



MOTHER TONGUE EDUCATION IN INDIA: CHALLENGES AND ISSUES

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ABSTRACT

It is impossible to overstate the significance of mother tongue for a child's cognitive, linguistic, social, and educational development. This acknowledgment led to the 1999 UNESCO declaration of February 21 as International Mother Language Day, which has been observed globally since 1999. Despite this, English and, to a lesser extent, other European languages continue to be given preference over the native mother tongues of India. This study asks: Have India's mother tongues reclaimed their proper place in the educational system? The purpose of this essay is to analyse India's linguistic policy. The importance of mother tongue in the educational system, the larger community, and the country is especially concerning. The article discusses a few of the enduring issues and difficulties that impede the instruction of native languages in India. Additionally, it makes recommendations for potential tactics that could be applied to revive mother tongue instruction both in India and abroad.

INTRODUCTION

"The language which a person acquires in early years and which normally becomes their natural instrument of thought and communication" is the definition of mother tongue given by UNESCO (1953:46). Since India's independence, the majority of its educational laws have defined mother tongue as the language spoken in the school's catchment region or as a child's first language. In academic circles, there has been debate about any attempt to define mother tongue education.

Instead of concentrating on this argument, this paper will use the working definition put forth by UNESCO. Mother tongue education is defined by UNESCO (1968:698) as "education that uses a person's mother tongue—that is, the language they learned as children and which typically has become their natural instrument of thought and communication—as its medium of instruction."

THE PRESENT LANGUAGE CONDITION IN INDIA

India is a diverse and heterogeneous linguistic nation. Both native and foreign languages are widely spoken there. Spanish, English, Arabic, French, and German are among the external languages. 22 languages are listed in the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution; these languages are known as scheduled languages and are accorded official recognition, status, and support. In addition, Kannada, Malayalam, Odia, Sanskrit, Tamil, and Telugu have been designated as classical languages by the Indian government. Languages that are autonomous and have a rich history are granted this classification. The adoption of the trilingual language policy in education—English, Hindi, and the native tongue—allows for the unofficial identification of India's ethnolinguistic variety.

Furthermore, Hindi is designated as the national language, although English continues to hold the status of official language. According to the 2001 Census of India, there were 1599 other languages

spoken in the country in addition to 122 major languages. Nevertheless, data from other sources varied, mostly because "language" and "dialect" are defined differently in other sources. Thirty languages were spoken by over a million native speakers according to the 2001 Census, while 122 languages were spoken by over 10,000 persons. Because of the advent of English and the numerous varieties within each mother tongue, the precise number of languages spoken in India is difficult to determine.

Sir George Abraham Grierson conducted the first-ever formal study of linguistic variety in the Indian subcontinent between 1898 and 1928. It was called the Linguistic Survey of India and included information on 544 dialects in addition to 179 languages. However, the survey excluded the former provinces of Burma and Madras as well as the princely states of Cochin, Hyderabad, Mysore, and Travancore, skewing the results due to ambiguities in differentiating between "dialect" and "language," the use of inexperienced personnel, and underreporting of data from South India.

The 2011 census, which was conducted after linguistic scrutiny, editing, and rationalization of 19,569 raw linguistic affiliations, indicates that 1369 rationalized mother tongues and 1474 names that were categorized as "unclassified" and placed in the "other" mother tongue category are recognized. The 1369 rationalized mother tongues that are spoken by ten thousand or more people are further divided into suitable sets, resulting in 121 total languages. Of the 121 languages identified in the 2001 census, 22 are already included in the Eighth Schedule to the Indian Constitution, while the remaining 99 are referred to as "Total of other languages."

The "total configuration of language use at a given time and place, including data such as how many and what kinds of languages are spoken in the area by how many people, under what circumstances, and what the attitudes and beliefs about language held by the community are," is what Ferguson (1966:307) defines as the language situation in any given nation. However, for a variety of reasons, it can occasionally be challenging to determine the precise number of languages spoken in developing nations, including India.

LANGUAGE POLICY ON EDUCATION IN INDIA

While referring to policy, language is The official language policy, which specifies the languages to be utilized for official reasons, and language education policies both address India. The Constitution also contains a number of clauses pertaining to language preservation and advancement. Hindi written in Devanagari script is designated as the official language of the Union by the official language policy. According to Articles 342(2) and 343(3) of the Indian Constitution (1950), Hindi will replace English as the sole official language of the Union after 15 years of usage for official activity. However, many states that do not speak Hindi opposed the substitution of English with Hindi, primarily in the south.

