English Next

India

British Council

David Graddol

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The future of English in India

David Graddol

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Foreword by Martin Davidson, CMG
Chief Executive, British Council

English plays a vital role in increasing opportunity around the world. It provides access to the information with which individuals can learn and develop and it provides access to the networks which are vital in building and maintaining economic links. Perhaps more importantly, it provides a common language to share knowledge and ideas and to create the kind of relationships which go beyond a simple deal or contract. It enables people to explore cultural differences and to create the kind of trust and understanding which is vital in negotiating and agreeing our common future.

One might assume that India, a country with a long history of English speaking, would be ahead of the curve in the teaching and learning of English, but increasing access to opportunity is a significant challenge. The challenge of taking what is currently the language of the elite and turning it into a tool for the masses is complex and daunting.

English Next India sits as part of a wider programme of work by the British Council in India, one which aims to contribute to the development of English language teaching and learning in India. The study aims to develop a better understanding of the issues facing India and draws on the contributions of a wide range of experts from India and the UK, many of whom participated in the *English for Progress: Third Policy Dialogue* that took place in Delhi in November 2009. The concluding chapter is based on those discussions and recommendations that emerged from this conference and we hope, working in partnership with the government of India, to see many of these implemented.

Martin Davidson

It has always been a pleasure reading David Graddol's works. As the Vice-Chancellor of a university that is well known for the teaching of English and training of teachers of English, it is imperative on my part to keep abreast of the language trends in the country, and in this connection, David Graddol's works contain a wealth of well-documented facts and figures, a testimony to the research that goes into each of them. I had the pleasure of meeting David on his visit to our university and was impressed by his dedication, enthusiasm and earnestness to unravel the mystery of the status of English in modern India.

English Next India is an eye-opener for readers who are interested in knowing the place of English in the present scenario. The 'USP' being used by modern India for the growth of its new, IT-enabled economy has been knowledge of English. Modern India boasts a talented pool of young, proficient users of the English language, who can transform Indian society and who can provide the necessary impetus to its growth, even in these recession-ridden times. David Graddol questions this premise in the introductory sentence where he succinctly states:

> *India speaks English. At least that is what most of the world imagines.*

David Graddol doesn't deny the fact that India does have some near-native speakers of English but he is quick to add that these are restricted to certain pockets of the country, the preserve of the elite. The author has brought into focus what Pandit Nehru had said way back in 1963,

> *In the old days, we produced a relatively small, though numerically fairly large, class of people who knew English and who formed a kind of English-knowing caste in India. In this*

land of castes, everything turns into caste. And people who knew English, even though they may not have known it very well, considered themselves superior to those who did not.

The government of India, quick to observe the social divide that this was creating between those who can speak English and those who can't and also recognising the importance of English for economic expansion, has embarked on a programme to make English universal. David Graddol questions the desirability of this move in a complex, multilingual context of India, a country that is truly linguistically and culturally diverse. He identifies the issues that may hamper the realisation of this dream. As a first-generation learner myself, I could relate well to the problems and hurdles that are mentioned in this book.

The main ideas and key concepts, including the notion of *English – Dalit Goddess,* peddled by some Dalit activists, are presented in an easy-to-read format, signposted in compact sections. The statistics and the topically relevant photographs add credibility to the ideas and issues highlighted in the book. Language trainers in the corporate world with the blinkered idea that correctly spoken English is the only 'soft skill' to be mastered by their employees are in for a rude shock in this book. David Graddol provides a list of 'soft skills' other than English language proficiency that employers may insist on in future for the smooth functioning of their organisation. This book provides useful recommendations not only for trainers and teachers but also for government agencies on what steps they need to take to counter the problems faced by them.

I wish David Graddol success and I look forward to 'Graddol Next' – the next venture from him.

Abhai Maurya

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Introduction

India speaks English. At least that is what most of the world imagines.

Only a few years ago, north America and Europe discovered that India could provide low-cost back office and call centre facilities. It looked as if India was finally able to 'monetise' its British colonial legacy. The English language appears to be the key ingredient in a new, IT-enabled, economy which is everywhere transforming Indian society. But as the Indian economy grows, exhausting its English-speaking 'talent pool', some people are beginning to think that perhaps not enough people in India speak English after all.

India is home to what is probably the most complex society in the world – complex not just because of its size, but because complexity seems to be in its DNA, reproduced in a fractal pattern from national to local village level. Indian society embraces some of the most modern, hi-tech fuelled, global-travelling life-styles alongside the most abject poverty. In the cities of India, it is possible to experience many centuries of urban development on the same day.

Within this complexity grows the English language; implanted in colonial times, and argued over ever since. Some in India claim it is a burden, others a liberation. Many complain that English has created one of the biggest social divisions in an already divided society – between those who can speak English, and those who cannot.

(Left) A girl in a slum school in Hyderabad receives English lessons from a volunteer teacher supported by Pratham – an NGO first established in 1994 to provide education to the children in the slums of Mumbai city and whose work now reaches millions of children in both urban and rural areas across India. But will English provide a liberation for such children, or prove to be yet another means of marginalising them, as they watch others get far richer than before?

The place of English in India cannot be understood without simultaneously understanding both the local detail and the bigger national picture. On the one hand, we ideally need to draw on detailed ethnographic studies, including close observation of classroom practices, detailed linguistic research into the use of English in different communities in modern India, and case studies of how English has affected the lives and careers of individual Indians. On the other, we cannot understand the recent surge in demand for English without examining larger, national trends in the economy and demography. The story of English in India is a still-unfolding one about India's journey from British colony, through the status of being a 'developing country', to its eventual destiny as one of the world's superpowers.

And there is a bigger picture still, created by the emergence of English as a global language. The rewards of investing in English depend in great measure on how many other countries are now teaching English to their youth. In China, elsewhere in Asia, in Latin America, across Europe and many other places, English is now seen as a new 'basic skill' which all children require if they are to fully participate in 21st-century civil society. I have argued in an earlier book in this series that the rise of English as a global lingua franca simultaneously makes English more useful – it can now be used to communicate to people from almost any country in the world – but also erodes the competitive advantage that it brings its speakers. When English becomes universal, no one gains advantage by having it. Rather, anyone without it suffers. We are fast moving into a world in which *not* to have English is to be marginalised and excluded.

If there is a shortage of English speakers in India, then it may be greatest among the non-graduates, the 88% of the population who do not reach

college. The Government of India's eleventh five-year plan, which guides public sector policies during 2007–12, calls for a massive expansion of technical and vocational education, to provide the skills needed for the next phase of India's economic expansion. Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee, in the 2009 Budget speech, tells us:

> *The demographic advantage India has – in terms of a large percentage of young population – needs to be converted into a dynamic economic advantage by providing them the right education and skills.*

As part of that upskilling programme, India now aspires to make English universal, after a couple centuries of it being the preserve of an elite. But that must remain no more than an aspiration for longer than most people imagine. It will take another two or three generations to come near realising it. And is it necessary? Is it desirable? And if English is not democratised in this way, can India find a way of exploiting its English potential in a manner which leads to inclusive development, improving the lives of the masses? Can India find a way of engaging with globalisation by reinventing itself as a modern society with a unique cultural, linguistic and intellectual offer? I argue that a part of that answer lies in building on the extraordinary human resource offered by India's existing linguistic and cultural diversity. English may be a useful catalyst, it may be a vital ingredient in India's continued progress, but the final goal must lie beyond English.

This book does not attempt to provide simple answers to what are complex problems. It suggests a diversity of locally implemented solutions is needed. But *English Next India* attempts to identify some of the key questions, and thus help stimulate an informed public debate about the future of English in India.

