The Development of Language Education Policy: An Indian Perspective; a View from Tamil Nadu

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Abstract- The present paper presents a detailed account of the Indian Language Education Policy from a historical perspective and the issues associated with policy- making for language in education in the Indian socio-political context; It argues the outcome of the policies implemented in the colonial period and discusses the current status of implementation of these policies in the present Indian Educational scenario. It further elaborates the adoption of national and regional language policies of India in general and its outcomes in Tamil Nadu state in particular. Finally it discusses and evaluates the consequences and aftermath to be taken into account by the policy makers.

Index Terms- language Education Policy, Colonization, National Language Policy, Official Language, Indian Constitution, Regional Languages, Three Language Formula, Scientific Tamil, National Education Policy, Equitable System of Education

I. INTRODUCTION

A multi-ethnic and multi-lingual pluralistic nation needs to evolve education and language policies in such a way that all the segments that constitute that nation develop a sense of participation in the progress of governance and nation-building. In addition, the specific aspirations of the individual segments of the nation need to be met to the satisfaction of the various ethnic, religious, and linguistic communities.

Education, however, is considered a state responsibility, and while national policies exist, individual states play a primary role in the execution of language decisions. The relationship between India's language and education policies further complicate the tension between cultural preservation and economic growth. India's constitutional policies concerning the use of language reflect the economic and cultural evolution within this diverse and multilingual country.

The Republic of India has hundreds of languages. According to the Census of 2001, there are 1,635 mother tongues and 122 languages with more than 10,000 speakers. Language planners and policy makers have to grapple with the complex problems of multilingualism and of keeping the Indian languages center stage by giving them their due place in the educational process and national development. Owing to the defective planning by the policy makers both at the state level and the federal levels, the English language has emerged as the favored language in education.

Sanskrit was the link language of India for many centuries, Later Persian also coupled with Sanskrit and both were the link languages of India until the arrival of English to the nation. Not only English rulers, but English also ruled India for many centuries. English rulers went out but not English.

Education policy debates in India provide an additional lens for understanding the tensions of India's language policy. Experts have observed that "the states are supposed to arrange for the teaching of all minor or minority languages in schools having at least 10 students who speak these languages as their native tongue. But in practice, most state governments discourage the use of minor languages in schools." (Mohanty 2011)

Academics such as Bruthiaux note the overarching governmental framework that further affects these education and language policies: "India is a tumultuous democracy operating within a federal system, a combination that does not facilitate smooth decision making or efficient policy implementation." (Bruthiaux 2009)

II. LANGUAGE EDUCATION POLICY IN COLONIAL PERIOD

The first language education policy of India was made for the promotion of English language that is on February 2nd in 1835, Thomas Babington Macaulay's minute on Indian Language policy was introduced. It says "we must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern….. We need a class of persons, Let them Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect".

This minute implies that English was introduced in the Indian educational system for the purpose of getting servants with English language knowledge. During the freedom struggle periods Gandhi vehemently opposed and wanted to throw out English from Indian nation, but he failed in his attempt. After independence, he proposed some suggestions to the government for the promotion of regional language for the state affairs, Hindustani for national affairs, and English for world affairs.

III. LANGUAGE EDUCATION POLICY AFTER INDEPENDENCE;

i) National Language Policy

The Indian constitution assembly was established on 9 December 1946, for drafting a constitution when India became independent. The Constituent Assembly witnessed fierce debates on the language issue. The adoption of a "National Language", the language in which the constitution was to be written in and the language in which the proceedings of the assembly were to be conducted were the main linguistic questions debated by the framers of the Constitution. On one side were the members from

the Hindi speaking provinces moved a large number of pro-Hindi amendments and argued for adopting Hindi as the sole National Language. On 10 December 1946, Dhulekar declared "People who do not know Hindustani have no right to stay in India. People who are present in the House to fashion a constitution for India and do not know Hindustani are not worthy to be members of this assembly. They had better leave."

