

23

LANGUAGE POLICY IN EDUCATION IN INDIA

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1 Background

Linguistically India is among the most diverse countries in the world. The recently concluded People's Linguistic Survey of India (PLSI) (Devy 2014) has identified at least 780 languages (see www.peopleslinguisticsurvey.org for a list of all volumes of PLSI). The 2001 Census of India listed over 6,600 mother tongues (MT) declarations by the people which were rationalised to 3,592 MTs. Out of these, 1,635 with more than 10,000 speakers each were listed and the remaining 1,957 were clubbed under a single "other" MT category. Further, the 1,635 listed MTs were grouped under 122 languages. This process of rationalisation of MT declarations and grouping them into languages has resulted in variation in the number of languages identified in successive decadal census surveys in India. This shows, on one hand, the fluidity of linguistic boundaries in Indian multilingualism leading to fluctuations in people's declarations and the arbitrariness of the grouping of MTs or languages into broader categories. For example, as many as 38 MTs, including Bhojpuri, are grouped under Hindi; yet Bhojpuri is considered a language in Nepal and Mauritius. Similarly, in 2001, Maithili was counted as one of the MTs under Hindi. Now Maithili is recognised as one of the 22 state level official languages in the Constitution of India (http://www.india.gov.in/govt/constitution_of_india.php), the VIIIth Schedule of which is a schedule of all the official languages for communication between the states as well as the states and the Union of India. In addition, Article 343(1) of the Constitution recognises Hindi (in Devanagari script) as the official language of the Union. English is not an "official" language of India; it is usually referred to as an associate or additional official language. Article 343(2) of the Constitution provides for English "to be used for all the official purposes of the Union" (in addition to Hindi) initially for a period of 15 years from the commencement of the Constitution (i.e. until January 25, 1965). Later, a Constitutional amendment lifted this time limitation, allowing continued use of English as additional official language of India for an indefinite period.

Assignment of constitutional status to some languages – Hindi as the official language of the Union of India, English as an associate official language at the national level, and the 22 state majority or regionally dominant languages (including Hindi) at the level of the states – is discriminatory against the other languages including the indigenous, tribal, and minority (ITM) languages. Languages in India constitute a hierarchical and pyramidal power structure of broadly

three layers with a “double divide” (Mohanty 2010, 2013; Mohanty & Panda 2015, 2016). English occupies the most powerful position in the hierarchy. Hindi and other major regional languages, listed in the VIIIth Schedule as official languages and branded as ‘vernaculars’ during the British rule, are in the middle layer of the hierarchy. The majority of languages, the ITM languages in particular, are in the lowest rung of the power hierarchy. This hierarchical system of power relationship between languages in India is characterised by a double divide, one between English and the major regional languages (English–Vernacular divide) and the other between the major regional languages and ITM languages (Vernacular–Other divide).

Historically, India has been a multilingual area with grassroots level of multilingualism and with recurrent patterns of dominance of some languages and the marginalisation of others. The hierarchical organisation of languages has also been typically characterised by a double divide. In different periods of history, a language like Sanskrit, Persian, or English has achieved a status of power and dominance with the patronage of the rulers – the Hindu kings, the Persian invaders and Moguls, or the British, respectively. This has led to the rise of the privileged elites who actively learned, cultivated, and propagated the dominant language as the language of power with greater control over resources. The languages of the masses, the majority languages in the middle rung of the three-tiered hierarchy of languages, were subordinate to the most dominant language of power. The languages of the masses had some presence in education and literacy instruction, but high levels of competence in the dominant language always remained the most prestigious and targeted as the end-point of quality education. The minority, low-caste, indigenous, or folk varieties or the ITM languages had no presence in education and other scholarly and social activities. Located in the lowest rung of the sociolinguistic hierarchy, the ITM languages had marginal use in limited domains of social communication particularly within the disadvantaged communities. It is, therefore, not surprising that the ITM languages remained excluded from formal education. The users of the ITM languages were subjected to a vicious circle of language disadvantage (Mohanty & Panda 2015) and these languages were progressively impoverished; most of them did not develop any writing system or orthography. There are writing systems that have been developed sporadically by some groups or persons for their own tribal languages and, in most cases, these are not authenticated nor used. A prominent Santali leader, the late Pandit Raghunath Murmu, developed the *Ol Chiki* system for writing Santali language and it is now officially used and taught in Santali schools in the state of Odisha. However, the Santali people in other states – Bihar and Bengal – use Devanagari and Bengali scripts, respectively, to write the language.