HOW TO READ THIS BOOK

The first part of this book sets out the wider context, focusing on how globalisation is changing the Indian economy and society in ways which have implications for language policy. This part is not intended to be a comprehensive account of India today: it sets out some of the background factors which affect future educational needs and the changing role of English.

The nature of Indian society is such that up-to-date and accurate statistics are not easy to obtain. Data is abundant in some areas, difficult to locate, or obsolete, in others, and simply does not exist in some areas where language planners need it most. Who would imagine, for example, how impossible it is to estimate how many people in India speak English?

Wherever possible, I have drawn on government statistics and policy statements for this part of the book. I have also benefited from many conversations with Indian stakeholders and researchers – including economists, demographers, technology companies, linguists and government officials.

The focus in the second part of the book is on learning English in India, especially within the education system, both public and private.

The last part identifies some key issues and questions raised by previous sections and some of the responses from participants in the *English for Progress: Third Policy Dialogue*, a conference held in Delhi in November 2009, organised by 'Project English' of the British Council in India.

(Left) Chennai is a bilingual city, but in India that often means that some things are said in English and others in the local language. Are only those who understand English expected to obey the parking regulations?

Main conclusions

» **A MAJOR SHIFT TOWARDS ENGLISH**
A major shift in the status of English in India is now under way in India. English will be used by more people, for more purposes than ever before.

» **THERE ARE THREE MAIN DRIVERS FOR ENGLISH**
There are three main drivers in India towards the greater use of English: education (increasing demand for English-medium schools, widening access to higher education, incorporation of English training in vocational education); employment (many jobs in the organised sector now require good English skills); social mobility (English is seen as an access route to the middle classes and geographical mobility within India and beyond).

» **ENGLISH HAS ESCAPED FROM THE LIBRARY**
English has long been thought of as a 'library language', but spoken English skills are now increasingly needed both for higher studies and employment. School curricula have not yet reflected this change.

» **SUSTAINED ECONOMIC GROWTH REQUIRES MORE ENGLISH SPEAKERS**
India's development road-map needs more people to move into the jobs in the organised sector which require English.

» **NATIONAL IMPROVEMENT IN ENGLISH IS TOO SLOW**
The rate of improvement in the English-language skills of the Indian population is at present too slow to prevent India from falling behind other countries which have implemented the teaching of English in primary schools sooner, and more successfully. China may already have more people who speak English than India.

» **ENGLISH IS A CASUALTY OF WIDER PROBLEMS IN INDIAN EDUCATION**
Students in many government and private schools have very low levels of academic achievement. It is impossible to improve standards of English without addressing this wider educational problem.

» THERE IS A HUGE SHORTAGE OF ENGLISH TEACHERS

There is a huge shortage of teachers who can implement the English programmes now being started or envisaged in primary schools, secondary schools and vocational education. This will create inequality of provision and inequality of learning outcomes. It is also is one cause of slow progress nationally.

» ENGLISH-MEDIUM EDUCATION IS ONE CAUSE OF EDUCATIONAL FAILURE

Children do not learn English simply by being taught through English. A hasty shift to English medium without appropriate teaching of the language causes educational failure. Sustained education in, and development of, the mother tongue remains important.

» POOR ENGLISH IS HOLDING BACK INDIAN HIGHER EDUCATION

Indian universities fall far short of rival countries in the quality of their teaching, research, and graduates. Poor English skills is one of the causes.

» SURVEYS OF ENGLISH PROFICIENCY LEVELS ARE NEEDED

Without knowing more about the English proficiency levels of students and their teachers, it is impossible to make appropriate policy or plan for further training. Without understanding how English skills are distributed in society, it is impossible to estimate the impact of particular interventions.

» INDIA'S LANGUAGE DIVERSITY IS AN IMPORTANT FUTURE RESOURCE

Schools need to focus on language development in *all* languages, including lesser used languages and minority languages. The three-language formula as presently implemented does not properly support multilingual development. A new approach is necessary.

» A DIVERSITY OF APPROACHES IS NEEDED

There is no single solution to the problem of low English proficiency – a diversity of models is needed to fit local contexts.

India
in transition

India – a land of tradition and change

India is a country steeped in tradition where innovation – it often seems – simply adds yet another layer to the complexity of Indian life. But in the last decade things have started to change.

Something of the complexity of India is captured in this section of the book: the division and subdivision socially by geography, religion, language, caste, age, gender, education and employment. Depending on which cell in the complex matrix of Indian socio-economic life a person inhabits, their relationship with English is different. Different modes of learning, of use, of empowerment and marginalisation apply.

Indian society now seems to be on an unstoppable trajectory of change, in a way which could not be foreseen even in the 1990s. But change is occurring at very different speeds in each segment of society, leading to major structural shifts in the pattern of inequality.

The role of English in India is changing, triggered by a wider process of economic and social development which is expanding the number of people who know and use English. But speaking English is not a passive, accidental consequence of change. It lies at the very heart of change, enabling large sections of the economy to become more productive and at least a segment of society to become richer. If access to English is unequal, then the gap between the rich and poor in India will widen. That is exactly what is happening in other developing countries, and the process appears also to have begun in India.

This section thus describes a complex country in the process of fast and radical change. Some of these changes are 'destiny' processes – that is, we can be reasonably sure of where the change will end up, even if we are unclear about the rate of progress and the overall timescale of the change. Destiny systems include the demographic one: the total population of India will continue to grow, but growth is slowing, will stabilise and then is likely to decrease. As this happens, India will move from being a young country, to one that suffers from some of the same social and economic problems now being experienced by developed countries with ageing populations. India has been struggling to provide for huge numbers of children, with a relatively small proportion of the population in productive work, creating the wealth and tax revenue to pay for education and social welfare. But in future the problem will become the inverse: too few people in the productive workforce to support an ageing population.

How long this transition will take is still a matter of debate, but it is likely to be at least half a century, and probably more.

Imagining the future of India as a multilingual society

English Next India focuses on the past, present and future status of English in Indian society and the wider contexts – social, economic and technological – in which English is desired, learned and used. The book concludes that a major status shift in English is now in progress in India and that this is likely to have significant social and cultural consequences.

Understanding the implications of widening access to English thus raises a bigger issue of what kind of society India should become. It is important that policy-makers do not just focus on the immediate demands of the economy, or indeed of any particular interest group. If action is not taken now, in terms of educational planning, curriculum development, teacher-training and examination reform, the linguistic diversity of India will suffer. Both English and Hindi are likely to grow in use, but small languages will continue to decline, and even regional languages will lose domains of use. Educational policy can be used as a tool to ensure that India's linguistic and cultural diversity remains an economic resource for future generations.

THE DEVELOPMENT ROAD-MAP

There is something of a well-thumbed, international road-map for development. For example, economists warn that as a country develops, the structure of its employment must change. We can see this most dramatically in the way employment in the 'primary' (agriculture) sector all but disappears – in the UK and the USA around 70% of pre-industrial employment was in agriculture, and this has dropped to a few per cent today. So one major transition – barely begun in India – requires the large-scale shift of people out of agriculture, allowing food production to become more efficient, mechanised, and based on different patterns of land ownership.

This shift requires a huge investment in skills and training – so presently unskilled workers can take on other jobs – which need to be created by the new economy. These jobs will require higher educational levels, but they will pay better and provide families with greater security.

This, of course, is what development is all about: a country cannot simply pay people more. Everybody has to become more productive: that is, carry out work which produces more value. And they not only need to earn more, they also need to spend more.

The big development question – perhaps the largest 'elephant in the room' – is what role English plays or can play in this process. Growing the number of English speakers requires a huge investment for both the country and for families and individuals. Will such an investment be rewarded, or does it represent a misdirection of resources? And if English is so important, how can the investment be best directed? Where are the weaknesses in the present 'pipeline' which produces English speakers?

