

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF LAW
MANAGEMENT & HUMANITIES
[ISSN 2581-5369]

Volume 8 | Issue 3

2025

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Linguistic Politics along the Lines of Nationalism

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ABSTRACT

In a nation where thousands of languages echo across communities, the politics of language is more than just a cultural concern; this paper explores the intersection between language and nationalism in a country like India; there is a lot of diversity when it comes to languages, and the linguistic dynamics are vast. This linguistic diversity is oftentimes closely knit with political identity and regional proclamations and assertions. While also emphasizing the historical evolution of language politics, language has served a role as both a tool of resistance and a weapon of exclusion. There are a lot of intricacies in this day and age about language and politics.

The paper is divided into the intricacies ranging from modern-day aspects to the future prospects of these dynamics. The hypothesis draws the lines that connect the nation's multilingual character, intensifying the political barriers along nationalist lines. The study reviews academic literature, constitutional provisions and real-world movements like - The Anti-Hindi agitation and regional language mobilizations.

While the Constitution attempts to preserve linguistic pluralism through legal safeguards and frameworks such as the Three- Language Formula, the reality reflects a complex struggle between integration and marginalization. To conclude, the paper highlights that without deliberate and conscious efforts to inculcate linguistic equity and regional inclusion language will be a prolonged issue and a hurdle in India's growth and evolving democracy. By analysing past contexts and current and evolving trends, the study emphasizes the immediate pressing need for policies that focus on promoting national unity.

I. INTRODUCTION

Language plays a significant role in shaping the national identity and political discourse of a country, identities are collectively navigated and structured by how the societies understand the relationship and dynamic between the concepts of Nationalism and Language. India is a diverse nation and is a land of several languages. It has been debated by scholars whether the connection between language and nation is natural or is socially constructed. A nation is a cultural entity

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with a distinct character while the language aspect embodies its soul.

Nationalism is connected with the idea of belonging and allegiance to a particular nation or community at its core. Language is a significant factor that marks cultural identity and plays a pivotal role in constructing nationalist ideologies. This paper dives into the different dynamics of linguistic politics along the lines of nationalism by examining how language acts as a battleground in the process of achieving political objectives.

The implications of linguistic nationalism through its effect and impact on issues such as cultural diversity, rights of minorities and group cohesiveness are explored in the paper, while also providing insights into the processes of nation building and formation of state overall the role of language is pivotal and significant for any nation and this research paper highlights the essential role that language plays in shaping the political identity of a nation.

Hypothesis

This study article aims to demonstrate that the preservation and promotion of a language within a nation contribute to the formation of national identity. The articles mentioned in this research paper align with our perspective where we put forth that the multi-linguistic dynamics serve as a tool for the political elites who hold power in the society that can eliminate or marginalize any backward linguistic communities, thereby influencing the sociopolitical landscape at large. The articles referenced in this research paper correspond with our viewpoint, asserting that multilingual dynamics function as a mechanism for the political elites in power, capable of eradicating or marginalizing disadvantaged linguistic communities, thus impacting the broader sociopolitical landscape

To demonstrate the potential for increased political linguistic barriers within the nation, we have analysed the current debates surrounding linguistic dynamics and politics, revealing the framework established between national identity formation, language policies, and the significance of various languages across different regions.

Methodology

The methodology used in this respective research paper includes qualitative data based on theoretical research in examining the ways linguistic politics affect national identity and socio-political unity in India.

The main theoretical framework was developed after conducting a broad study of the literature. The analyses included key articles by K.K. Mishra (on Linguistic Nationalities in India) and by Paul Friedrich (on Language and Politics in India). The authors provided great insight into how

language has played a role in both uniting and dividing India's politics.

In addition to reviewing others' research, we went forward to communicate and interact with individuals to capture current views and real-world situations. Public sentiment about language-based discrimination, unity and identity was gathered from interviews and surveys with students and individuals from a range of minority languages, which helped us interpret how language can affect a person's involvement in society and in political decisions.

