
4 Language-in-education policy and practice in India: experiments in multilingual education for tribal children

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INTRODUCTION

Around the world, the loss and endangerment of languages can be seen as a consequence of state policies, social discrimination and denial of linguistic human rights (Skutnabb-Kangas 2000). The process of language loss continues to be alarming; the last speaker of a language dies in some corner of the globe every 2–3 weeks. At the current rate of linguistic diversity loss, only about 10% of the languages in the world today will survive this century. In India, 196 languages are facing different levels of endangerment (UNESCO 2009). India is a paradox of endangerment and diversity. It is a country with the highest number of languages in the endangered categories and, at the same time, it is the fourth most linguistically diverse country in the world, with 300–400 major languages and a large number of mother tongues. The Census of India in the year 2001 received 6661 mother-tongue declarations, which were rationalised to 3592 mother tongues, out of which 1635 were named in the Census report while the remaining 1957 – each with less than 10000 speakers – were simply grouped under the ‘other mother tongues’ category. Most of the Indian languages in the UNESCO endangered categories are Indigenous and tribal minority (ITM) languages, and some of them have less than 100 speakers. Prolonged neglect in significant domains of social use and economic activities has left the ITM languages marginalised and cornered to home domain only.

During the 1980s, working with the Kond community in Phulbani district of Odisha (India), we noted that Kui, the language of the community, was in wide use in weekly village markets as much as in many other public

domains. Any outsider seeking to enter a bargain in the market had to deal with the Kond woman seller who spoke her language and, hence, had the last word in the bargain. In less than 30 years, the dominant state language, Odia, and the language of the traders from the neighboring state, Telugu, have displaced Kui from the market domain; the Kond woman has lost her language, her trading power and her economy. ITM languages are progressively weakened due to neglect and the imposition of the dominant languages in major domains of use including education, which is the most potent factor in vitality of languages (Fishman 1991; Skutnabb-Kangas 2000). Indian multilingualism is known to be characterised by strong maintenance norms and several other positive features (Panda and Mohanty 2013). However, despite this, languages are distributed over a power hierarchy, with English as the most privileged language and other state level or regional languages clearly dominating over the ITM languages, which are in turn placed in the lowest rungs of power. This hierarchy across the languages has been described as a ‘double divide’ (Mohanty 2010a) – one between English and the major regional languages (vernaculars), and the other between the regional languages and the ITM ones.

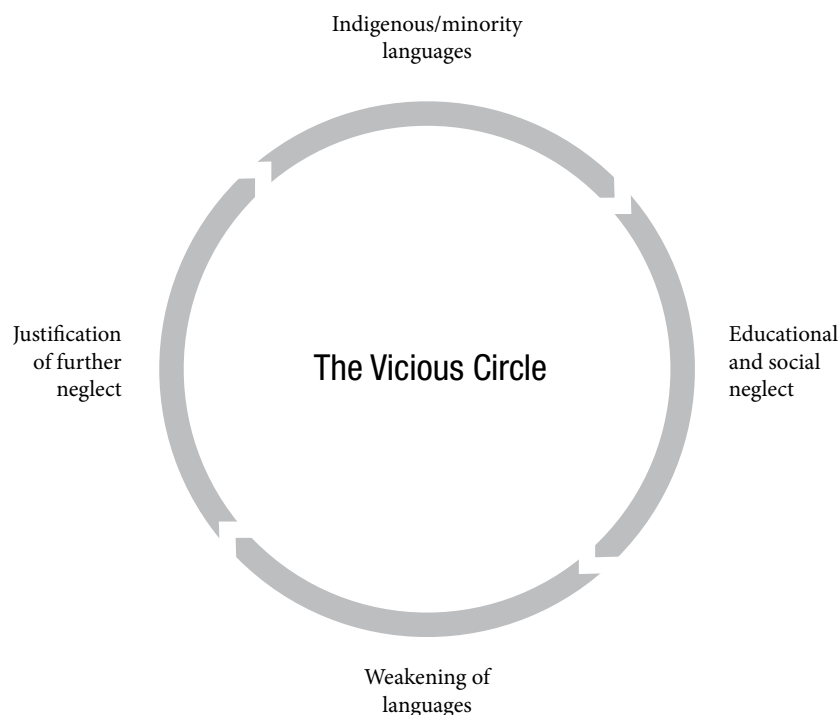
In this chapter, we examine the language-in-education policy (LiEP) and practices in India and their implications for India’s linguistic diversity as well as for education and economic development of the tribal communities. We show that the educational practices with respect to languages in India lead to large-scale educational failure, capability deprivation and poverty among the tribal communities. Some recent attempts to deal with the language disadvantage of the tribal children through mother tongue-based multilingual education (MLE) are critically examined. Our analysis of the educational language policy and practice in India focuses on the extent to which they support the principles of inclusive growth and social equity and linguistic human rights to which India is committed as a liberal democracy in the modern world and a member of the Commonwealth of Nations.