A DOWNSIDE TO ENGLISH?

And what might the downside be? More English implies not just an economic rebalancing, but also a cultural one. Indian lifestyles are already changing, as the middle class grows in size and people change from simply trying to survive to become consumers. This means that English will probably play an increased role in private, as well as public, life.

What does the increasing importance of English mean for the still-unfinished project to make Hindi a national language? What does it mean for the status of regional languages? And what does it mean for the smaller, lesser used, unscheduled languages of India? Is the development road-map one which leads inevitably to reduced linguistic diversity, or can India draw up a new map of its own, in which multilingualism becomes the goal, rather than English on its own?

Demographic change may be an intrinsic feature of development and has a known ultimate destiny. But the destinations of other kinds of transition are determined by the development road-map itself – in other words, by policy decisions or the lack of them. One such transition is to an English-speaking, multilingual society. Too often, individual elements of policy are stressed as if they were ends in themselves – such as the need to learn English – without explaining how they fit into the bigger social and economic picture. *English Next India* is intended to help stimulate a debate which will help us understand that bigger picture.

The main transitions in India

India is undergoing several kinds of transition. The following seem to be the most important with regard to language:

The demographic transition

» *The Indian population will continue to grow, possibly reaching over 2 billion before it stabilises early in the next century*

» *The age structure will become more balanced, with a greater proportion of the population of productive working age*

The economic transition

» *Fewer people will work in agriculture, more in the organised sector, especially services*

» *The domestic economy will grow, becoming more important than the export sector*

The social transition

» *The middle class, with disposable income, will grow in size – even in rural areas*

» *More people will live in cities*

The educational transition

» *Enrolment in education, up to the age of 14, will approach 100%*

» *The quality of learning will improve*

» *A larger proportion of the population will enter higher education*

The English transition

» *Spoken English, rather than just reading and writing, becomes a key skill*

» *A majority of the population will become bilingual, with English as their second language*

SECTION 1: INDIAN SOCIETY

One of the most notable features of Indian society is its sheer complexity, which makes it difficult to understand the existing distribution of resources and the needs and aspirations of different sectors of society.

Young India

India has more young people than any other country – even China. This has made attaining full enrolment in schools a challenge, and also means many more school-leavers and graduates will be looking for employment.

Populations grow quickly when mortality levels fall as a result of better health-care and nutrition. After a while, birth rates fall – a result partly of education, partly family economics. Eventually, the birth rate falls to the 'replacement rate' (usually considered to be around 2.1 children per couple). Even at this stage, the total population keeps growing for decades, resulting from the 'wave' of younger people growing older. This process, from population increase, to stability, and then perhaps decline, is known as the 'demographic transition'.

India's population is following this path: already increasing before independence, the rate has risen faster since the 1960s, yet the transition is unlikely to be complete until the start of the next century.

CHANGING AGE STRUCTURE

In the early stages of the demographic transition, there is a 'baby boom'. As these children grow up, the age balance in the population (**1.4**) will change. In India there are around 25 million children in each year-group, but only a third as many aged in their 60s.
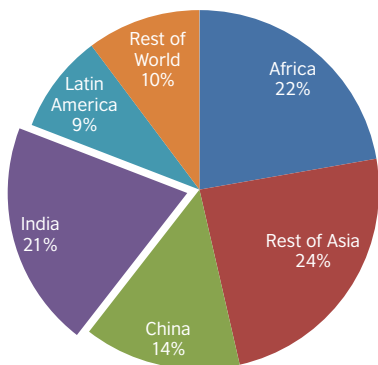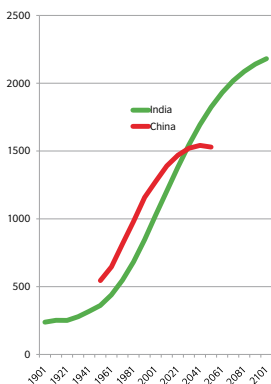

1.1 Distribution of the world's five- to nine-year-old children. India has substantially more children of primary school age than any other country.
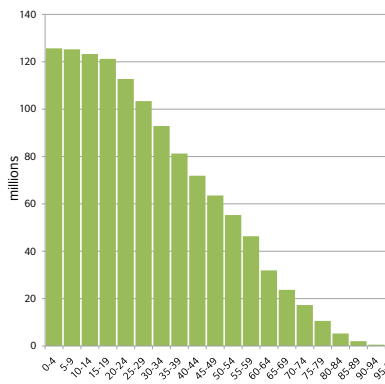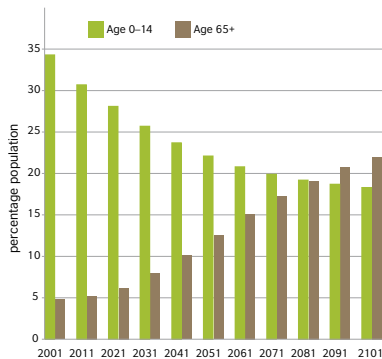

1.2 India's age profile in 2010. There are about 25 million children in each year-cohort. (UN Population Prospects 2008)

India's burgeoning youth provides an economic advantage – but only if they can be educated

1.3 India's population (millions) will continue to grow, but will eventually stabilise around the end of the century. The population of India is expected to overtake that of China in 20–30 years' time.
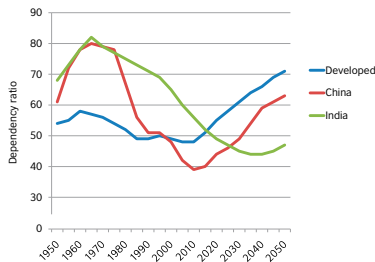
THE DEMOGRAPHIC DIVIDEND

As the proportion of people of productive working age outnumber their dependents, there is a potential 'demographic dividend'. This is a 'once-off' stage in a demographic transition where a rapid increase in national wealth and welfare is possible – but *only* if the skills level of the working population is high. If the workforce is under-educated and unproductive, the opportunity is lost.

INDIA AND THE WORLD'S WORKFORCE

Dependency ratios in many parts of the world are rising. In India they are falling as it moves into its 'demographic dividend' moment. This, along with the fact that Indians already account for over 17% of the global population, means that soon, India will be home for over 20% of the world's productive workforce.

In future, the rest of the world may look to India for workers not because they are cheap, but because that is where they can find a large pool of people with talent.

1.4 India's youth will become a less dominant factor in the population make-up. At the same time, the number of older people will grow. (PFI & PRB 2007)
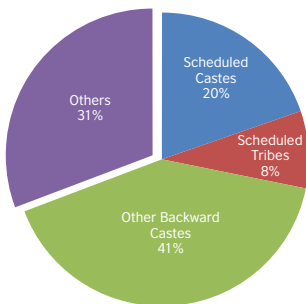

1.5 Changing dependency ratios. A dependency ratio shows the number of dependents (children or elderly) as a percentage of people of working age.
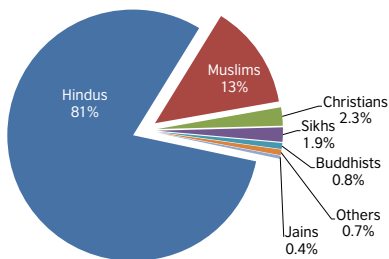
A divided society

India may have a huge population, but its society is ranked by interlocking divides of religion, caste, gender, age, wealth and geography.

National averages – as typically given in national statistics for India – cannot be understood without also understanding how Indian society is fragmented into different communities in a complex mosaic. The almost fractal structure of difference and inequality – even among the poor – means that any social or educational innovation has a differential impact on different communities and individuals. The problem is that anything which promotes economic growth can also increase the gap between rich and poor.