As a result, while the states are free to select their own formal languages, the Official Language Act of 1963 designates Hindi and English as official languages. One of the most crucial areas for information transfer and maintaining the progressive usage of a language is language instruction. As a result, language education programs are given particular weight in India's language policy. The National Education policy of 2020 has reintroduced the three-language formula, which is regarded as the most significant advancement in language education policy. It was first implemented in 1968 and has since been modified and repeated in 1986, 1992, 2005, and again. The Kothari Commission on Education (1964–1966) proposed it, and states all over India were to adopt it.

It was suggested that the program be implemented in order to eliminate linguistic disparities and facilitate national integration during a period of general discontent with the imposition of Hindi. The study of a modern Indian language, preferably one of the southern languages, is the main objective of the strategy. In the Hindi-speaking states, Hindi is studied alongside the regional language and English. In the non-Hindi-speaking states, Hindi is studied alongside English. (NPE, 1968: 40) The three-language system was not, however, adopted uniformly by the states and encountered resistance.

Different states in India use different variations of the formula. From Standard 6 to 10 in most state boards; Standards 8 to 10 in a few state boards; Standards 6 to 9 in two national boards under the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), namely the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) and the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS), and one private board, the Council for the

Indian School Certificate Examinations (CISCE). State boards have also begun to follow the CBSE format, which includes two languages in Standards 9 and 10, in order to overcome the unfair disadvantage their pupils face in the Class 10th Board Exams.

Speakers of linguistic minority languages must acquire their mother tongue, the dominant regional language, English, and Hindi, resulting in a four-language formula. In many Hindi-speaking states, Sanskrit has replaced any current regional language as the third language, and some boards/institutions even allow students to study other languages such as Spanish, French, and German instead of Hindi or Sanskrit. No South Indian language was included in the school curricula in Hindi-speaking states. Tamil Nadu and Puducherry maintain a two-language policy. Odisha is the only state that has formally incorporated Mother Language school (MLE) into its school system, and exclusively in tribal areas.

The NEP 2020 continues to adopt the three-language formula, stating that it would be more flexible and that no language will be imposed on any state. The proposed NEP 2019, which contained compulsory Hindi study, was later revoked due to strong criticism from non-Hindi speaking states. According to NEP 2020, states, regions, and students will be able to choose three languages to learn, as long as at least two of them are native to India. Wherever possible, the medium of instruction until at least Grade 5, but preferably until Grade 8 and beyond, will be the home language/mother tongue/local language/regional language used by both public and private schools.

There will be widespread use of technology in the teaching and learning of languages, coupled with the provision of top-notch textbooks—including those in science—in home languages and mother tongues. Early on, every effort will be taken to guarantee that any language gaps between the child's native tongue and the teaching medium are filled in. Under the "Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat" initiative, all students nationwide will take part in an enjoyable project/activity on "The Languages of India" at some point in Grades 6–8 to learn about the main Indian languages. While local sign languages would be taught and utilized when appropriate and feasible, Indian Sign Language (ISL) will be standardized. Secondary school students in India will have the option of studying various foreign languages in addition to traditional Indian language.

Debates and arguments in support of Teaching in Mother Tongue

A review of the literature indicates that scholarly and institutional perspectives on mother tongue education diverge. The importance of teaching early schoolchildren in their native tongue was outlined in a 1953 UNESCO report. UNESCO notes (1953:11):

It is axiomatic that the best medium for teaching a child is his [her] mother tongue. Psychologically it is the system of meaningful signs that in his [her] mind works automatically for the expression and understanding. Sociologically, it is a means of identification among members of the community to which he [she] learns more quickly through it than through an unfamiliar linguistic medium (Emphasise and gender sensitive terms mine).

It contends that mastery of one's mother tongue, or first language, must be well-developed before one may acquire literacy or a second language (UNESCO, 1968). UNESCO (1968:689–690) warns against assuming that a child's mother tongue is the language their parents speak to them or that it is the first language they speak. A person's mother tongue is the language they naturally pick up in their early years and use for cognition and communication (UNESCO, 1953).