2 Language education in pre-independence India

Education in pre-colonial India was broadly multilingual in a nominal and informal sense (Mohanty 2008a). Early education of children from the majority communities (speaking the major Indian languages, i.e. vernaculars) was in the mother tongues. As the pupils moved into the higher levels of scholarship, learning involved more powerful language(s) of dominance, such as Sanskrit or Persian, as the language of teaching of religious texts and philosophical treatises. Thus, education of children in formal or informal systems involved learning of the mother tongue and other languages at different levels. Formal education was rare among the tribal communities and, hence, tribal mother tongues (which were not the vernaculars) had no presence in the common system of education. The distinction between language as a medium of teaching and as a school subject started during the British rule when English was introduced in schools as a language of teaching in private English medium (EM) schools and as a school subject in other schools where teaching was in Indian languages. Promotion of English in formal education

entailed a distinction between Sanskrit as a *classical* language and other major Indian languages, those labelled as *vernaculars* and used by the masses. School education during the period of British rule usually involved use of one language (*vernacular*) as medium of instruction (MoI) and other languages, such as English and Sanskrit (*classical* language), as school subjects, except in the private English medium schools, and in special and exclusive programmes of education in Sanskrit or Persian/Urdu. Higher education in British India was in English; the *vernaculars* (sometimes also labelled as Modern Indian Languages) and *classical* languages were taught as language subjects.

The hierarchical distinction between English and Indian languages (including the vernaculars and the classical languages) was institutionalised in education in British India. Formal education in English was clearly associated with instrumental benefits in British administration and English replaced Sanskrit as it became the colonial language of power and prestige. The dominance of English over the Indian languages was contested during the freedom movement. The discourse of rejection of the British rule necessarily involved rejection of the dominance of English. Gandhi was a champion of MT education for all (Mohanty 1998). But, ironically, all the major national leaders of freedom movement, including Gandhi and Nehru, had education in English and some of the most prominent were educated in England. By the time of independence from the British rule, the Indian leaders were considerably influenced by English (and the western liberal ideas that came with it) and, in many ways, this facilitated the continued dominance of English in education and governance in post-colonial India, despite the legacy of a long period of fighting for freedom, which thrived on rejection of the ‘foreign.’

3 Current languages-in-education policy and practice in India

Broadly, the pattern of education during the British rule continues in the post-colonial India with a growing prominence of English at all levels of education. At the same time, Hindi is sought to be developed and widely used to become a common language across India as per the mandate of the Constitution of India (Articles 344 and 351). The dominance of English is politically resisted in the Hindi speaking states in the northern regions of India, whereas the southern states have shown their preference for English, rejecting the prospects of imposition of Hindi in the non-Hindi speaking areas. The “*Hindi Virodh*” (Oppose Hindi) movements in the non-Hindi areas have sought to resist the initiatives of the government for the promotion of Hindi. The “*Angrezi Hatao*” (ban English) movements in other parts of India have sought to resist the dominance of English over the regional majority languages often projected as MTs. The anti-English movements are usually projected as movements for the promotion of MTs as these are seen as being adversely affected by the dominance of English. However, these political movements hardly ever project the ITM languages as MTs and as deserving the same consideration or status as the ‘majority’ mother tongues.

Education in India reflects the sociolinguistic double divide through the exclusion of ITM languages from formal education. Only three to five of the tribal languages are used as MoI in regular school programmes for primary education (Grades 1 to 5) and, except Bodo and Santali, which are the tribal languages recognised after 2003 as official languages listed in the VIIIth Schedule of the Constitution, no other tribal language has any presence in higher education. The Anthropological Survey of India has listed 159 distinct tribal languages (Singh 2002) in the country and these languages remain neglected in education, governance, and other domains of socio-economic activities. Almost 99% of the tribal MT children in India are forced into submersion education starting from primary grades in a dominant language with a subtractive effect on their mother tongue competence. This results in large scale push-out (in the sense that the

schools impose language and teaching conditions which push the pupils out) and educational failure among the tribal children (Mohanty 2008b; Mohanty & Skutnabb-Kangas 2013).