Growth is never equally shared in an unequal society (NCEUS Report, 2009, p. 22)

1.7 The religious composition of India, according to the Census of India 2001. Many Muslim families migrated to Pakistan after the Partition, but Muslims still represent a significant presence. The 'others' include the Parsis, and several Jewish communities.

Much of the oppression of the lower caste now occurs at village level, where a variety of practices (from physical intimidation to being cheated of land rights) can block attempts to self-improvement. Low caste members also meet prejudice in job applications and recruitment, despite 'positive discrimination' in the public sector.
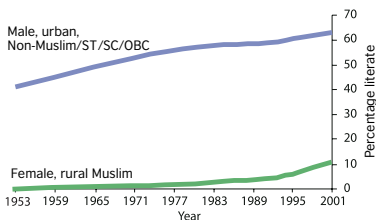
1.6 Less than a third of Indians belong to groups which are regarded as not deserving of special treatment in social and economic policy. (Household Survey 2004–05)
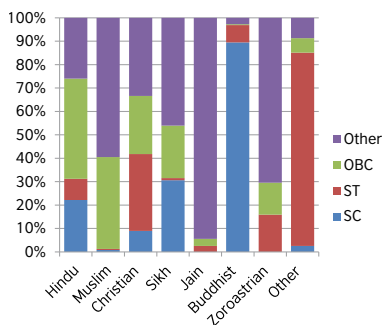
1.8 Which segment of India's divided society a child belongs to has a significant impact on their educational chances, as these two extremes in literacy development show.

1.9 Caste is not a feature only of Hinduism. Each religion has different proportions of 'scheduled' and 'backward' groups who are eligible for special quotas in higher education and public employment. Nearly 90% of Buddhists were found to belong to 'Scheduled Castes' in the NSSO 61st round (Household Survey 2004–05)

GROWTH OF THE MIDDLE CLASS

As the economy grows, the middle class is expected to swell and poverty to decrease. A report by McKinsey in 2007 projected that another 300 million people are expected to move from the category of 'rural poor' to 'lower rural middle class' by 2017, making rural areas a growing source of consumption. The middle classes now spend only around 40% of their income on the necessities of living. As they become more numerous, and richer, McKinsey suggests:

> as India moves from its place as the twelfth largest consumer economy in the world today, to fifth largest, its newly empowered middle class will embark on a shopping spree of historic proportions

Sending children to English-medium private schools used to be regarded as the prerogative of the rich. McKinsey's report suggests, though, that the proportion of the population who are willing and able to pay for education is increasing fast.

ENGLISH AS MAGNIFIER OF INEQUALITY

English can magnify the inequality between rich and poor. English is rapidly becoming embedded in the school curriculum of regional-language schools, where it is often now regarded as a basic skill, necessary for employment and social inclusion. Leaving access to English subject to market forces will increase the social divide.
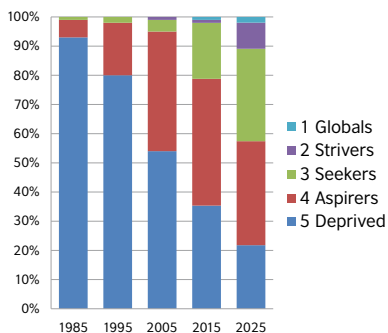
1.10 How household income groups might evolve, according to McKinsey (2007).
Globals = 'Rich' = > Rs1000
Strivers = 'Upper Middle Class' = 500–1000
Seeker = 'Lower Middle Class' = 200–500
Aspirers = 'Poor' = 90–200
Deprived = 'Very poor' = <90
(Annual income in Rs1000s per year)

The urbanisation puzzle

The natural home of English in India has been among the urban, educated classes. But cities are not growing as fast as expected.

Urbanisation in most countries is closely associated with development. Cities provide the best opportunity for non-agricultural employment and a sufficient population mass to make a diversity of services – including education – viable. Cities are where the middle classes grow, where people from different parts of India – and the world – mingle together, and where social mobility for the lower social groups is most possible. Not surprisingly, cities prove to be centres of English.

There are, however, some puzzles over urbanisation in India: the official statistics, as in census returns, show India to have a surprisingly low rate of urbanisation. Most developed countries urbanised rapidly, and now have around 80% of people living in urban areas, but India may still remain below 45% by 2030.

Puzzles over the population of Indian cities have a long history. William Adam, in the first 'Report on the State of Education in Bengal', in 1835 comments that earlier estimates of the population of rural districts had proved to be grossly underestimated, but:

> On the other hand, the population of some principal cities has been found by actual census to fall considerably short of what it was before supposed to be.

1.11 Cart drivers are seen on a flooded street in Ahmedabad, India, July 2009. Many Indian cities suffer from floods in the monsoon season. (AP Photo/Ajit Solanki)

Recent research suggests a similar problem today: the big cities have not been growing as fast as was thought, and the rate of increase seems actually to have slowed.

The eight Tier 1 cities ('Megacities') are where the multinational companies have established themselves, but fastest growth seems now to have shifted to the smaller cities. Research by NCAER (National Council for Applied Economic Research) identified 12 'cities to watch' in addition to the Tier 1 'Megacities'. These were the 'Boomtowns', and 'Niche cities' (**1.13**). The 20 cities taken together make up less than 10% of India's population but account for more than 30% of household income, according to the report.

Cities encourage English. But are they part of India's problem, or part of the solution?
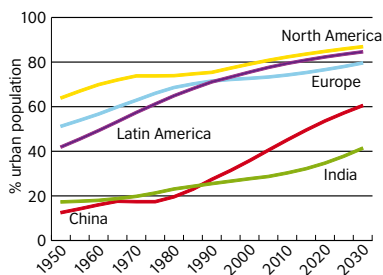
1.12 Urbanisation is progressing at a slower rate in India than other developing countries.

WHAT IS THE REAL URBANISATION RATE?

India may be urbanising faster than official statistics suggest. An increasing number of people live in districts that have become developed, or absorbed into an urban area, but which are still designated as 'rural'. No one is in a hurry to have their district redesignated, as rural status brings various funding benefits. Gurgaon, for example, the satellite town outside Delhi which is one of the biggest IT-BPO (IT-Business Processing Outsourcing) centres, maintains its 'rural' designation.

It is possible that India may be taking a different path to urbanisation. In developed countries urbanisation has been associated with depopulation of the countryside but in India it may be small towns which predominate. A Goldman Sachs report in 2007 forecast that 700 million people would migrate to Indian cities by 2050, but the authors comment, 'The growth is happening not in large cities, but in small and midsized towns.'

	Population (millions)	Income*
Megacities		
Mumbai	20.3	459
Delhi	15.5	408
Kolkata	13.8	287
Chennai	6.9	337
Bangalore	6.6	300
Hyderabad	5.7	273
Pune	5.1	210
Ahmedabad	4.8	317
Boomtowns		
Surat	4	431
Karpur	2.7	160
Jaipur	3.4	300
Lucknow	2.6	280
Nagpur	2.5	309
Bhopal	2.8	165
Coimbatore	1.7	220
Niche cities		
Faridabad	2.1	253
Amritsar	1.9	267
Ludhiana	1.5	273
Chandigarh	1.1	485
Jalandhar	1.1	297
All 20 cities	**106.1**	**339**

* Average annual household income (Rs '000s)
1.13 Twenty cities to watch, NCAER

VILLAGES IN THE POLITICAL IMAGINATION

There has long been an attachment to the idea that the heart of India lies in its villages. Perhaps that is why cities tend to be regarded as a problem by politicians rather than part of the solution. In comparison with China, for example, the infrastructures in the cities of India are notoriously underdeveloped, and little attention has been given to low-cost housing for workers migrating from the countryside: one reason why slums proliferate. Even here, hierarchies exist – there are state-notified slums, local government-notified slums, and non-notified slums.