It is highlighted in the paper that literacy and technology reduce the gap between different languages. To evaluate how linguistic pluralism was supported, data about literacy and digital language measures were studied.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Linguistic politics that exist within the society when related with nationalism, we get a complex interplay between identity, power, language, and the historical narratives that had been prevalent since ages. They often reflect the wider social, political and cultural spheres and dynamics within a nation. Therefore, through many articles and journals, we initially get a better understanding of the theoretical problems that are existing which again rapidly leads to the development in the field of language and culture.

In the journal article "**Linguistic Nationalities in India**" by K.K.Mishra, it discusses about the multi-national character of the Indian society where it also mentions the historical background and the perspectives of several historical schools and scholars and shows us the existing debates that are prevalent with respect to the linguistic barriers in social problems.

Firstly, it has been put forward that the historians belonging to the imperialist school had been considering India as a mere "geographical expression like Europe and Africa" where Sir John Seeley explains that it is so because it primarily marks the territory of a single language or a nation but rather the territory of several languages and nations. They emphasised more on the linguistic and cultural variations rather than accepting the authenticity that lied in their nationalist movement.

This respective journal article makes us understand that there does exist unity among the different languages and cultures mostly due to their struggle towards freedom against British imperialism but again it was important to note that the capitalist society that was rising in the state had a competitive struggle existing between the different nationalities and the social classes. It further stated that the uneven law of development under capitalism that is remaining in India is likely to develop some nationalities faster than that of the others which would

eventually create tension and inconvenience between the classes. The author of the article explains that then such tension can be removed only when there would be a democratic system with equal economic advancement of all the nationalities.

The critical aspect that has been pointed out through this article is that, when there was rising imperialist intervention in India, a wide range of linguistic communities were rising that gradually had acquired the status of nationality.

As Namboodiripad says,

“National languages and national literature were developing, folk culture was flowering into national culture in Maharashtra, Bengal and other parts of India. The great Mughal Empire was breaking up and foundations were being laid for the establishment of national states. The great Shivaji and other national heroes were coming out as the champions of a new form of social and state organisation—an organisation based on national language and national culture—although many of them were also national oppressors in relation to nationalities other than their own.”

Therefore, through the article the emphasis was majorly directed towards no discrimination against any language despite it being from a small community or a tribe. It mentions that all the languages in the country would be given equal opportunities to develop. At the end, the author mentions the methodology to transform India into a federal polity where it states that only through the policy of educating the masses, making them understand and learn the science and the technological aspects through the medium of their languages along with the simultaneous security on the economic development of a planned economy, can lead the various and wide range of nationalities to be uniformly coordinated and united in a federal polity.⁴

K.K. Mishra’s article, “Linguistic Nationalities in India” is a well-written critical analysis of the complexities of the linguistic landscape, dialectal changes and linguistic status of historic regions focusing on the modern times in India. We believe that in India linguistic individuality holds a major importance. Language is the culture, history and identity. Every linguistic community in India brings with it its own heritage to the larger Indian civilization. Preserving the cultural Integrity of the nation requires recognizing and respecting this individuality of the nation.

Despite the presence of a host of linguistic communities historically derived and a challenge that comes along with them, India has been able to survive as a united nation. Looking at the positive side of having diverse linguistic landscape, it does not appear as a weakness but instead,

⁴ Mishra, K. K. (1972). Linguistic Nationalities in India. *Social Scientist*, 1(3), 20–33. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3516395>

a strong sense of unity as people and society despite being divided by different linguistic backgrounds came together for the struggle for independence sharing the same sense of unity and goal for the nation.

Linguistic equality may, however, be more a constitutional or theoretical principle than a reality: one that must be reflected in policy, education and socio-economic development. In nurturing development in local languages, as Mishra writes and in promoting economic progress that is equitable across nationalities, is what real unity requires. Our guiding principle shall be true federalism, based on respect for one another and on equal opportunity. India is, perhaps, the best example of how a country can succeed with several languages, cultures and traditions. Rather, their linguistic differences ought to be seen as barriers to work, rather as symbols of India's celebration. But a linguistic mosaic like this is not just what built India, it is the India of the future — a future in which we do not just preserve these languages, but are proud of the mosaic they make up in the tapestry of our national identity. India must keep being seen as a country of many voices but one heart.

Further, another article that discusses linguistic politics along the lines of nationalism is a journal article named **“Language and Politics in India”** by Paul Friedrich.