The adoption of Hindi as the national language was opposed by members from South India like T.T.Krishnamachchari G. Durgabai, T.A.Ramalingam Chettiyar N.G.Ranga. Gopalaswamy Ayyangar (all belonging to Madras) and S. V. Krishnamurthy Rao (Mysore). This anti-Hindi block favoured retaining English as official language.

ii) Official Language Policy

After three years of debate, the assembly arrived at a compromise at the end of 1949. It was called the Munshi-Ayyangar formula (after K.M. Munshi and Gopalaswamy Ayyangar) and it struck a balance between the demands of all groups. Part 17th of the Indian Constitution was drafted according to this compromise. It did not have any mention of a "National Language". Instead, it defined only the "Official Languages" of the Union.

Hindi in Devanagari script would be the official language of the Indian Union. For fifteen years, English would also be used for all official purposes (Article 343). A language commission could be convened after five years to recommend ways to promote Hindi as the sole official language and to phase out the use of English (Article 344). Official communication between states and between states and the Union would be in the official language of the union (Article 345).English would be used for all legal purposes - in court proceedings, bills, laws, rules and other regulations (Article 348).The Union was duty bound to promote the spread and usage of Hindi (Article 351).

IV. LANGUAGE POLICY IN INDIAN CONSTITUTION

When developing its Constitution, Indian leaders enacted language policy that placed emphasis on both language-development and language-survival. The language policy contained within Part III of the Constitution defines language rights as fundamental rights – linking these language rights to education as well. The text acknowledges the innate challenges of educating a multilingual society with the legacy of a caste system by stating: "All minorities, whether based on religion or language, shall have the right to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice."

This policy and subsequent documents have produced a school system that encourages tri-lingual education, with students learning their mother tongue, Hindi, and English. However, while the Constitution highlights the importance of mother tongues, in practice it has proven unfeasible to protect the 22 scheduled languages it lists, let along the hundreds of additional languages spoken by significant numbers of people.

In 1950 the Indian constitution was established. Gandhi emphasized on Hindustani, and wanted it to be the official language of India. Later the concept of Hindustani was given up by the rulers. Gandhi achieved politically a lot but linguistically a little. In 1952, 15 major languages of India were recognized and placed in Eighth schedule.

Indian states were established in 1956 on the basis of the regional languages of the majority people. Thus English was introduced in the Indian education system and rooted in all the lines of education. During the freedom struggle periods, Mahatma Gandhi vehemently opposed English and wanted 'Hindustani' to be the prime language of our nation. Later in 1992 three more languages were added, and during 2002-2006 again four languages were added to the schedule. Now 22 languages are placed in the eighth schedule. They are Assami, Bangla, Boda, Dogri, Gujarathi, Hindi, Kashmiri, Kannada, Konkani, Maithili, Malayalam, Manipuri, Marathi, Nepali, Oriya, Punjabi, Tamil, Telugu, Santali, Sindi, Sanskrit and Urdu.

V. REGIONAL LANGUAGE POLICY: CHRONOLOGICAL CHANGES IN TAMIL NADU GOVERNMENT POLICY

In 1956, Indian states were established on the basis of majority regional languages and states were allowed to make their own official language for state affairs. According to the 345 section of the Indian constitution, in 1957, Tamil was made as the official language of the Tamil Nadu state by the official language act of the state number 39/1956 on 19th January 1957. (When Bhavatchalam was chief minister and C.Suramaniyan was the minister for education)

In 1960, President of India formed a committee for the promotion of Hindi to the status of official language of the nation. In 1965, Hindi was made as the official language of the nation and English was given the status of Associate official language. In1963, Three language formula was introduced in the nation, According to this formula a student who has completed the high school education, must have command of two languages besides English. That is first in his state language, second in Hindi, third in English. This three language formula was sincerely adopted by the Tamil Nadu government during 1963-65 and Hindi was introduced as a school subject. Insertion of Hindi in Tamil Nadu, created different attitudes in the minds of Tamilian and C.N. Annadurai lead the Hindi agitation movement. His language power and presence of mind attracted student community and many students involved in Hindi agitation movement under the leadership of Anna. Periyar, E.V.Ramaswamy also supported Arignar Anna in opposing Hindi and supporting English.