Geography

India's geography ranges from Himalayan valleys to the Great Indian Desert of Rajasthan and the beaches and backwaters of Kerala. Each of the Indian states and Union Territories has its own profile in terms of size and mix of social communities.

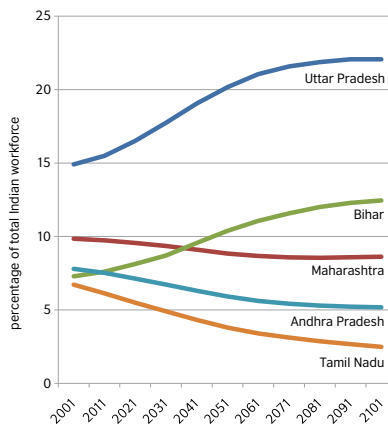The states of India vary on almost every dimension considered so far: demographic, religious, degree of urbanisation, and perhaps most of all, sheer size. Uttar Pradesh has a population of about 197 million (2010), whereas one of the smallest is the Himalayan state of Sikkim, with a population of 600,000. Population is increasing in all states, but the rate of growth is slowing in most. By 2026 it is expected to have started to decline in only one: Goa.

TWO KEY GEOGRAPHICAL DIVIDES

The division between north and south in India is a long-standing cultural and economic one. The populations of the southern states (Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Tamil Nadu) are largely Dravidian language speakers. Their history, development record, population profiles, and economies are very different from those of the large northern states, such as Bihar, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. Kerala, for example, has the highest literacy rate in India, and remittances from its many English-speaking overseas workers provide an important development resource. School attendance in states like Bihar, meanwhile, remains stubbornly low.

The eight north-eastern states form another distinct geographical zone. Connected to the rest of India by a 20km-wide land corridor and all but surrounded by Nepal, Bhutan, China, Burma and Bangladesh, these states are very multilingual, but politically troubled. Several of the

1.14 The states of India vary greatly in population size.

percentage of total Indian workforce

Uttar Pradesh

Bihar

Maharashtra

Andhra Pradesh

Tamil Nadu

1.15 How the demographic dividend may move north. Lines show the proportion of the total Indian workforce in each of the selected states. Tamil Nadu appears to be on a trajectory which provides a well-educated workforce, but one which represents a declining share of the total Indian working population.

north-eastern states have adopted English as an official language, and many English-speaking workers migrate from this area to Delhi and other urban centres where they are sought after in the services industry. (See p.117 for a map which identifies rural English-speaking zones.)

URBAN AND RURAL STATES
States also differ greatly in terms of their urbanisation rates. Tamil Nadu, for example, will have nearly three-quarters of its populations living in urban areas by 2026, whilst Bihar will not have reached 12%.

THE DEMOGRAPHIC DIVIDEND MOVES NORTH
One of the big questions regarding human development in India is whether the kind of development seen today in the southern states reflects trends which will move northwards in the coming decades.

Because of differing age profiles between the states, the *opportunity* for a 'demographic dividend' will certainly move northwards. The proportion of the total Indian workforce living in the south will decline, and if the future workforce in states like Uttar Pradesh and Bihar (which will together account for a third of the total Indian workforce by the end of the century) are not well educated, India will not be able to sustain economic development.

One implication of states being at different stages of development is that they face very different kinds of challenge with regard to improving proficiency in English. However, the experience being acquired now in more developed areas may not be easily transferable to other parts of India because of the diversity in local conditions.

POSTCODE GEOGRAPHY
The complex structure of Indian society means that it is not just large-scale geography that matters. Poor people may live on the street in prosperous areas, migrant-workers may settle in temporary camps. The word 'pocket' is often used to describe geographical diversity in India at a micro-level. There are 'slum pockets', 'pockets of excellence' – even 'pockets of English'.
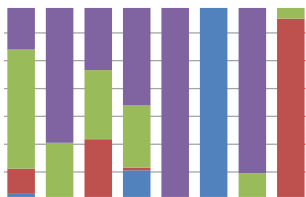
Indian society
Trends and issues

» Despite its slightly smaller total population, India has 50% more children than China – making the Indian education system the largest in the world.

» This burgeoning young population has been a brake on development, but some Indian states are now at the stage where they can enjoy a 'demographic dividend'. This represents a 'one-off' educational opportunity.

» The changing age structure of the population will be one of the defining features of India's future development. Bihar at present has a smaller population than Maharashtra, but in 25 years' time, Bihar will have a much larger workforce.

» Urbanisation rates in most Indian states remain very low – much lower than in other developing economies. There appear to be structural and political reasons for this, but low urbanisation is likely to have an impact on the growth of English.

» Research shows that the middle class is growing in size and becoming richer. Spending on private English-medium education is growing.

» An unusual feature of the Indian context is the expectation of strong growth of the rural middle classes with a commensurate rise in their consumption, and the perceived need for policy to encourage this.

SECTION 2: ECONOMY

The Indian economy has been growing steadily since the 1980s, but surprisingly few have enjoyed the benefits.

An economy in transition

1.16 Farmers sprinkle fertilisers on their rice crop on the outskirts of Amritsar, June 2009. India's monsoon rainfall, the main source of irrigation for the country's 235 million farmers, was below normal in 2009, but flooding in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh in October caused loss of life and further difficulty for poor communities. (AP Photo/Altaf Qadri)

Before the 19th century, India and China were the world's economic superpowers. Both see their growth in the 21st century as reasserting their historic position in the world.
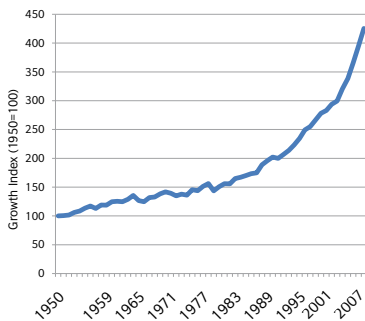
1.17 As the Indian economy grows, so average income increases. (Economic Survey 2009)

The Indian economy has been growing steadily at only a few percentage points less than China for several years. Even in the 2009–10 fiscal year, in the aftermath of a global recession, it is expected to grow around 7%. But, even more crucially, the economy has been expanding faster than the population, which means that the average per capita income has also been increasing, helping bring more families out of poverty, and providing more tax revenues which can support national development.

THE SHIFT TO SERVICES
The services sector has already overtaken all others as a source of wealth (**1.18**). In the next decade, more workers will be needed in all parts of the services sector: from professional to retail. Employment trends will have a major impact on the communications skills needed by employees.
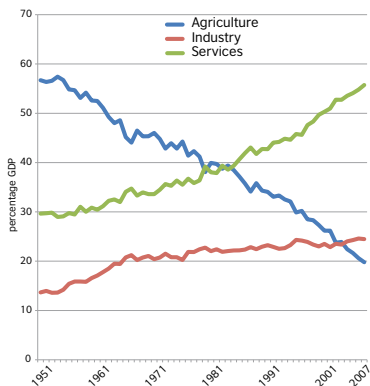
1.18 Changing structure of GDP: Services contributed over 55% of GDP in 2007–08 as the role of agriculture is falling. (Economic Survey 2009)

1.19 How the top ten economies might look in 2050. India is expected to become the world's third-largest economy. (Goldman Sachs, 2003)
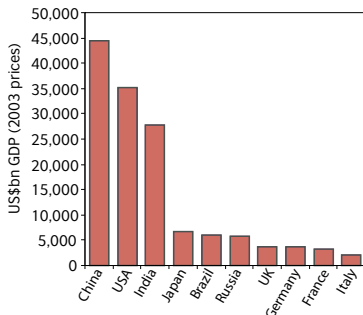
Agricultural workers have little need to communicate with people outside their communities. Services – even shop or hotel workers – need good communication skills both towards customers and within their own management. India's continued economic growth will depend on the availability of people who can communicate across language and cultural boundaries, both internationally and nationally.