MULTILINGUALISM IN INDIA AND THE DOUBLE DIVIDE

Indian society is characterised by complementary use of many languages at the grass-roots level; different languages are quite predictably distributed over different domains of use – communication within family, marketplace, inter-group transactions, religious activities, entertainment, formal workplace and so on – with each language meeting the specific functional requirements of

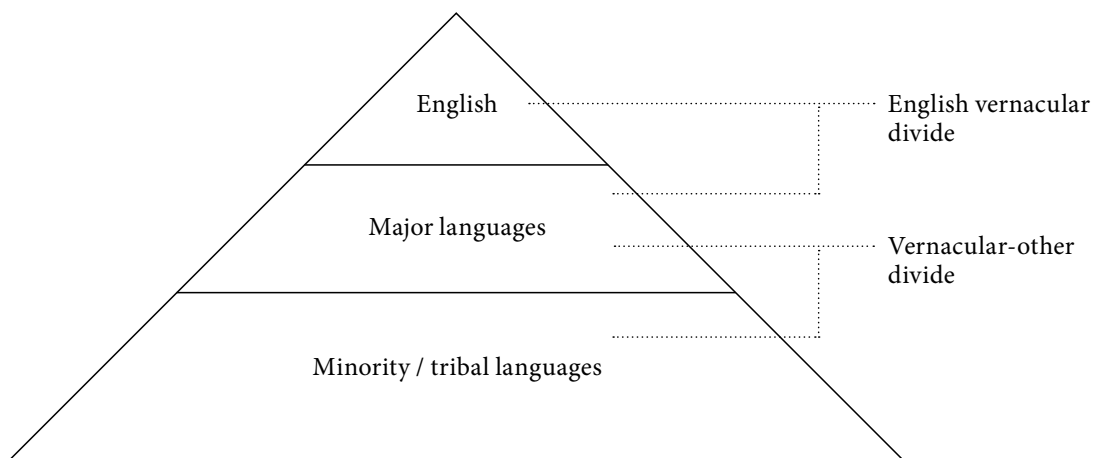
the user. Often, boundaries across languages are flexible allowing their users to move freely between languages such as Hindi, Urdu, Punjabi, Bhojpuri and other varieties of Hindi. Usually people develop multiple linguistic identities (Bhatia and Ritchie 2004) through complex processes of multilingual socialisation (Mohanty, Panda, and Mishra 1999). As people move between languages and domains of use, it becomes evident that 'no single language is sufficient for communicative requirements in different situations and occasions, and, hence, individuals need multiple languages' (Mohanty 2010a, 134). Such features support maintenance of languages in face of language contact and a natural and unimpaired communication flow is maintained throughout the country (Khubchandani 1978; Pattanayak 1981, 1984).