The number of languages used as languages of teaching or medium of instruction (MoI) and as school subjects in India has been declining sharply (Panda & Mohanty 2014). The number of languages taught as language subjects in schools also declined from 81 in 1970 to 41 in 1998. Languages used as MoI in primary grades declined from 43 in 1990 to 33 in 1998. The number of languages used in education has declined further in recent years, despite the Constitutional provisions for education in MT; Article 350A of the Constitution of India mandates “instruction in the mother tongue in primary stage of education to children belonging to linguistic minority groups” (i.e. tribal languages). This provision has not been implemented in educational practices in the country.

3.1 The three-language formula: changing positions on languages in education

In 1956, the Central Advisory Board on Education (CABE) attempted to deal with inequalities among the Indian languages and divergent practices in schools across the country and proposed a set of unifying principles for languages in school education (Meganathan 2011). This was called the three-language formula (TLF), which was incorporated into the Annual Report of the Ministry of Education (MOE) in the year 1957 (MOE 1957). The TLF 1957 recommended the teaching of three languages in school education with different combinations in Hindi and non-Hindi speaking areas. As the first language of teaching, the TLF 1957 recommended use of the *regional language or mother tongue* or a selected composite course of a combination of MT, regional language, and classical language like Sanskrit. There were two alternative recommendations for selection of the second and the third languages. Alternative one suggested teaching Hindi or English as the second language and teaching a Modern Indian or European language (not covered as the first or the second language) as the third language. The other alternative for choice of the second and third languages suggested teaching English or a modern European language as the second language and teaching Hindi (in non-Hindi speaking areas) or another modern Indian language (in Hindi speaking areas) as the third language. This formula did not distinguish between the regional language and the MT making it convenient for the states to impose the state majority languages as the first language and MoI on tribal and other linguistic minority children whose MT was not the state majority language. Further, recommendation of Hindi as the second language was not acceptable to the non-Hindi states (particularly the South Indian states). In addition, this formula was viewed as too complicated to be practicable. A simplified version was approved in the Conference of Chief Ministers of the States held in 1961. This 1961 TLF recommended use of three languages in school education (GOI 1962: 67):

- 1 The regional language or the MT when the latter is different from the regional language;
- 2 Hindi or any other Indian language in the Hindi speaking areas; and
- 3 English or any other modern European language.

The simplified TLF did recognise that the MT may be different from the regional languages. However, the two were not explicitly suggested as mutually exclusive options. This confusion made it possible for the states to impose the regional majority language of the state on ITM children. A majority of the state population had the regional language as their MT and the state governments found it convenient to accept the ‘regional language’ as the MT of all children including those from ITM communities. This version of the TLF suggested that

the children in Hindi speaking areas would have Hindi as the first language (non-Hindi MT children in these areas were also taught Hindi as it was the regional majority language) and an Indian language other than Hindi as the second language. The children in non-Hindi speaking areas would have the state majority language as the first language (children with other MTs were also taught the state majority language) and Hindi as the second language. The third language for all children would be English (or a modern European language, which was never taught in any school). In practice, in the Hindi-speaking areas, Hindi became the first language, Sanskrit the second language, and English the third language for all children. In the non-Hindi speaking areas, the state majority language became the first language, Hindi the second language, and English the third language. Hindi as the compulsory second language for the non-Hindi areas was resisted since none of the non-Hindi state languages was taught as a second language in the Hindi-speaking areas, as was envisaged in the revised TLF. Adding to the anomaly, the earlier form as well as the modified form of the TLF was applicable only to public or government schools. The private schools were free to choose their MoI as well as other languages as school subjects.