Other trends are equally important. A worsening balance of payments, followed by the first Gulf War (which had a huge impact on the Indian economy) helped the then Finance Minister Manmohan Singh push through radical, liberalising reforms in 1991. Since then the private sector has made an increasing contribution to GDP.

Many public sector jobs require applicants to pass English language exams – for over a century, English has been seen as a passport to a pensionable government job. Now, the private sector also requires English – but often of a different kind.

1.20 Prime Minister Manmohan Singh shares a word with US President Barack Obama, at the G8 summit in Italy, July 2009. (AP Photo/Michel Euler)

The employment puzzle

There are many mysteries about how people in India earn a living, but some striking facts show the challenge in ensuring continued inclusive economic growth.

THE UNORGANISED SECTOR DOMINATES

Nearly everyone in India (93% of the total workforce) works in what is termed the 'unorganised sector'. These are the self-employed – farmers, auto-rickshaw drivers, street vendors, *dhobi wallahs* and the like – or low-wage workers in very small, often family-run enterprises, such as one of the estimated 15 million *kirana* stores, found throughout the towns and villages of India. Few such workers are skilled or well educated; many are illiterate. Few enjoy the security of an employment contract or labour rights, or earn more than a subsistence wage. We know little about their needs and whether having better English might help because their daily lives go largely undocumented.

Agricultural workers of various kinds account for most of the unorganised sector – about 60% of the total working population – followed by textile workers (8%) (**1.22**)

MANUFACTURING OFFERS FEW JOBS

One reason the organised sector is so small is the relatively minor role that large factories play in India. Most developed countries went through a stage in which manufacturing mopped up large numbers of unskilled

1.21 Men on a cycle ride past the Tata Motors Nano factory at Singur, north of Kolkata in September 2008. The company shifted production to Gujarat after a dispute with local farmers, who complained they were not fairly compensated for the land where the new factory was being built. (AP Photo/Bikas Das)

workers transferring from rural areas, allowing them to gain specialised skills. Like much else, the reason why India appears to be following a different route is complex: poor transport infrastructure, state ownership of large enterprises, patterns of land ownership which make it difficult to establish factories on greenfield sites (**1.21**), and limitations on foreign direct investment (FDI), all play a part.

1.22 The structure of employment in India (in millions). Over 93% of all workers are employed in the unorganised sector; barely 2% are employed in the private sector. (NCEUS 2009, Ministry of Textiles 2009)

1.23 Expected make-up of the workforce in 2012 (NCEUS 2009)

A NATIONAL JOB SHORTAGE

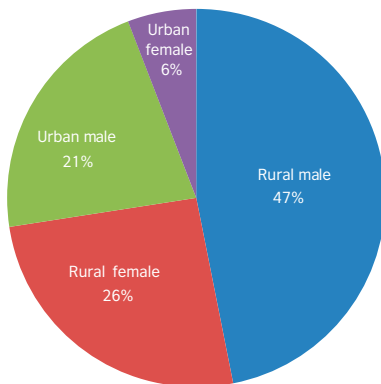Job opportunities in India have scarcely grown during the recent years of high economic growth – certainly not fast enough to absorb the estimated 12–15 million young people who join the workforce each year. Recession has made the outlook even bleaker: in 2009 employers cut recruitment at second-tier private engineering colleges by 60–65%.

A paradox of economic growth is that it depends on workers becoming more productive. But as this happens – through improved levels of training and investment in mechanisation – fewer workers are needed. Put bluntly, economic growth puts less skilled people out of work and, without improvement in education, can actually increase poverty.

A NATIONAL SKILLS DEFICIT

The ITES (IT enabled services) sector has been complaining for years that as few as 15% of graduates from engineering colleges are employable. But a far larger number of young people leave school each year with even fewer skills. As Kapil Sibal, India's Minister for Human Resource Development says:

This is a recipe for disaster. You have a huge national pool of unskilled youngsters who have no avenues for gainful employment (IANS, 25 June 2009)

India is now embarking on a massive upskilling programme, expanding both higher and vocational education. Government reports have identified improving English competence as a key ingredient at all levels.

The domestic economy

Much attention has been focused on the growth of the export economy in the IT sector. However, the big economic story in India is now the domestic economy – especially the growing services sector. This will affect the demand for English.

One of the paradoxes of globalisation is that, as it helps economies grow, it becomes less important to them: the focus of continuing growth shifts to the domestic economy.

For example, as people become richer, demand for cars and 'white goods' such as fridges stimulates manufacturing. Greater car ownership creates a demand for better roads, and people also spend more on financial services such as insurance, and bank loans.

PRESS 1 FOR ENGLISH

Even the outsourcing sector is looking towards the domestic economy – domestic BPO is now growing faster than the traditional export sector. Wipro Technologies reported 'a growth rate of 40–50% compound growth over the last three years' (*FT*, 9 July 2009). The expansion is coming from such sectors as mobile phone companies, banks and outsourcing from the Indian Government.

Outsourced services for the USA and Europe may remain, for some time, more valuable – both for employees and the corporates – than equivalent services for the local economy, but the domestic sector provides more employment opportunities. Intelenet Global Services, the largest 'pure-play' BPO in India, says it now (2010) has approximately 12,000 people working on its overseas desks, as compared to 19,000 working in the domestic sector.

THE GROWTH OF MALLS

As disposable income grows, so does the retail sector. New supermarkets, clothing shops, and malls appear. As these expand, they employ more people.

The organised retail sector in India is growing, despite the problems caused by the recession. Shopping malls are opening in both metro and rural areas and are now providing new employment opportunities for school-leavers and graduates with appropriate skills. One executive in a Bangalore shopping mall complained:

> The demand is so huge that we have to hunt for smart shop assistants in institutes that are offering courses in spoken English. As Bangalore has a large number of expatriates, we prefer to have English-speaking shop assistants. ... Shop assistants are an integral part of our marketing exercise. English-speaking youngsters with a panache to serve customers are in great demand. (IANS, 12 October 2008)

The Centre for Language Resources – an NGO in Pune – has developed a course in English for school-leavers (16–20 years) completing Class 10 and who wish to work 'in malls, coffee shops or even as drivers for private cars and taxis'. Its director, John Kurrien, said:

New jobs in the service sector require better language skills

1.24 Brigade Road, Bangalore, where many middle-class consumers go to shop. The growth in the retail sector provides new job opportunities for school-leavers who possess English language skills.

We have observed that English communication skills for the said age group need to be developed. The target is mainly students from municipal schools and rural areas whose English is poor.

TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY

The Government of India's 11th Five-Year Plan identifies tourism as an important sector:

Tourism sector in the country is witnessing a boom that may bring an exponential demand for the workforce at managerial, supervisory, skilled and semi-skill levels. (Vol III, p. 250)

India still has a small tourism industry considering its size, but domestic tourists outnumber international tourists by a factor of ten. Workers in the hospitality trade will thus need better communication skills in Indian languages as well as English.

Tourism companies and elite hotels need English-speaking drivers, who can earn 2–5 times as much as a driver elsewhere – in addition to receiving the benefits of a job in the organised sector, such as health insurance and a pension.
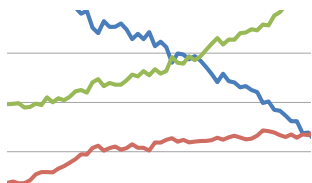
Economy
Trends and issues

» The Indian economy has been growing strongly since the 1980s but it is the future pattern of growth that will determine the demand for languages in India, including English.

» In terms of employment, the organised sector – which might be expected to provide the kinds of jobs which most need English, is tiny and the total number of jobs available has not grown in the last two decades. Nearly all Indians make a living in the unorganised sector.