An International Mother Language Day was established in 1999 to honor mother tongues, and it is observed on February 21st each year. Proponents of mother education argue that elementary education in the child's mother tongue improves academic performance. According to a research conducted in New Zealand, Maori youngsters who got a rudimentary education in their own tongue outperformed those who only received instruction in English (UNESCO, 2005:1). Students feel that their language is acknowledged, respected, and valued when they learn in it. One may argue that preventing students from learning in their mother tongue at the foundational level of school is equivalent to "erasing" their identity because language is connected to culture and people's identities. In terms of mother tongue education, UNESCO's stance is still as follows:

On educational grounds, we recommend that the use of mother tongue be extended to as late a stage in education as possible. In particular, pupils should begin their schooling through the medium of the mother tongue, because they understand it best and because to begin their school life in the mother tongue will make the break between home and the school as small as possible (UNESCO, 1953:47-48 cited in Ogechi, 2003:284).

Mother tongue instruction is encouraged by UNESCO for psychological, social, and pedagogical reasons. Educationists promote mother tongue education because it can help children develop cognitively. When taught in a second language, learners struggle to develop cognitive skills, particularly if the language is unrelated to their mother tongue (McNab, 1989:15).

The idea that a student's mother tongue is optimal for conceptual understanding and expression is promoted by UNESCO. This is contrasted with foreign languages such as English, where the student must acquire the subject matter prior to receiving instruction in the language. Mother tongue education is supported by numerous regional and international organizations. Mother tongues are now considered second-class in India. This is partially caused by the public's disapproval of Indian languages. It should be the primary focus of linguists, educationalists, legislators, publishers, parents, and everyone else to consciously push mother tongue education.

In fact, affirmative action need to be used to advance native tongues both in India and around the globe. Teaching a child in his or her mother tongue should be seen as an unalienable right, as it is the language that the child is exposed to from birth and will help him or her to understand the world around them. This viewpoint is in line with the views of academics who advocate mother language instruction since it can improve a child's academic performance in other subjects and provide them with psychological support. One could argue that knowing one's mother tongue fosters pride and independence while also quickening learning. Similarly, a number of academics have noted that acquiring a second language equates to acquiring a new culture and, hence, cultural reliance.

Many educators agree that students learn best when they move from the known to the unknown and from simple to complicated. Mother tongue is the first language a child learns and uses in their daily lives. It is also possible to state clearly that teaching primary school students a language different than their mother tongue is a significant deviation from the fundamental educational principle that knowledge should be transferred from known to unknown. The kid can only be introduced to the realm of high culture and abstract experiences through their mother language, which has connections to their surroundings and experiences. It follows that the importance of mother language in a child's growth and development cannot be overstated.

Denying a youngster the chance to study in their mother tongue at a lower educational level is linguistic injustice. Researchers in mother language education make reference to the belief that using one's mother tongue helps a kid learn a variety of concepts, ideas, and skills more successfully. Compared to, say, national or official language, a learner can more easily conceive and assimilate concepts using their mother tongue. According to a renowned expert on mother tongue education, children pick up social norms through their language. Numerous studies have shown that teaching students in their mother tongue—the language spoken in their immediate community—improves their academic performance.

Through their mother tongue, students' ideas, imaginations, and creativity are fostered and stimulated. The following justifications for mother tongue inclusion in the primary school curriculum should be listed by the educators in charge of curriculum development. It may be emphasized that even after learning to speak English, the students' ideas and thoughts will still remain in their home tongue. The students must be assisted in thinking independently in their own tongue if they are to be inspired to do so. A people's mother tongue is how they convey their culture.

Mother tongue instruction needs to be positive in order to help students recognize their cultural history as a foundation for understanding others' and contributing on their own as adults. Mother Tongue fosters a child's freedom of expression and serves as a conduit between the family, Early Childhood Development (ECD) facilities, and primary schools. It serves as a basis for learning foreign languages as a tool for teaching literacy, numeracy, and manipulative abilities. When utilized as a

teaching medium, mother tongue gives kids a feeling of community, boosts their self-esteem, and encourages them to take part in all school activities. This guarantees a seamless transitional experience.