The Tamil script reform developed by Periyar, was adopted by the MGR government and enforced on 19th October 1978. Since 1978 many more activities were carried out for the development of Tamil "engum Tamil – etilum Tamil"

Former Chief Minister J. Jayalalithaa decided that no student studying in Tamil Nadu should leave the school system without learning Tamil. Hence she took the 'landmark' decision to introduce the subject "Ariviyal Tamil" (Scientific Tamil) from LKG to 12th standard in all categories of schools. At the same time, as also stated earlier the Tamil Nadu government is extremely trade-savvy and realises that knowledge of Tamil, while instilling a sense of pride in one's culture, is useless in the global scenario unless one is fluent in today's lingua franca, English. English-speaking Tamils also have great opportunities in the IT industry. Thus while publicizing the decision on Tamil to gain political mileage, Jayalalithaa also quietly declared that English would be taught as a subject in all State Board schools

from class I onwards. The government has also since 2003-04 been introducing English Language Laboratories in selected government High and Higher Secondary schools to combat the large number of students failing in the English subject. Unlike in the national boards, a second language is compulsory in all state board schools right until class 12.

In 1986, Indian Prime minister Rajiv Gandhi introduced the "National Education Policy". This education policy provided for setting up Navodaya Schools, where the DMK claimed teaching of Hindi would be compulsory. The ADMK led by MGR (which had split from the DMK in 1972), was in power in Tamil Nadu and the DMK was the main opposition party. Karunanidhi announced an agitation against the opening of Navodaya Schools in Tamil Nadu. On 13 November, the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly unanimously passed a resolution demanding to abolish of Part 17th of the constitution and for making English the sole official language of the union.

On 17 November 1986, DMK members protested against the new education policy by burning Part XVII of the Constitution. Rajiv Gandhi assured Members of Parliament from Tamil Nadu that Hindi would not be imposed. As part of the compromise, Navodhaya schools were not started in Tamil Nadu. Currently, Tamil Nadu is the only state in India without Navodhaya schools.

The Karunanidhi government's Samacheer Kalvi (Equitable System of Education) policy is in force from the academic year 2010-2011. It is certain that due to the policy, based on two-language system (Tamil and English), the state will not allow, after 2015, Hindi, Urdu, Arabic, Persian, Telugu, Malayalam and Kannada in public examinations.
The object of the government is to do away with all the languages except Tamil and English from 2016. The text books will contain syllabi extolling the Tamil scholars and Periyar's teachings.

Tamil Nadu government gives a great deal of importance to Tamil language. Those who study Tamil as main language obtain government scholarships and get great job opportunities. Tamil leaders such as Periyar, Annadurai and Karunanidhi all strong advocates of atheism, no doubt brought a renaissance in Tamil language. Their prolific writings were quite popular. Theatres and films helped them to bring alarming progress and great craze for the Tamil language. Within the span of fifty years there was a sea-change in the language both in spoken and written. All signboards bear Tamil language and all government buses carry the Tamil poet Valluar's couplets.

VI. Observations and Conclusion

i. Two language formulas seem to be purely political, because medium of instruction in Tamil was accepted in three language formula also.

ii. For politicians, language is not for communication but for power. Hindi played a major role in the Tamil Nadu politics, and the political power was generated upon Hindi, so Hindi is a powerful language so far the Tamil Nadu politics is concerned.

iii. Language agitations were held for the betterment of Tamil on three different phases. First it was against

Hindi in 1960s and 70s, second it was against Sinhalese in 1980s and third it is running now against English.

iv. Two language formula now getting turned towards one language formula. If it is turned so, our younger generation may find difficulties in getting job markets in the globalized world, because globalization is nothing but Englishization.

v. The hatred that the people developed upon each other's language does not allow any Indian language to be the lingua franca of India instead of English.

With over 1,600 mother tongues from five different language families, the attempt to determine a single language as the "authentic" voice of India is ongoing but it is unlikely to be resolved. Given India's increasingly prominent role on the world's stage, the tension between supporting myriad cultures and economic forces put increasing pressure on the pragmatism of India's language policies. India's language policies demonstrate this duality. They waver between preserving the country's rich language diversity and supporting economic objectives that increasingly depend on English, the widespread use of which is one of India's greatest economic advantages.

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