» There are several economic transitions now under way in India, of which the most important from a linguistic point of view are probably the shift to the services sector in both employment and contribution to GDP, the growing importance of regional trade, and the growth of the domestic economy.

» Although government reports identify English as a key skill in vocational training, it is not yet clear where the jobs requiring English are, or what kind of English they might require.

SECTION 3: COMMUNICATIONS

Communications, whether in the form of computer networks, call centres, mass media, mobile phones or even road building, have played an important role in reshaping the demand for English and other languages in India.

The IT-BPO revolution

The growth of the IT-BPO sector over the last two decades is one of the outstanding features of the Indian economy, but there is anxiety that the Indian 'talent pool' is running dry.

In less than two decades, India's IT-BPO sector has grown from almost nothing to become a world-leading industry which employs more than any other segment of the private-sector economy in India. What is more, several Indian IT companies have become global operators and employ many thousands of staff in other countries.

Many western enterprises have established their own 'captive' operations in India to provide back office and customer contact centres. And it is not just the banks and technology companies that do this: Tesco claims to be the world's third-largest retailer, headquartered in the UK, but employing almost half a million people worldwide in over

1.26 Infosys corporate headquarters in Bangalore

4,000 stores in 14 countries. Tesco provides IT, business and finance services to its operations across Europe, Asia and America from a service centre in Bangalore which employs over 3,000 'techies', accountants, market analysts and logistics experts.

A WIDER IMPACT ON SOCIETY

The industry lobby group, NASSCOM, justifiably argues that the industry has had a ripple effect across Indian society. In addition to its economic impact, it has captured the imagination of people both within and outside India and has done a great deal to 'rebrand' India as a hi-tech, forward-looking country. It has also provided a model of business leadership and employment practices which has had a galvanising impact elsewhere in the economy and in political consciousness.

The sector has also opened a new possibility for social mobility, by providing well-paid jobs based on merit rather than social background – but only for those who can speak English.

NASSCOM Top 10 IT-BPO employers 2008–09
1   Tata Consultancy Services
2   Infosys Technologies Ltd
3   Wipro Ltd
4   Cognizant Technology Solutions India Pvt Ltd
5   HCL Technologies Ltd
6   HP India
7   MphasiS Ltd
8   Intelenet Global Services Ltd
9   IBM-Daksh Business Process Services Pvt Ltd
10   Genpact India Pvt Ltd

1.25 Influential IT-BPO employers

A SHORTAGE OF TALENT

The IT-BPO industry in India directly employs about 2 million people, but expects to need a further 6 million in the coming decade. It claims three times as many people are indirectly employed. There are fears that India just does not have the English-speaking 'talent pool' to support this level of growth.

IT AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

The hunt for talent is one reason why the IT-BPO revolution is spreading from the main cities into smaller towns and rural areas. A study by NASSCOM and A.T. Kearney (2008) identified 50 cities which are emerging as centres for IT-BPO. Outside the metros, operational costs and salaries are lower. Tax breaks are available in the new software parks and employment zones established in development areas. But another advantage is that employees in smaller cities tend to stay there, ensuring lower attrition rates among staff. Furthermore, when a BPO starts up in a Tier 2 city, there is often a 'reverse migration' of experienced workers from the metros, happy to find work closer to home.

It is, however, more difficult to find English-proficient workers in Tier 3 cities, and it is more difficult to maintain English as the corporate language when most workers share a mother tongue. But the industry is keen to help local schools, colleges and 'finishing schools' to develop courses which will help improve the supply of talent.

1.27 BPOs are now opening in rural areas. This one in Tamil Nadu employs trainers and workers from the local Anglo-Indian community.

Locations which are 'Challengers'				
Ahmedabad	Coimbatore	Kochi	Mangalore	Tiruchirapalli
Bhubaneshwar	Indore	Lucknow	Nagpur	Vadodara
Chandigarh	Jaipur	Madurai	Thiruvananthapuram	Visakhapatnam

Locations which are 'Followers'			
Aurangabad	Gwalior	Mysore	Salem
Bhopal	Hubli-Dharwad	Nashik	Surat
Goa	Kanpur	Puducherry	Vijayawada

**1.28** Source: NASSCOM–A.T. Kearney (2008)

Media

In many countries, the complaint is that imported English language media are too dominant and overwhelm locally produced programming. In India, it is not English but Hindi which may be now most dominant – eroding programming in regional languages.

NEWSPAPERS

As the literacy rate in India has improved, so has the circulation of regional language newspapers. Hindi papers are, as might be expected, now the most widely read, with 41% of the total readership of dailies – about the same proportion of Hindi speakers in the population. English dailies, however, are the second most read – *The Times of India* has the greatest circulation. A survey of affluent families by Nielsen in 2009 found that English is their preferred language for newspapers, but television is consumed more in regional languages.

FILM

India is said to make more films than any other country; some 1,000 each year. About 70% of these are in Hindi, but as they are intended to reach a national audience, (and around half of the big Bollywood stars are Muslim) the language might be better described as Hindustani, with different characters speaking in ways which reflect the diversity of the film's audience. The historian Ramachandra Guha commented on the role of film in helping create a national identity:
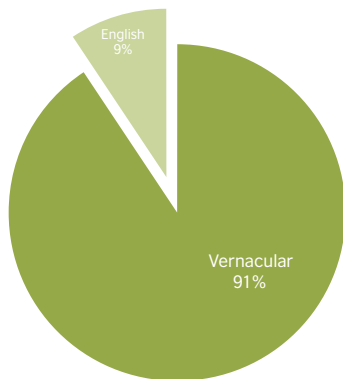
1.29 Readership of daily newspapers. The last National Readership Survey (2006) showed vernacular readerships growing, and English ones stagnating.

Top ten English daily newspapers 2009		
1	The Times of India	13.3
2	Hindustan Times	6.3
3	The Hindu	5.3
4	The Telegraph	3.0
5	Deccan Chronicle	2.8
6	The Economic Times	2.0
7	Mid-Day	1.6
8	Indian Express	1.6
9	Mumbai Mirror	1.6
10	DNA	1.5

1.30 About 15% of newspaper titles in India are in English, 40% Hindi. The above table shows millions of readers for the top ten English newspaper titles. (Indian Readership Survey May 2009)

Is television and film extending the national reach of Hindi?

When imposed by fiat by the central government, Hindi was resisted by the people of the south and the east. When conveyed seductively by the medium of cinema and television, Hindi has been accepted by them. In Bangalore and Hyderabad, Hindi has become the preferred medium of communication between those who speak mutually incomprehensible tongues. (Guha, 2007)

TELEVISION

Indian television used to be dominated by Doordarshan, the state broadcaster which supplied the nation with staid national and regional programmes. When private companies were licensed in 1992, commercial channels proliferated – there are now over 300 satellite channels received in India, and around half of households have a television.

Commercial channels in India need to reach the widest audience at the lowest cost and this has resulted in a focus on a few languages. However, the main beneficiary language is not English. Hindi reaches a much larger audience for general entertainment channels and offers media companies the greatest returns: Hindi entertainment is thought to account for 55% of advertising revenue and so can justify high levels of investment in production values. Even English films are often dubbed into Hindi before broadcast. Rupert Murdoch, owner of Star TV, said as early as 1994:

With the coming of electronic mass media, Hindi is finally spreading because everyone wants to watch the best television programming. (Charter 1995)

The dominance of Hindi extends to children's television. A Disney official, quoted in a Kolkata newspaper report, says 'English may be the language of our business, but a local language is preferred for entertainment' (*Telegraph*, 29 July 2009). But some parents in Kolkata are concerned that it does not get local enough – there is a lack of Bengali-language programming, and they say their children are now learning Hindi, rather than English, from television.