Debates and arguments against Mother Tongue Education

It may be noticed that those who oppose mother tongue education refer to the cost consequences of executing the scheme. In India, for example, the multiplicity of mother tongues and dialects makes it prohibitively expensive to educate each child in her/his native language. Other experts have suggested that mother tongue education might lead to division and disunity in a country. Gupta (1997), for example, feels that emphasizing mother tongue education may lead to considerable ethnic group division in the educational system. However, Gupta's (1997) argument has flaws because it has been demonstrated that language is not the primary driver of political instability and divisiveness, but rather current politics. Subsequently, in this case it may be observed that various Commonwealth, African and European countries speak only one language, and national fragmentation is caused by political, clan, and ideological differences rather than mother tongue.

Mother tongue education has also been accused as being the root cause of ineffective second language learning. For example, in India, low performance in English compositions, particularly at the Higher and Technical Education levels, has been attributed to mother tongue intrusion. To counter this, opponents of MTE believe that in order to effectively acquire a second language, it must be employed as a medium of instruction from the start (Fasold, 1984:294). However, scientific research conducted by UNESCO and backed by various experts suggests that the best strategy to introduce a second language is to teach it first as a subject, using the mother tongue as a medium (UNESCO, 1968:692).

Aspects that Hinder Mother Tongue Education in India

There are many obstacles in the way of mother tongue education in India, such as a dearth of published course materials and dictionaries, inexperienced teachers, and unfavorable views toward the language. Nevertheless, other commonwealth nations as well as India mention the issues. One of the issues impeding mother language education in India is the scarcity of instructional resources. Materials for instruction and learning continue to be one of the main obstacles in mother tongue education. Since independence, educational and other resources have been developed by state-owned publications such as NBT, Sahitya Akademi, and the regional language academies. In addition, the private publishing sector is enormous.

However, a lack of skilled staff, such as editors, to cope with India's numerous mother tongues and the small market make many publishers timid or afraid to publish in mother tongue. For example, in addition to being a native speaker, an editor working with mother tongues should be a certified, skilled, and experienced teacher and linguist. English-language publishing is thought to be simple and profitable. Because the language is required, examinable, and offers a ready market for published products at the elementary and secondary levels, it is financially advantageous. Furthermore, the fact that so many experts are proficient in various languages makes it simple.

Even with the availability of instructional resources, it can be argued that lower primary teachers exercise their own judgment when allocating class time for mother language instruction. The majority of the time, they are teaching English, math, or merely storytelling instead of the native tongue. The belief among educators that teaching in one's mother tongue has no financial advantages is, in fact, seriously impeding the advancement and growth of mother tongue instruction. However, problems are even worse than they were in the past because of modern circumstances, such as the demands placed on language proficiency, particularly in English, by multinational corporations. One strategy for language promotion is research.

On the other hand, hardly much research has been done on mother tongue instruction, particularly in our universities. It may be argued that study is necessary to support the use of Indian languages in terminology development and standardization. This is due to mother tongues' inadequate vocabulary to deal with the rapidly expanding global community, particularly in the fields of science and technology. One of the main arguments in favor of standardizing Indian languages is the existence

of several dialects. Nonetheless, it is apparent that Indian educators have created a sophisticated curriculum for teaching mother language to students in preschool through higher education. However, without investing time and resources in language development, this could not be sufficient for leaders and academics to elevate Indian languages.

Mother tongues struggle to keep up with the rapidly changing world, particularly in the fields of science and information and communication technology (ICT). For example, the majority of Indian languages lack terms for things like computers and email. But like any other language, Indian languages have a tendency to expand their vocabularies in order to borrow and indigenize terms. An additional issue impeding mother tongue education in India is the absence of uniformity in Indian languages and dialects. This is also related to the problem of conscious efforts to address orthographies of different mother tongues being sluggish or nonexistent in some cases. In general, there is not enough mother tongue research being done in our educational institutions.

Consider the fact that, historically, mother tongues have been studied less in university settings and more in English when it comes to language study. Our educational system has to reevaluate how mother tongues are taught and learned. It is evident that sixteen vowels are present in the majority of Indian languages, Telugu in particular. The majority of previously released documents written in native languages did not sufficiently address the orthography problem. It is important to resolve this orthographical issue in published documents to prevent misinterpretations of Indian languages. The orthographical standardization of diverse dialects of many Indian languages ought to be ongoing.