However, strong maintenance norms and other positive features of multilingualism in India do not ensure an egalitarian positioning of languages. As noted, languages are located in different layers of power hierarchy; some languages enable their users to have privileged access to power and resources whereas others lead to disadvantages. The tribal languages in India are marginalised and deprived of their place in domains of socio-economic and educational significance, and in turn they lose their instrumental vitality. As a consequence of prolonged neglect, deprivation and domain shrinkage, these languages become weak. Unfortunately, such weakness is used as a justification for further neglect. Educational use of the tribal languages is often shunned by the policy-makers because these languages are viewed as inadequately developed for use as languages of science and formal education. The tribal languages are further stigmatised as 'dialects' since most of them do not have an Indigenous or exclusive script or writing system, a position that ignores the fact that a writing system is not a defining feature of language and that many major languages in the world are written in borrowed scripts such as the Roman script used to write French, English, Spanish and other languages. Thus, as shown in figure 1, a vicious circle of disadvantage (Mohanty, Mishra, Reddy and Ramesh 2009) is perpetuated when the tribal languages, subjected to prolonged socio-economic and educational neglect, are progressively weakened and remain underdeveloped and, then, that weakness is used to justify further language neglect.

Figure 1: The vicious circle of language disadvantage

Clearly, the ITM languages are marginalised, rendered almost powerless, and located in the lowest rungs of the power hierarchy in Indian multilingualism. In the relationship between language and power, the dominant position in the hierarchy is held by English, whereas the major regional languages, known as the ‘vernaculars’ since the period of British rule, are located in the middle level. Beneath English, clusters of languages are placed in different layers of the hierarchy. Within each of these layers, languages can be further categorised into different levels of power. English used by the upper socio-economic strata and the urban elites, for example, is viewed as more prestigious than the variety used by their rural counterparts in relative poverty. Similarly, among the ‘vernaculars’, some languages and varieties, such as the so-called ‘standard’ Hindi, are associated with greater power and privileges compared to the others. However, broadly speaking, analysis of the major gaps in the power hierarchy of languages reveals two major cleavages – one between English and the major regional languages and the other between the regional languages and the ITM languages – as a ‘double divide’ (Mohanty 2010a; Mohanty, Panda and Pal 2010) in a three-tiered hierarchy.

Figure 2: Indian multilingualism: the double divide



The double divide in Indian multilingualism emanates from the hegemonic status of English in post-colonial India. English wields greater power over the major Indian languages including Hindi. These major national and regional languages are under pressure due to the growing influence and rapid spread of English and, in the regional levels, these languages in turn marginalise the tribal languages, subjecting them to maximum neglect in all spheres of the society. The operation of the double divide is quite evident in the national policy and practice relating to languages and their role in education.

INDIA'S LANGUAGE POLICY IN EDUCATION

The Constitution of India (Government of India 1950) recognises Hindi as the official language of the Union of India and 22 languages (including Hindi) as official languages for communication between the states and the Union (Articles 343, 344, 346 and Schedule VIII of the Constitution of India). English was recognised as an associate official language initially for a period of 15 years, during which Hindi was envisaged to be developed nationally for use as the sole official language of the Union. However, in view of the resistance to the dominance of Hindi from the non-Hindi speaking areas of the country, the official status of English was extended for an indefinite period. Assignment of official status to some of the many languages in India is clearly discriminatory against the other languages since these 'official' languages are viewed as more powerful. In fact, in 1950 when the Constitution was

promulgated, only 14 languages had the official language status included in Schedule VIII. Through several amendments, the last one being in 2003, the number of official languages increased to 22; with intense political lobbying some powerful language communities were able to get official status for their languages. No tribal language was included in the schedule of official languages till the year 2003 when two tribal languages – Bodo and Santhali – were declared as official languages. The official status is significant since it guarantees public education and other privileges in a language. In fact, besides these 22 official languages, very few are used as languages of education.

