English Hindi Urdu Others	English Hindi Urdu Others	English Hindi Urdu Others
34.	Lakshadweep	Malayalam Others	English Malayalam Others	English Malayalam
35.	Puducherry	English Tamil Others	English Tamil Others	English Tamil Others