The TLF has been modified from time to time in response to the anomalies and confusions raised by the earlier versions. The gap between the modifications was sometimes too short to make any impact on actual practices in school education in the country. All these changes to the TLF were directed at finding some compromise between the role of English as a language in demand and the projection of Hindi as a national level language in face of opposition from non-Hindi states. In the process, the issue of MT as the language of teaching for all children including those from ITM communities has been neglected. A modification to the TLF in 1967 sought to make teaching of Hindi optional and it also recommended the use of tribal languages as MoI in the early school years. But, this recommendation, like several others during the recent years, remained unimplemented (Mohanty & Panda 2015). There were also several subsequent modifications to the TLF which failed to have any real impact on the choice of languages in schools in India. The school practices continued to be divergent while “English became the most common second language subject in all the states, followed by either Hindi or Sanskrit as the third language subject” (Mohanty 2006: 274). Hindi as well as the state majority languages were relegated to secondary roles in the school curricula and ITM languages remained neglected. The TLF was not a comprehensive language-in-education policy; it was only a balancing formula which raised more problems and issues than it solved. Lack of a clear language policy in education, the dual system of private and public schools, and the growing presence and popularity of private English medium schools reinforced the hegemonic role of English in school and higher education in India (see Mohanty 2017, for further discussion).

3.2 Languages in education beyond the three-language-formula: monolingual school practices in multilingual social reality

The rhetoric of language policy in education in India remains fractured between a political desire to promote the mother tongues and indigenous identities of the masses in a multilingual society and, at the same time, to cater to the growing popular craze for English. In most of the 29 states in India, English is taught in Grade 1 in government schools. The National Knowledge Commission (NKC) (2009) of India also recommended teaching English from the first year in primary education in order to ‘democratise’ English among the masses. “Such proposals of early introduction of teaching of English in schools belie unfamiliarity with the principles of teaching languages in a multilingual framework and the well-established pedagogic grounds” (Panda & Mohanty 2014: 111).

The National Curriculum Framework (NCF) was revised in 2005 (NCERT 2005). The NCF 2005 recommended multilingual education with the home language(s) as “the medium of learning in schools” (NCERT 2005: 37). It reiterated the Constitutional commitments for education in MTs and cited research evidence showing cognitive, social, and scholastic advantages of bi-/multilingualism. However, NCF 2005, along with the position papers on the same, was self-contradictory in several ways. While it recommended the home language as the MoI, it accepted the continuation of the English medium school system. Further, NCF 2005 (Section 3.13, Chapter 3) treated English as the second language for all children in complete disregard to the multilingual reality of the country (Mohanty & Panda 2015). The confusion was further evident in the *National Focus Group – Position Papers* (NCERT 2006) which followed the NCF 2005. In discussing the teaching of Indian languages and English (Volume I: Curricular Areas, NCERT 2006), it accepted the practice of using Hindi and English as MoI from Grade 1 in some government schools such as the *Kendriya Vidyalaya* or Central Schools. These are Government of India (usually referred to as the Central Government) schools located in different parts of India. These schools were started to provide uniform schooling to the children of all Central Government employees as they are posted in different parts of the country and transferred from one place to another during their service. The children in these schools have different MTs. But they are taught in English (used as MoI to teach Mathematics and Sciences) and Hindi (used as MoI to teach Social Sciences) although the MTs of most of the children in these schools are not Hindi or English. The contradictions were further evident in the explicit support in the *Position Papers* (NCERT 2006) for the principle of cross-linguistic transfer (Cummins 1984, 2009) and the delayed introduction of English only after the development of a strong MT foundation; and the simultaneous, but contradictory, proposition to continue the practice of teaching English from Grade 1, as in private English medium schools (and also in the Government schools in most of the states). As Panda and Mohanty (2014: 112) pointed out, the NCF 2005 “failed to project a clear vision in respect of the role of home language(s) *vis-à-vis* other dominant languages including English.” According to them, “English turned out to be the Achilles’ heel for NCF 2005.”

The NCF 2005 was followed by a major national initiative in 2009 in form of the Right to Free and Compulsory Education Act (RTE). The RTE Act guaranteed free education for all six- to 14-year-old children as a right. However, it could not reinforce the principle of MT based multilingual education purportedly advanced through NCF 2005. The provision, in Article 29(2) (f) of RTE, that the “medium of instruction shall, *as far as practicable*, be in child’s mother tongue” (emphasis added) is with a caveat and it fails to guarantee education in MT. The proposal for a uniform school system in India doing away with the dual system of private schools for the privileged class and public schools for the less privileged was mooted earlier and reiterated in several education policy documents and recommendations of education commissions. This proposal was debated prior to the RTE Act. But, in spite of expectations, the RTE 2009 could not ensure a common school system which could have replaced the existing dual system of private English medium schools, mostly for the privileged class, and the public vernacular medium schools for the disadvantaged (see Mohanty 2017, for a discussion on the social stratification associated with the English medium private schools and the vernacular medium government schools).