Only 3–4 tribal languages are used as languages of teaching or the medium of instruction (MoI) in regular school programmes. Absence of tribal children's mother tongue from their early education has several negative consequences. Besides pushing these children into a forced submersion education in a language they do not understand at the point of school entry – thus leading to large scale school failure – a dominant non-mother tongue MoI has a subtractive effect on their competence in the mother tongue; as they struggle to learn the school language or the MoI, their mother-tongue competence declines. It is noteworthy that the number of non-tribal languages outside the 22 scheduled official languages used as MoI in schools is also declining. By 1998, the number of languages used as MoI and as school subjects declined to 33 and 41, respectively, from the corresponding figures of 43 and 81 in 1970 (Panda and Mohanty 2013). The Constitution of India (Article 350A), as well as many other policy documents and recommendations of several Educational Commissions, emphasise 'instruction in the mother tongue at the primary stage of education to children belonging to linguistic minority groups' (Article 350A, Constitution of India). These statutory provisions and several policy recommendations were never put to serious practice and the role of mother tongues, state-level majority languages, Hindi and English in school education remain quite vague and divergent across the states.

A three-language formula (TLF) was proposed in 1957 (and was subsequently revised several times) in an attempt to rationalise the role of different languages in school programmes (see Meganathan 2011 and Mohanty 2006 for discussion). The TLF recommended the use of regional language or mother tongue as the first language of teaching (MoI) to be followed by Hindi or regional language and English as school subjects. Lack of clarity in distinguishing between the mother tongues and the regional language led to imposition of the state majority languages as MoI on tribal and other linguistic minority children whose mother tongue was not the state majority language. The TLF was modified in 1967, primarily to make teaching of

Hindi optional (particularly for the South Indian states). The 1967 modification also recommended the use of tribal languages as MoI in early school years. But this recommendation as well as similar ones in several other policy documents remained unimplemented (Mohanty 2006). Despite several subsequent modifications to the TLF, the school practices across the country remained 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). The TLF was never intended to be a policy framework; it was only a balancing formula. But, even as such, the TLF raised more problems and issues than it solved. Lack of a clear policy framework, absence of a uniform school system, and the growing presence and popularity of private English medium schools reinforced the hegemonic role of English in school and higher education in India. This has led Hindi and other state languages to struggle for existence in the schools while the chances of tribal languages remain bleak.

The policy rhetoric in respect of languages in education in India seems to be guided by political compulsions to assert the mother tongues and Indigenous identities of the masses. But the actual practices are influenced by the popular craze for more and better English. In 19 of the 29 states in India, English is taught in Grade 1 in government schools. Surprisingly, the National Knowledge Commission (2009) of India also recommended teaching English from the first year in government primary schools in order to 'democratise' English among the masses, despite the established pedagogic principles of grounding English language teaching in a mother tongue-based multilingual education framework (Skutnabb-Kangas and Mohanty 2009). Thus, English has effectively become the most preferred language in education, pushing the other Indian languages to lesser roles while the ITM languages remain marginalised, 'caught in the underside of the vernacular-other language divide' (Mohanty 2010b, 168).

In the year 2005, the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) (NCERT 2005) was revised to acknowledge the significance of mother tongue in early education. The NCF (2005) reiterated the research evidence that showed the cognitive, social and scholastic advantages of bi/multilingualism and asserted the Constitutional commitment for education in the mother tongue. It recommended multilingual education with the home language(s) as 'the medium of learning in schools' (NCERT 2005, 37). However, the curricular framework of 2005, along with the position papers on the same, became a bundle of contradictions in several ways. It recommended home language as the MoI, but failed to reject English medium school system. Strangely, the

document treated English as the second language for all children (NCERT 2005, section 3.13, chapter 3). The confusion was further evident in the National Focus Group – Position Papers (NCERT 2006) which followed the NCF 2005. In discussing teaching of Indian languages and English (NCERT 2006, volume 1: Curricular Areas), it asserted the role of mother tongue as the MoI in primary schools and, at the same time, it also accepted the practice of using Hindi and English from Grade 1 (regardless of children's home language) in some government schools such as the Kendriya Vidyalaya. Late introduction of English based on a strong mother-tongue foundation was supported on the basis of Cummins' principle of cross-linguistic transfer (Cummins 1984, 2009), and yet the document also suggested continuation of the practice of 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 (2013, 112) point 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. In fact, in our view, English turned out to be the Achilles' heel for NCF 2005'.