This article mentions the issue of establishment of a common language that too in a multilingual state where it is likely to result in the most deep-rooted political implication which appears as a debate that needs to be looked into. Therefore, this article provides data and information regarding the linguistic diversity that exists in the state where it mentions that the starving Indians who reside in the slums close to the industries of Bombay have killed one another with a knife because of each speaking different languages such as Marathi or Gujarati. India today has been having a very shocking linguistic variation and diversity which gives a probable weak chance of any individual potential national language. Such is considered to be growing despite the remaining weakness but at the same time the combination of the cultural and scientific genre makes it appear as a social problem whose solution needs to be discovered.

The author through the article adds his explanation regarding the linguistic problems that eventually emerge as a symbolic reflection of any other conflict.

He mentions that there are many Indians who feel that the question of linguistic in itself is abnormal because the population residing has many hungry and furious individuals who are not employed and hence anxious about not being able to provide families with food and then there at this crucial moment appears the language differences that make them exasperated.

The article also discusses how the general level of literacy in a state also plays an important role

in accepting and deciding a particular language for national purposes. The fact that any language which has perfect symbolic systems and is capable enough to make a meaning out of it should not be confused with the equal fact of an illiterate mass existing who has a full role playing the social, economic and political sphere of the nation at large. Continuing with this, there comes into action the political power and the national language that are interrelated to each other in India. The data as per this article includes that Hindi had been chosen as the *de jure* by the congressional majority during the anti-British sentiments that flowed during 1947. The reason for victory was mostly due to a wide range of the Hindi speakers and the location that was in Delhi. There had been a “reorganisation of the linguistic states” that had done nothing but increased the long-range problems where there were individuals driven out on the per capita basis of the language they spoke.

Therefore, in conclusion the articles try to make us understand and explain that there are few citizens of India who believe that the only peaceful and less harmful method to avoid any linguistic barriers or chaos in the linguistic politics is an improved education in regional languages as well as English and Hindi combined with a patience and tolerance level. The author puts forward that multilingualism in itself should be attained as a goal and a form of knowledge where it is hoped that the language skills would keep advancing along with less political barriers. It is essential to note that meanwhile English would be considered as a significant and useful language for both the national and the international purpose, it should align with the Indian tradition of tolerance and patience with reverence and adopt the motto for the present as “Speak and let speak.”⁵

The journal article “Language and Politics in India” by Paul Friedrich aims to put forward that despite India having diverse and rich linguistic dynamics and an established landscape it brings forward certain political and social barrier which leads to unrest and distinct divisions within the society.

According to our view, India having rich cultural background does not come off as powerful if the language itself becomes so strong that it excludes the basic cooperation between the people and the functioning of the society. When people simply clash over language, as described in the article, language can make troublesome situations much worse when poverty, joblessness and frustration are also present. Having a language you speak becomes the reason for discrimination is very common. Migrants in India may be treated badly or excluded if they cannot speak the

⁵ Friedrich, P. (1962). Language and Politics in India. *Daedalus*, 91(3), 543–559. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20026727>

spoken language locally. Such a situation causes frustration and helps to split the idea of one national identity. A method for bringing people together, language now separates people.

Being literate helps us make sense of today's complex world. It should be understood that when a community is educated and well-read, it automatically brings together the coordination and cooperation among the people to understand the importance of linguistic individuality and not construe or act in any such way that it appears to be a political or social barrier. Then again, literacy ought to help individuals become both culturally careful and understanding of different languages and not stop at learning to read and write. According to the article, teaching various Indian languages along with Hindi and English is a helpful way to respect India's diverse culture and boost national togetherness.

Henceforth, we believe that there is a good chance that multilingualism could be successful in India if everything is approached with understanding, patience and clear government policies. International literacy is not just picking one language, but making sure all languages are treated with respect and can be used together. Rather than promoting Unity in Diversity, the vision should be to enable Fluency in Diversity, helping every citizen to be recognized, acknowledged and respected, regardless of the language they use and most importantly giving each of the languages spoken in and around India equal respect and recognition.