According to Ferguson (1968), standardization is the application of a supradialectal norm that "brings to a language the kind of integration and uniformity needed for large scale communication." If initiatives to support mother tongue education are to be successful, the other local language dialects must be standardized in the same way that a few Indian languages have been standardized. One of the biggest obstacles is the attitude that parents in urban areas have toward their mother tongue. Even in lower primary school, the majority of Indian parents prefer that their kids learn in English rather than their mother tongue, and their attitudes about mother tongue education are quite appalling.

Even many so-called educated parents contest the notion that a child will gain if their first education is provided in their mother tongue. Sometimes parents who choose an English-medium school do so because they observe the benefits of an English-medium education, such as well-paying jobs and social mobility. The main contention put forth here is that English is the global language of communication. Parents believe that English is the language of the future for their children because of its widespread use.

As Corson (1993:71-72) notes "...when a language spoken by a minority is not used in schooling either as a means of instruction or as a curriculum subject, then it is clear to all concerned that that language is not valued in the school." Furthermore, it may be said that Indians' disdain for their mother tongues stems from the fact that they value other countries more highly than themselves and feel deeply inferior to them as people. As a result, they will never value their native tongues. A child's right to language is being violated by this. During the early years of schooling, a child should have the linguistic right to receive instruction in his or her mother tongue. Furthermore, Robinson (2005:2) has noted in this instance that "children who learn in another language get two messages -- that if they want to succeed intellectually, it won't be by using their mother tongue and also that their mother tongue is useless".

Furthermore, it may be stated that native Indian languages have suffered as a result of the special favors accorded to European languages like English, Spanish, and French. Webb and Kembo-Sure (2000:6), for instance, lists the following justifications for why English is favored as the language of instruction in schools:

"English is a world language, it provides access to almost all the sources of knowledge (school textbooks) and entertainment (literature, television, films), it is the most important language of work in the country, it allows one to communicate with billions of people all over the world, it is the language of most successful people in the western world, and it is the language of the struggle against apartheid."

A scenario that could be referred to as "linguistic imperialism" could result from an over-reliance on foreign colonial languages like English and French and, at the same time, from Indians' negative sentiments toward their mother tongues. It is concerning that speaking in one's mother tongue can result in punishment in certain Indian schools. This creates a negative impression that their language is less valuable than others, such as English. A clear message that a student should "renounce any allegiance to their language and culture" is conveyed when a teacher discipline a student for using their mother tongue (Cummins, 2000).

While the majority of Indian states have provisions in their constitutions guaranteeing the right to use Indian languages, several academics are seen bemoaning the fact that these states barely make any effort to change the legacy of colonialism. It should be mentioned that another difficulty the mother tongue faces is a lack of financial resources. The development of mother tongues requires financial and human resources. Not a select group of academics should be in charge of developing Indian languages. Governments in charge of developing indigenous languages ought to offer incentives and financial support to the organizations involved. For example, the Indian government can provide the KIE or publishers additional funding so they may hire writers and create mother tongue course materials that can be used in lower primary education.

Additionally, more funding needs to be allocated for elementary school teachers' retraining and training in the most recent mother tongue teaching methodologies. Even though there are explicit policies in place for teacher training in mother tongue education, language councils, and bills supporting local languages are being passed because some of these languages are endangered, political will should still play a crucial role in the actual implementation of these policies, as government leadership should provide the necessary impetus for the language policies to be implemented. For instance, it appears that the Indian government does not provide extra funding for the teaching of native tongues throughout the nation. The absence of language policy implementation in the majority of Indian states is indicative of a lack of political will.

One may say that language policies in India are declarations without action. For example, the majority of educational policies in India suggest teaching native languages, but there is still a lack of interest in mother tongue education. Like all other disciplines, the mother tongue syllabus in India is undergoing significant revisions. Nevertheless, the majority of the previously released mother tongues do not align with the updated syllabus. One big issue has been the dearth of skilled and competent writers who write in their native tongues. Keep in mind that not all people who are native speakers of a language are qualified writers or editors of that language. The dearth of certified and trained teachers presents still another obstacle to the efficient and well-coordinated teaching of mother tongue.

Mother tongue is less often used as the major language of teaching, despite the fact that primary school teachers receive training in over ten courses at several teacher-training colleges. As a result, when it comes to their different mother tongues' methods and content, the majority of mother tongue teachers are lacking. Curriculum designers should think about including mother tongue instruction and its methods in teacher-training programs.