The Right to Free and Compulsory Education Act (RTE) of 2009 guaranteed free education for all 6- to 14-year olds as a right. Article 29 (2) (f) of RTE says that the 'medium of instruction shall, as far as practicable, be in child's mother tongue'. This provision with a caveat thus fails to guarantee education in mother tongue unequivocally. Panda (2009) critiqued this aspect of the RTE, citing established research evidence that education in early years needs to be imparted in the child's mother tongue (Panda and Mohanty 2009; Skutnabb-Kangas and Mohanty 2009; Thomas and Collier 2002), and that the duration of mother-tongue medium education is the strongest predictor of educational success of linguistic-minority children (Heugh and Skutnabb-Kangas 2010). Panda concluded that 'the right to education needs to be linked to the right to receive education in one's preferred language' (2009, 122). Further, contrary to all expectations, the RTE also could not ensure a common school system to replace the dual system of private English-medium schools, mostly for the privileged class and the public vernacular medium schools for the disadvantaged (see Panda and Mohanty 2013 for a discussion of the social stratification associated with English-medium and Government Schools). According to Panda (2011), the failure to ensure a common school system detracts RTE from the mother-tongue based multi-lingual education perspective purportedly advanced through NCF (2005).

Across the different levels of education in India, from primary to secondary, higher and university education, the number of languages as MoI

declines sharply. While at least 33 languages are present in primary level education as MoI, university and technical education is almost exclusively in English. Out of nearly 617 universities or institutions of higher-, technical- or postgraduate-level education, only 30 provide instruction in or allow students to use a language other than English. The number of non-English languages is slightly higher in undergraduate institutions. Such priority for English in higher and technical education in India has a 'wash back' effect (Heugh 2009) triggering popular demand for early education in English. It is therefore not surprising that English has 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 student population in the country) and in government schools in some states, English is taught as a compulsory language subject at least by Grade 3 in the government schools in all states. All private and public schools in India have a prominent place for English. These schools, as Panda and Mohanty (2013) point out, are quite heterogeneous and cater to different socio-economic strata. Pedagogic practices in respect of English in the English-medium schools for the elites and upper class are quite different from those for the lower social strata and from the government schools. Further, within the government schools, the strategies for negotiation of English for majority-language children are different from those for ITM children (Mohanty, Panda and Pal 2010). The linguistic hierarchy in Indian multilingualism – the most privileged position of English, the relative advantaged status of the regional majority languages or the 'vernaculars' and most disadvantaged status of ITM languages – is clearly related to how the schools are placed in society. 'The challenge of the double divide is most formidable for 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 it, but also to learn an alien language such as English, which is twice removed from their social reality and early experience (Mohanty 2010a, 147).