III. ANALYSIS

Linguistic policy

The Indian Constitution, ratified in 1950, honours the country's numerous languages. No language has been given the title of national language.⁶ There are 22 languages which are recognized as official languages. In line with the Official Languages Act of 1963, English is allowed to continue as the sole language used by the Union government and parliament in official tasks. Henceforth, the official languages of the Government of India are Modern Standard Hindi and Indian English⁷.

One of the most significant highlights in India's linguistic policy was the incorporation of the Three-Language Formula in the National Education Policy in 1968. It suggests that students should learn the regional language, Hindi and English to support multilingualism and bring people from different states together. In this NEP, the first language of a student shall be their respective mother tongue or their regional language. Specific to Hindi-speaking states, the

⁶ Friedrich, P. (1962). Language and Politics in India. *Daedalus*, 91(3), 543–559. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20026727>

⁷ The Official Languages Act, 1963 § 3 (1963)

second language may be adapted as either English or any other modern Indian language. Thus, in states where Hindi is not spoken, the official languages are English or Hindi. Where Hindi is commonly spoken, the third language adopted has to be a modern Indian language or English. The states where Hindi is not widely spoken shall use either English or a modern Indian language.⁸

The Indian government had also worked to promote the development of endangered and minority languages through various language preservation programs and institutions, including the Central Institute of Indian Languages (CIIL) and the Sahitya Akademi.

Identity politics

Local politics in India is meshed with its linguistic affiliations that usually helps in mobilising and asserting the cultural and political rights. In the year 1956, one of the crucial moments in Indian's history occurred when states were reorganised based on the recommendations made by the States Reorganisation Commission.

The process led to the creation of states along its linguistic lines like Maharashtra for Marathi speakers, Karnataka for Kannada speakers, Tamil Nadu for Tamil speakers among others.⁹ However, linguistic diversity presently has also become a source of conflict and tension in India, particularly when language identities run counter to nationalistic or regionalistic interests. Instances such as movements for separate statehoods or recognition based on language such as the Gorkhaland movement in West Bengal and demands for a separate Telangana state located in Andhra Pradesh illuminate how intricate language can be in shaping identity and politics.

From the 1970s onward in Maharashtra, a pro-Marathi ideology was spread by the local political parties such as Shiv Sena. This pro-Marathi ideology included the promotion of Marathi language as a language of people and also included the anti-Bihar and Bihari language sentiments. The people supporting the ideology were very aggressive in their way to promote the Marathi language which even led to violence against people belonging to different states such as the 2008 attacks on Uttar Pradesh and Bihari migrants.

In 1965, as January 26 approached, the movement against making Hindi the official language became more powerful in the State of Madras, mainly because of the college students. Some tension between students and INC members led to a riot in Madurai on January 25 which soon

⁸ drishtias.com. (2020). National Education Policy (NEP) 2020: Languages, Culture & Values. In *drishtias.com*. <https://www.drishtias.com/pdf/1597603777-national-education-policy-nep-2020-languages-culture-values.pdf>

⁹ Laitin, D. D. (1989). Language Policy and Political Strategy in India. *Policy Sciences*, 22(3/4), 415–436. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4532177>

spread all over the state, due to Part XVII of the constitution been indefinitely suspended.¹⁰ Therefore, the anti-Hindi campaign was triggered by the Dravidian movement backed by political parties like the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK).

In recent years, there has been an increase in violence and resistance to the usage of Hindi in public spaces. The protestors often use Hindi in Government or public buildings such as in 2017 there was opposition for usage of Hindi in Bengaluru metro. In social media, pro-Kannada activists staged a protest at metro stations across the city using #NammaMetroHindiBeda (Our Metro, we don't want Hindi). The people from Karnataka; a state that doesn't speak Hindi, were in complete disagreement about observing Hindi Diwas. Demonstrations were conducted throughout the state.

Language has become a bone of contention between education and governance with controversy over imposition of Hindi as a national language leading to protests and resistance movements in non-Hindi speaking regions. The demand for linguistic rights and protection of linguistic diversity continue to shape political discourse and public policy in India.