There is a sharp decline in the number of languages as MoI in higher levels of education in India. As pointed out above, there are 33 languages as MoI in primary level education. This number further declines in secondary and high school levels (Grades 5 to 12) and university and technical education is almost exclusively in English. Only 30 out of more than 617 universities or institutions of higher, technical, or post-graduate level education provide instruction in or allow students to use a language other than English. The number of non-English languages

present in the curricula of undergraduate institutions is slightly higher. The almost exclusive presence of English in higher and technical education in India has a ‘wash back’ effect (Heugh 2009) which boosts the popular demand for early education in English. It seems, English is increasingly projected as central to education in India; other languages in multilingual India have a role, but only as long as they complement the position of English as the targeted endpoint.

A comprehensive language-in-education policy has not been attempted in India. The constitutional provisions for languages in education have not been transformed into policy provisions nor put into action. Numerous *ad hoc* recommendations such as the TLF in its various forms, the recommendations of NKC and various National Education Commissions, the NCF, the RTE Act, and many other temporary measures and government proclamations have only added to the confusion over the place of Indian languages and English in education. It is, therefore, not surprising that, with its global appeal and power, English has gradually replaced Hindi as the most widely used language in schools. Besides being the MoI in all private English medium schools (which now have a share of over 40% of the total student population) and in government schools in some of the states, English is taught as a compulsory subject in Grade 1 in almost all the states and Union Territories (UTs). The linguistic hierarchy in India – the most privileged position of English, the relatively advantaged status of the regional majority languages or the ‘vernaculars,’ and the disadvantaged status of ITM languages – is clearly related to how the schools are organised in Indian society (Mohanty 2017). “The challenge of the double divide is most formidable for the ITM children in schools who need to negotiate simultaneously the English-Vernacular and the Vernacular-Other language divide. They struggle not only to learn the vernacular language of the school with no or little proficiency in the same but also to learn an alien language like English twice removed from their social reality and early experience” (Mohanty 2010a: 147).

The hegemonic role of English in Indian education has forced a monolingual orientation to education in a country where multilingualism is the social reality. All the efforts and policy pronouncements in respect of the positioning of languages in education have presupposed a need to impose a uniform framework in a formidably complex sociolinguistic reality. For example, the assumption that all the children in India need three languages is a denial of the diversity of multilingual contexts. The problem with the TLF was that while the Hindi MT children may manage with school education in Hindi and English, the majority language children from the non-Hindi areas need education in their MT, English, and Hindi and the three languages may not meet the requirements of tribal MT children who need education in MT, the regional majority language, Hindi, and English. In view of such diversity of needs for languages in education, any formula for a fixed number of languages in formal education is grossly misplaced. It is not surprising that the fixed quota solution of uniformity proposed by the TLF has not worked; it sought to impose a Procrustean rule of forced choices in the language education policy in a diverse multilingual society.

3.3 Mother tongue-based multilingual education in India: experiments in language policy and practice

Shohamy (2010) distinguished between declared and *de facto* language policies in education as “policies that are manifested in policy documents in the form of laws or other official statements” (p. 182) and what is actually implemented. The former are ideological statements showing some intentions which are often not followed up with meaningful implementation. Language education policy in India seems to have been trapped in this duality and the wide gaps between the declared and *de facto* policies have serious consequences, particularly for the tribal minorities.

The declared policies and pronouncements have been egalitarian and apparently promoting all languages and minority MTs. The actual school practices, on the other hand, have reproduced the sociolinguistic hierarchy among languages, thereby seriously disadvantaging the ITM language communities.

The ideology of promoting and protecting the rights of communities to maintain, learn, and develop their languages in line with the constitutional commitments as well as various policy recommendations, along with the political processes associated with linguistic identity of the ITM groups, led to some attempts in India to develop special programmes for children whose MT was not the school language. The earliest attempt was by the Central Institute of Indian Languages of the Government of India which implemented the bilingual transfer programmes (see Mohanty 1989, for details and a critical analysis) for early education in tribal MTs in Grade 1, progressively switching over to the dominant state majority language by the end of Grade 2 in a transitional model of bilingual education. The programme was dropped after a few years as it was not successful. The focus on early transition from the MT to the dominant school language failed to provide necessary developmental opportunities for children's MT and it became quite evident that the dominant language, rather than the MT, was the actual target in schools. The strength of the children in their MT was never put to any use and, further, by the time they reached Grade 2, they could not develop grade appropriate competence in the dominant language.