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

LANGUAGE BARRIER AND WASTAGE IN EDUCATION OF TRIBAL CHILDREN

The language barrier that tribal children face in the schools where their mother tongue is not the language of teaching or MoI is twofold. These children have a formidable burden of comprehension since they fail to understand the language of the teachers and the textbooks, which are in the dominant regional or state language. They confront a second barrier in the form of a third language such as English. This disadvantage of tribal children in forced submersion schools with a vernacular language MoI is a major factor in poor school learning, high failure and push out rate, capability deprivation and poverty (see Mohanty 2008, for a detailed discussion). The literacy rate (the percentage of literates in the total population) for the tribal population in India is 47.10%, compared to 65% for the total population, with a literacy gap of 17.90% from the national average (Panda 2012). The Gross Enrollment Ratio (i.e. the percentage of children enrolled in schools) for 6- to 11-year olds (Grades 1 to 5) is 140.76, 130.12 and 114.37, and for 11- to 14-year old (Grades 6 to 8) 77.52, 85.28 and 76.23 for the Scheduled Tribes (STs), the Scheduled Castes (SCs) and the total population, respectively (MHRD 2010). National figures also show that the percentage of students joining Grade 1 and then pushed out of school by Grade 5 is 31.26 for the STs, 26.71 for the SCs and 24.93 for the total population. The push-out rate is 76.16, 66.56 and 55.88 by Grade 10, respectively, for the STs, the SCs and the total population. Thus, for every 100 tribal children joining school (in Grade 1), less than 24 survive to take the high school examination at the end of Grade 10 and only 9 of them pass this examination. As Panda (2012) notes, there is wastage of 91% in the existing system of school education for tribal children. Many studies including a large-scale national survey by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) (Singh, Jain, Gautam and Kumar 2004), show that the academic achievement of tribal children is the poorest among the different demographic categories in India. Only about 50% of the successful high school graduates from the tribal communities join higher and technical education; the rest with very low levels of performance in the high school examination cannot enter higher and technical education. The representation of the tribal students in higher and technical education remains far below their share of the population despite the reservation of seats for them. Thus, forced submersion education for tribal children in a dominant language, which is not their mother tongue, fails to develop capability and enable them for upward mobility out of poverty. Language in education is an instrument of power, discrimination

and exclusion; schools, unfortunately, institutionalise such processes of exclusion. Review of the educational language policies and practices in South Asia (Mohanty and Panda, forthcoming) also shows similar adverse effects of the neglect of mother tongue on educational development of linguistic minorities in Nepal, Pakistan and other countries in the region. Realisation of the crucial links between mother tongue and education of the ITM children in India as well as other South Asian countries has led to some experimental initiatives for mother-tongue based education for such children (see Mohanty and Skutnabb-Kangas 2013 for a discussion on some such initiatives in India and Nepal).

EXPERIMENTS ON MOTHER TONGUE-BASED MULTILINGUAL EDUCATION IN INDIA

Persistent emphasis on mother tongue as the basis for quality education in the declared policy and ideological statements in India led to sporadic attempts to use mother tongue in the education of children whose school language was different to their home language. During the 1980s the Central Institute of Indian Languages introduced experimental bilingual transfer programmes of mother tongue-based early education for smooth transition from a tribal mother tongue to the dominant state language of schooling. Children started Grade 1 in the mother tongue and progressively switched to the dominant language by the end of Grade 2 (see Mohanty 1989, for a critical analysis of the bilingual transfer programmes). These programmes showed little success and were subsequently dropped. Some recent initiatives in India have sought to go beyond the transitional use of mother tongue in early education, yielding a foundational role to mother tongue in developing multilingual competence of children in mother tongue, languages for regional and national level communication and an international language of wider communication. For tribal children, particularly from non-Hindi regions, education must develop competence in at least four languages – tribal mother tongue, regional or state-majority language, Hindi and English. Since 2004, some states in India have launched pilot programmes of multilingual education (MLE) beginning with development of proficiency in mother tongue used as the MoI for early literacy acquisition and primary level education. Proficiency in the regional language, English and Hindi are gradually developed through their systematic use as language subjects and, later, as languages of teaching (MoI) as required. The programmes generally follow the basic psycholinguistic principles of bi-/multilingual education

(Cummins, 2009) and MLE programmes throughout the world (Mohanty, Panda, Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas 2009).