Suggestions, Plans, and Future Directions

Mother tongues need to be cultivated and supported in the educational system in order to flourish. It should be emphasized once more that a language cannot be developed unless it is used in education, and that language cannot be developed until it is utilized in education. Stated differently, the utilization of mother tongue as a teaching medium inside the educational system is a positive step toward their eventual widespread adoption. The political resolve to support mother tongue education is essential. Since language policy is a political matter overall, the ruling class must demonstrate political will in order to address this. Linda King, senior program specialist at UNESCO's Divisions for Promotion of Quality Education, is quoted by UNESCO (2003:2) as saying:

Every decision about languages is political. But the technical issues of how to teach them are involved too. The main thing is to respect local languages and legitimize them within the school system as well as giving pupils access to a national and foreign language.

In India, mother tongue development is necessary in addition to English and other foreign languages. As things stand, Hindi and English are given greater weight than mother tongue, which has been ignored or receives little attention. It is necessary to stop and reverse this tendency.

India has 197 endangered languages, of which UNESCO lists 81 as vulnerable, 63 as definitely endangered, six as severely endangered, 42 as critically endangered, and five as extinct. The top spot on the list goes to the Indian union territory of Andaman and Nicobar, whose 11 very endangered languages are primarily tribal varieties. With seven endangered languages, Manipur leads the country in this category, followed by Himachal Pradesh with four. Approximately 197 Indian languages are in risk of dying out, according to the report. Teaching the languages as topics in the school system and employing them as the primary language of instruction in the catchment areas is one strategy to save the endangered languages.

Nevertheless, educational resources have to be released in the languages first. The methods and strategies of teaching in the mother tongue should be taught to teachers. This necessitates reviewing the curricula offered by Indian teacher training institutions. Furthermore, in-service training courses as well as frequent seminars and workshops are necessary for retraining practicing teachers. The task for the nation's future constitution is to address mother tongue education and lay out the policies for their upkeep and advancement inside the nation. The Indian constitution ought to include provisions supporting and developing mother tongue education.

A few nations that have set the standard are South Africa and Sierra Leone; these are worthwhile models to follow. The elaborate statement "Recognizing the historically diminished use and status of the indigenous languages of our people, the state must take practical and positive measures to elevate the status and advance the use of these languages" (Section 6 (2)) is found in the South African constitution (Act 108 of 1996). In actuality, the selection of the teaching medium within the educational system as a component of language planning is a political one (Rahman, 1997). The future of mother tongue education will be guaranteed by the constitution's inclusion of the multilingual language policy.

This means that educators, linguists, and all other interested parties in India must persuade the political class to support mother tongue instruction in lower primary schools and the implementation of the multilingual language policy. Indians cannot afford to lose their native tongues because language loss, including the loss of one's mother tongue, is painful because languages are not interchangeable and because they are a people's way of communicating and organizing their thoughts throughout history. India's multilingualism ought to be a strength rather than a drawback. The several linguistic communities should remain together by the multilingual environment. The variety of Indian languages should be utilised by Indian states.

CONCLUSION

The present paper sought to identify the problems with mother tongue instruction in India. From the talks, it is clear that not enough has been done to address the problem of mother language education in India, particularly with regard to the execution of policies. In terms of mother tongue education specifically and language policy in general in India, the paper advocates for linguistic egalitarianism.

Language policies should respect, support, and encourage the mutually harmonious coexistence of all languages, regardless of their origins, political or economic power, or speaker count. It can be argued that linguistic egalitarianism involves all languages in a multilingual context, whether major or minor, exoglossic or endoglossic, as resources that need to be effectively harvested for the overall national good. The statement made by Phaswana (1994:36) that "English will be preferred as the medium of instruction as long as it is still perceived as the language of power, the economy, and education" is supported by this essay.

In this age of globalization, we are not advocating for the abolition of English as a medium of teaching in Indian primary and secondary school. According to Phillipson (1996:162), encouraging mother tongue education does not imply "saying farewell to European languages but reducing them to equality". We must promote mother tongue education alongside English and other foreign languages.

Although it is a "mission practically impossible" to provide basic education to every kid in India in his or her mother tongue at the elementary level, efforts should be undertaken to close the existing gap. A multilingual person enjoys several benefits. As Champion correctly remarks in Crystal (2000:44), "a man [or woman] who knows two languages is worth of two men [women]".

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