Legal framework

Article 29 grants citizens liberty to preserve their unique languages, scripts or cultures¹¹ and Article 30 allows minority groups to establish schools where they can teach in their own languages.¹²

By the Official Languages Act (1963), Hindi and English are declared as the official languages of India and Hindi acts as the principal language, while English is used as an associate official language for business and official work. As per Section 7 of the act, the Governor of the State may use either Hindi or any such other official language(s) which is/are spoken by majority number of people within that State along with English for all proceedings before him/her including judgments, decrees and orders passed by High Court for that State¹³.

Article 348(1) of the Constitution of India states that all proceedings in the Supreme Court and all High Courts must be conducted in English unless Parliament otherwise provides.¹⁴

Article 348 (2) states that the Governor of a State may, with the President's prior consent, authorise the use of the Hindi language or any other language specific for any official purpose

¹⁰ Forrester, D. B. (1966). The Madras Anti-Hindi Agitation, 1965: Political Protest and its Effects on Language Policy in India. *Pacific Affairs*, 39(1/2), 19–36. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2755179>

¹¹ C.O.I., amend LXXIII, § 29

¹² C.O.I., amend LXXIII, § 30

¹³ The Official Languages Act, 19 § 7 (1963)

¹⁴ C.O.I., amend LXXIII, § 348(1)

of the State in the proceedings of a High Court with its principal seat in that State, provided that judgments, decrees, or orders issued by such High Courts are in English.¹⁵

Article 343(1) of the Indian constitution states that "the official language of the Union shall be Hindi in Devanagari script." The international form of Indian numerals shall be used as numerals for official purposes,"¹⁶ while article 343(2) allowed English to remain an official language for another 15 years¹⁷, during which period article 343 (3) gave parliament mandate on decisions concerning whether or not it was going to continue using this as its medium of expression¹⁸.

Furthermore, various state governments have enacted language policies and legislation to promote and protect regional languages, ensuring their use in administration, education, and cultural domains.

Future Prospects

Since India is constantly changing, these language rights give rise to a mix of opportunities and difficulties. With India's fast economic and technology growth, there is more awareness among people regarding the importance of preserving the linguistic diversity. It is established that language often blends cultural values and upholds the rights of the people in social, economic, and political ways. India's progress makes it more evident that we cannot promote growth while putting languages at risk. It is very important to ensure that no language—no matter how popular—is ignored, lost or fails to grow.

It is good news that movements from below, cultural groups and organizations in civil society are contributing to the promotion of local languages. As a result, communities are finding new reasons to embrace their cultures and languages. Importantly, advances in technology have greatly improved this approach. Digital advancements are helping protect minority endangered languages more than other methods in the past. Mobile applications, online translators, educational games and software in several local languages are giving people from different speech communities easier access to education and communication.

Despite these initiatives, there will likely be new challenges along the way. The dominance of a few languages in educational institutions and media will continue to marginalise speakers from minorities. Dealing with this situation will depend on continued effort from policymakers, teachers and those who lead our society. If we introduce regional languages in schools, create

¹⁵ C.O.I., amend LXXIII, § 348(2)

¹⁶ C.O.I., amend LXXIII, § 343(1)

¹⁷ C.O.I., amend LXXIII, § 343(2)

¹⁸ C.O.I., amend LXXIII, § 343(3)

resources in several languages and train teachers to speak regional languages, more students would be included in education. Additionally, organising several activities for public awareness along with language lessons regarding several communities around can also encourage and help several language groups and societies to come together and work.

IV. CONCLUSION

To conclude, this paper has explored how Linguistic connections are closely connected with the local politics in our nation. The reorganization of states along the lines of linguistics triggered and heightened political and cultural forces of assertion if we date back a little in time.

A legal framework is enforced to promote linguistic freedom, and the Constitution grants freedom to citizens by preserving the culture from which they come. Linguistic Limitation gives rise to challenges, leading to linguistic discrimination, while fair allocation of resources to promote language education remains a challenge.

Linguistic identity remains central as a goal and will allow for a complex and detailed interplay between identity, politics, and policy. Language plays a pivotal role in shaping a nation's socio-political backdrop. While a nation like India is putting an effort to uphold linguistic diversity there are many challenges that still persist, addressing these issues and challenges need persistent effort.

The future prospects of limitations would be to increase awareness and advancement of technology in the hope of preserving the element of language in nations like ours.