Two states in India – Andhra Pradesh and Odisha – started MLE for tribal children in the year 2004 and 2006 respectively. In Andhra Pradesh, 240 schools started mother tongue-based MLE for tribal children from eight tribal language communities. Odisha started with 10 tribal languages and 195 schools (see Mohanty, Mishra, Reddy and Ramesh 2009, for a discussion of the early phase of MLE in these two states). The tribal languages in the programme, written in the script of the major state language (Telugu or Odia) are used as the languages of early literacy (L₁) and as the MoI for three to five years of primary education in these MLE programmes. The state majority language – Telugu in Andhra Pradesh and Odia in Odisha – is introduced as a second language (L₂) subject for development of oral communication skills in Grade 2 and for reading and writing skills from Grade 3 onwards. The L₂ is used as a language of teaching (along with the L₁) in Grades 4 and 5 of primary schools. The teachers in these programmes are from the respective tribal language communities and speak the tribal mother tongue as well as the state majority language. The MLE programmes in the two states follow the common school curriculum of the respective state and make special efforts to bring in the Indigenous cultural knowledge systems in developing the textbooks and curricular materials. As in the general state curriculum, English is taught as a school subject from Grade 3 in Odisha and Grade 1 in Andhra Pradesh. The Odisha MLE programme is now extended to 19 tribal languages in more than 1000 schools and the Andhra Pradesh programme is extended to over 3000 schools. The MLE programmes in the two states have been repeatedly evaluated (NCERT 2011; Panda, Mohanty, Nag and Biswabandan 2011) to show positive effects on classroom achievement, school attendance and participation, teacher and community attitude.

In 2007, along with the Government MLE programme in Odisha, we planned and implemented a five-year special intervention programme called MLE Plus (MLE+). The MLE+ programme was run in eight of the Government MLE schools in two tribal languages – Saora and Kui. The special intervention in MLE+ followed a cultural psychological approach and used everyday cultural practices in the community to develop classroom activities and plan pedagogic approaches in the classrooms. The MLE+ approach promoted literacy engagement through several community-based activities and a ‘synergistic reading programme’ in which children, parents and community members shared group reading, storytelling and cooperative deliberations for promotion of oral and literacy activities (see Panda and

Mohanty 2011, 2013 for details). Several internal and external evaluations of MLE+ show significant gains compared to MLE and non-MLE schools (Panda and Mohanty 2011).

Besides the structured MLE programmes in the two states discussed, other states in India with large populations of tribal communities, such as Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Assam, have various programmes to support and augment children's learning in the dominant language of schools through mother tongue-based materials and activities such as storybooks, supplementary curricular materials, rhymes and songs, number games and other specially designed activities in the mother tongue. These are not MLE programmes as such, but they seek to use children's mother tongues to facilitate learning of, and in, the dominant language. The role of such materials and activities has not been systematically evaluated and the growing efforts to use such materials and activities in different states in India at least show the awareness of the policy makers of the essential role of their mother tongue in promoting quality learning among the tribal children.

These initiatives in recent years, particularly the MLE programmes, are not yet the mainstream programmes in the two states where they started; they are treated as pilot projects for innovations in tribal education. These programmes can be seen as limited regional responses to the problems in submersion education of tribal children in a dominant language, somewhat driven by the ideological positions in declared language policy in education generally favouring mother tongue-based education in primary school years. There is now a National Policy for Early Childhood Care and Education of 0–6 year-old children which mandates use of mother tongue along with other languages in all programmes of early childhood education (ECE). Odisha is the only state in India to have developed materials for ECE in different tribal mother tongues. The recent MLE policy in Odisha also incorporates ECE in the mother tongue. However, the general perception of mother tongue-based MLE programmes in India is that it is to be used only as a 'bridge' to facilitate transition to development of competence in the major languages, particularly in English (Panda and Mohanty 2013). This stance has led to the early-exit character of the MLE programmes in which mother tongue is used as a language of teaching or as MoI for only three to four years and as a language subject for five years. This goes against the established research findings (e.g. Heugh and Skutnabb-Kangas 2010) that even if the early transition from mother tongue to L2 as the MoI may be somewhat better than L2 imposed from Grade 1, the late-exit programmes which use the mother tongue as the MoI for at least six to eight years are more effective in promoting better