Some experimental programmes of mother tongue based multilingual education (MLE) started in two states in India, namely, Andhra Pradesh and Odisha, in the years 2004 and 2006, respectively. The programmes begin from Grade 1 with the development of proficiency in MT used as MoI for acquisition of literacy and primary level education. The programmes are based on the basic psycholinguistic principles of bi-/multilingual education (Cummins 1984, 2009, etc). The MLE programme in Andhra Pradesh (see Mohanty, Mishra, Reddy & Ramesh 2009, for details of the early Phase of MLE in these states) started in eight tribal languages in 240 schools. Odisha started the MLE programme in ten tribal languages in 195 schools. The tribal languages in these programmes are written in the script of the major state language (Telugu or Odia) since they do not have any indigenous writing system. The tribal MTs are used as the respective first languages (L1) of early literacy and as MoI for primary education in these MLE programmes. The state majority language – Telugu in Andhra Pradesh and Odia in Odisha – is introduced as a second language subject for development of oral communication skills in Grade 2 and for reading and writing skills from Grade 3 onwards. The teachers in these programmes are from the respective tribal language communities with competence in the tribal mother tongue as well as the state majority language (and English). These programmes follow the normal school curriculum of the respective state and make special efforts to bring in children's cultural experience and indigenous cultural knowledge systems in developing the textbooks and curricular materials. English is taught as a school subject from Grade 3 in Odisha and Grade 1 in Andhra Pradesh programmes. The Odisha MLE programme is now extended to 21 tribal languages in 1,485 schools with over 140,000 students in Grades 1 to 5. The Andhra Pradesh programme was extended to over 3,000 schools by 2013. The pilot programme in Andhra Pradesh has now been stopped apparently because the subsequent government of the state was not willing to fund the project. Several evaluations of these MLE programmes (NCERT 2011; Panda, Mohanty, Nag, & Biswabandan 2011), however, show positive effects on classroom achievement, school attendance and participation, and teacher and community attitudes. Table 23.1 gives the MoI and curricular details for the MLE programmes in Andhra Pradesh and Odisha.

A special intervention programme called *MLE Plus* (MLE+) was planned and implemented by the present author and a co-researcher for a period of five years from 2007 along with the

Language policy in education in India

Table 23.1 MoI and language subjects in MLE programmes in India

<i>Curriculum</i>	<i>State</i>	<i>Grade I</i>	<i>Grade II</i>	<i>Grade III</i>	<i>Grade IV</i>	<i>Grade V</i>
Medium of Instruction	Andhra Pradesh	Tribal MT	Tribal MT	Tribal MT: 50% Telugu: 50%	Tribal MT: 25% Telugu: 75%	Telugu: 100%
	Odisha	Tribal MT	Tribal MT	Tribal MT	Tribal MT: EVS/Science Odia: Math	Tribal MT: EVS/Science Odia: Math
Language 1	Andhra Pradesh	Tribal MT	Tribal MT	Tribal MT	Tribal MT	Tribal MT
	Odisha	Tribal MT	Tribal MT	Tribal MT	Tribal MT	Tribal MT
Language 2	Andhra Pradesh	X	Telugu	Telugu	Telugu	Telugu
	Odisha	X	Odia	Odia	Odia	Odia
Language 3	Andhra Pradesh	English	English	English	English	English
	Odisha	X	X	English	English	English

Notes:

1. Math, Environmental Studies/Science are taught as Subjects in the Primary Grades (I to V).
2. Oral competence in Languages Two and Three are developed before teaching of reading and writing.

government MLE programme in Odisha (see Panda & Mohanty 2011, 2014 for details) in eight schools in two tribal languages – Saora and Kui. The MLE+ intervention followed a cultural psychological approach and used everyday cultural practices in the respective tribal community to develop classroom activities and plan pedagogic interventions in the classrooms. The MLE+ programme sought to promote literacy engagement through several community-based activities and a ‘synergistic reading programme’ with the children, their parents, and the community members sharing group reading, storytelling, and cooperative deliberations for promotion of oral and literacy activities and skills. Several internal and external evaluations of MLE+ show significant gains in children’s classroom achievement and participation and also indicated positive attitudes of teachers, parents, and community members towards the MT-based education of children (Panda & Mohanty 2011).