academic achievement and better competence in other languages (such as English). As Panda and Mohanty (2013) point out, 'there is a need to review the current schedule of transition from the mother tongue to other languages in the MLE programmes for tribal children in India. The problem of transition in the MLE programmes stems from the fact that development of a mother tongue is not unequivocally accepted as a legitimate goal in itself. MLE is supported because it facilitates learning of and in more 'important' languages' (121). Panda (2012b) has argued that MLE in India is trapped in the socially constructed metaphors of 'bridging' and 'exit' and fails to interrogate the unjust hierarchy of languages in the Indian society. She concludes that MLE in India 'needs to move from the early-exit models to a paradigm where all children's languages are respected. It needs to replace the authoritarian, rigid, pre-ordained knowledge approach of dominant-culture-centric education by a system of critical educational experience empowering them to become valued, equal and responsible members of their own and the larger society outside their community and not feel estranged from it' (249).

CONCLUSION

From the perspective of a critical language-in-education policy analysis seeking to explore the relationship between the *de facto* state policies and discrimination on grounds of language (Corson 1999; Phillipson 1992, 2009a, b; Skutnabb-Kangas 2000), the LiEP in practice in India can be seen as discriminatory. Such practices are causes as well as consequences of the hierarchical positioning of languages in India and the macro-level double divide between English, the major regional languages and the ITM languages. Reflected in language-in-education practices in India, the double divide perpetuates inequality and discrimination and has adverse effects on linguistic diversity. 'Discrimination against communities and children on the basis of their language, subjecting them to poor education and deprivation and poverty because they do not speak the language of the privileged, is a form of linguistic and social injustice' (Panda and Mohanty 2013, 125). The state practices in respect of languages in education, hegemonic status of English and its imperialistic controls and the homogenising forces of economy contribute to progressive marginalisation and loss of dominated languages and identities. Such practices, therefore, limit the scope of 'diversity and understanding the richness of our multiple identities . . . fundamental to the Commonwealth's principles and approach' (Section IV, Charter of the Commonwealth). At one

level, the recent practices of MLE seek to negotiate the discriminatory fall-outs of the imposed language practices in education and, at another level, they fail to offer any resistance to the unjust hierarchy. Unless the language-in-education policy and practices in general and MLE in particular are rooted in the egalitarian philosophy of social equity for all languages and their users, simple use of mother tongue as a medium and as a 'bridge' cannot be an effective instrument for promoting social justice (Mohanty, Panda, Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas 2009), since, as Panda (2012b) has argued, the state-level experimental programmes of MLE 'do not alter the hierarchical position of languages both in society and in school' (245).

The major policy pronouncements with respect to languages in India, such as the Constitutional and statutory provisions and formal statements relating to the role of mother tongue in education, tend to project an egalitarian position, upholding the country's commitment to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, including social and cultural rights. At the surface level, several provisions in the Constitution of India and the laws of the land relating to the linguistic, cultural and educational rights are in consonance with the universal principles of social justice as enshrined in the Commonwealth Charter seeking to uphold minority linguistic rights and the right to development for all without discrimination on grounds of language and culture. The ground-level practices, as we have shown, are quite different, ignoring the Constitutional and statutory provisions for the rights of the communities to use and develop their languages in all domains of use, including education. The recent regional responses to the problems arising out of exclusion of languages, particularly from education, have sought to provide some space for the ITM languages through mother tongue-based multilingual education programmes which, as we have shown, remain trapped in the sociolinguistic double divide and the unjust power hierarchy of languages. In the absence of a clear and comprehensive language-in-education policy and effective language planning, ensuring inclusive education and social equity for development, as envisaged in the Commonwealth Charter, will remain a distant goal for India.

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