Besides these experimental MLE programmes, other states in India, such as Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Jharkhand, and Assam, with large populations of tribal communities, have various supplementary programmes in MT with materials and activities such as storybooks, rhymes and songs, number games, and other specially designed activities to support and augment children’s learning in the dominant school language. The programmes seek to use the children’s mother tongue to facilitate the learning of and in the dominant language. These initiatives in the use of MT-based materials and activities in different states show a growing awareness in India of the critical role of MT in promoting quality learning among the ITM children. The MLE programmes and other MT-based initiatives for quality education of ITM children are not mainstream programmes, however. They are treated as innovative pilot projects in tribal education. However, in a positive development in education in minority MTs, the Government of Odisha (India) has announced a policy of MT-based MLE for tribal children in the state (Department of School & Mass Education 2014). The policy follows from the success of the experimental MLE programme in the state and is based on the recommendations of the report *MLE Policy and Implementation Guidelines for Odisha* (Mohanty et al. 2014) which provides the rationale,

theoretical bases, and curricular plan and other details for the MLE programme for tribal MT children in Odisha. The Odisha MLE policy is the first such language in education policy in India. In another positive step for early education in MT, the National Early Childhood Care and Education Policy (Ministry of Women & Child Development 2013) mandates use of MT along with other languages in all programmes of early childhood education for the zero- to six-year-old children in India.

4 Conclusion

India does not have a comprehensive language education policy. Starting from the constitutional provisions in respect of languages, there are numerous reports, recommendations, and suggestions in the form of language formula, government directives, curricular frameworks, laws, commission proposals, educational policies, and various other documents and judicial pronouncements regarding languages and language rights. There are also several views and attitudes expressed through significant political initiatives, declarations, and movements and civil society activism. All of these can be taken as aspects of India's language education policy. Language education policy is not just a set of written documents and directives in respect of the role and positioning of languages in education and curricula at different levels. As Spolsky (2004) suggested, actual practices, beliefs about languages in education, community attitudes, and political processes can be taken as constituting integral aspects of language education policy. However, as I have shown, the available mass of constitutional, legal, quasi-legal provisions and pronouncements of intensions and directives in respect of languages in education fail to project a unified picture and are fraught with ambiguities and contradictions. The *de facto* policies and practices in language education are divergent and the declared policies inconsistent.

The multilingual sociolinguistic realities of India and the complexities of a diverse society have not been adequately reflected in actual practices in languages in education. At one level, the national policy and provisions have sought to protect the minority linguistic rights and interests and, at another level, they have been discriminatory against the ITM languages. The politics of language identity has led to egalitarian constitutional and policy proclamations for education in MTs, but the recommendations of several National Education Commissions, National Policies on Education, and Curricular Framework for education in the MTs have gone unimplemented. English, as such, has never been explicitly projected as the language of choice and significance in India's education and polity, but, amid all the confusions and contradictions and the conflict between the pro- and anti-Hindi forces, it has assumed a position of dominance by default. The global significance of English and the growing demand for the language in India and the rest of the world have added to the significance and dominance of English in education in India. The major Indian languages are threatened but not yet endangered in their position in education despite being progressively reduced to a secondary role. The ITM languages are cumulatively neglected and ignored in education. There are some attempts to restore these languages through recent initiatives in MT-based MLE and some distinct policy pronouncements. But, the prospects of a large-scale restoration of MTs in education in India seem to be bleak. The burden of the sociolinguistic double divide has progressively led to homogenisation of linguistic diversity in education and to monolingual educational practices in a multilingual society. As a result, maintenance of ITM languages is seriously affected. UNESCO's (2009) *Atlas of world's languages in danger* lists 197 languages for India in the endangered category, the highest in the world. Over 80% of these endangered languages of India (Mohanty & Skutnabb-Kangas 2013) are tribal languages. Use of languages in education is critical for maintenance of linguistic diversity in the world (Skutnabb-Kangas 2000). Clearly, the ITM languages are threatened by their neglect in the language policy in education in India.

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