The dominance of Hindi may decline slightly as the media market grows. The global internet was first dominated by English, but developed into a multilingual space as it matured. Similarly, television may diversify linguistically, as the consumer market in India grows and companies attempt to reach into minority market segments.

Top ten programmes in Kolkata May–June 2009	
Genre	*% share*
1 Bangla regional	31.4
2 Children's	24.5
3 Hindi GEC	19.9
4 Hindi movies	7.9
5 Sports	2.2
6 Music	1.6
7 Hindi news	1.2
8 Infotainment	0.8
9 English movies	0.4
10 English business news	0.3

1.31 Programming for the target group 4–14 years old, 17.5.09 to 11.6.09. (TAM Peoplemeter System)

Road, rail and air

A revolution is taking place in Indian transport infrastructure. Expressways are connecting people faster by road, new underground systems are spreading through major cities, and private airlines are taking to the skies.

There is no context more saturated with English than an airport. English is the lingua franca not only of international air travel (all international pilots now have to pass a probing English-language test), but also of most passengers who use them.

Yet only a decade ago internal air travel in India was limited to state-run airlines. Their service was often unreliable, travel uncomfortable and tickets difficult to obtain.

The coming of private airlines after market liberalisation in 1991 transformed the ease with which the fast-growing class of professionals can move from one city to another.
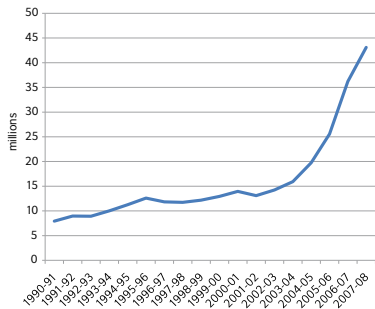
1.32 The number of passengers each year on domestic flights increased quickly as private airlines began operations in the mid 2000s.

RURAL ROADS

According to a World Bank report, 40% of the 825,000 villages of India had no all-weather road connecting them to the outside world in 2000. Now, a major rural roads project, PMGSY (Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojna, the Prime Minister's Rural Roads Programme) is helping villagers reach the local towns for employment, and – the World Bank reports – send their children to English-medium schools.

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENTS

The poor highways of India have long been a constraint on economic growth, but in the last decade huge investments by the Government of India are transforming national communications.

The first major project was the building of 3,650 miles of highways known as the 'Golden Quadrilateral', linking the main cities – Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Kolkata.

The government announced a target of building a further 12,000 kilometres of highway in 2009, some of which is to be funded privately through toll schemes.

As highways reshape the movement of people, they also remodel the linguistic landscape. They increase urbanisation, and bring large areas surrounding cities into a 'peri-urban' zone, in which many providers of services to the city reside.

Cities become more multilingual, and as linguistic diversity in the cities increases, so the role of English, as a lingua franca, increases too.

ROADS CREATE NEW JOBS

Road development restructures the geography of economic development. For example, sections of the Golden Quadrilateral have become new economic corridors as manufacturing zones develop alongside. According to a Tata Strategic Management report (Sen, 2008) the Delhi–Mumbai corridor offers 'an employment generating potential of 7.3 million'.

Improved roads connect rural areas to new to new employment opportunities of a kind which require English. Road development also has an impact on educational provision: colleges are springing up along the newly built trunk roads in Tamil Nadu ,which will allow more young people to acquire vocational skills.

Hence, better roads may mean more English.

MASS TRANSIT

For centuries, movement in cities has been even more difficult than in rural areas, but the recent construction of mass transit systems is helping to change patterns of work, shopping and leisure.

Kolkata was the first city to open an underground rail system, though it took far longer to complete than intended. Delhi followed with its metro project, which is regarded by most citizens as a model of efficiency and uncorrupt management. Rapid transit projects are now under way in other cities, including Mumbai, Chennai, Bangalore and Hyderabad.

1.33 The Mumbai–Pune Expressway, completed in 2002, reduced road travel time between the cities to around two hours.

1.34 Several hundred thousand villages in India, like this one in West Bengal, have no proper road access. A rural roads programme is helping local farmers move produce to markets, allow families to stay in contact, and get girls to school. More parents are also able to send their children to an English-medium school..

IT and social change

Information technology is transforming Indian society – especially the relationship between citizens and officialdom.

The biggest impact of IT in Indian education has not been in the classroom, but in the way databases and software have created transparency in educational management. Up-to-date information about schools, staffing, pupil enrolments and drop-out rates can be seen by anyone with internet access. Large-scale projects, such as Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), which has done so much to improve India's primary schools, can be managed effectively.

Students, as well as public servants, have benefited. Exam results are now widely available on the internet, application forms for colleges, government departments and employers can be downloaded, bypassing the need to deal with officials and avoiding lengthy, often wasted, journeys.

The social impact of IT has been felt in many areas of life – but perhaps most of all in rural areas. e-Choupal, introduced by ITC in 2000, has helped farmers by establishing internet kiosks which now reach 4 million rural families. With access to the internet, farmers can check prices of crops, get weather forecasts, find out insurance information and be informed about new developments in farming techniques.

In Karnataka, the 'Bhoomi' project has given millions of farmers instant access to computerised land records from kiosks set up in villages. Microsoft India plans to introduce 50,000 rural kiosks offering health, education and agricultural services as well as providing access to land registry and birth and death records. Such kiosks now offer business opportunities in villages across India – around 1,000 are already operated by local entrepreneurs.

GROWTH OF MOBILE TELEPHONES

Mobile phones have removed the long wait for landlines, and have become a key social networking tool. Their reach now extends into small towns and villages and many Indians cannot now imagine life without a cell phone. Mobile phones provide a new source of information, and are used by politicians and pressure groups to communicate with the electorate.
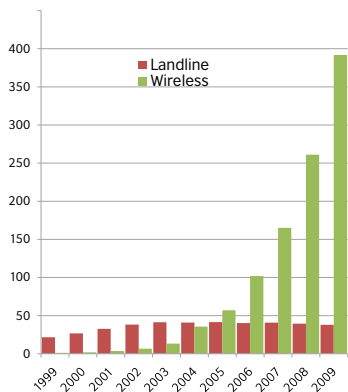
1.35 The growth of mobile phones in India has been exponential, but associated with a decline of landlines.

IT is helping citizens bypass bureaucracy and corruption

Factories supplying low-cost phones for the Indian market are now exporting to other parts of Asia and Africa, while call centres serving the domestic market are one of the fastest growing BPO sectors. The World Bank (2009) estimates that an extra ten phones per 100 people in a typical developing country boosts GDP growth by 0.8 percentage points. Though this seems an over-estimate for India, research does show that mobile phones are important to the Indian economy in a variety of ways. (Kumar, 2009).

INTERNET ACCESS

A survey by the Indian market research company JuxtConsult (India Online 2009) found that the total number of internet users in India has fallen slightly, but that the loss was mainly among casual, cybercafé users. The survey found that around 80% of internet users are in the 19–35 age-group, mainly middle class, who typically access the internet from offices.

A slowdown in internet use may signify that growth has become saturated in privileged segments of society, but that its benefits are not yet fully felt in rural areas, where mobile phones have become the main means of communication. The 2009 Indian budget, however, envisaged the roll-out of broadband to 100,000 villages, and provision of internet access to rural communities is high on many corporate social responsibility (CSR) agendas. IT visionaries, such as Nandan Nilekani, co-founder of Infosys, foresee mobile devices as offering

| Top 12 Websites in India	
Rank	Website
1	google.co.in
2	google.com
3	yahoo.com
4	facebook.com
5	blogger.com
6	youtube.com
7	orkut.co.in
8	rediff.com
9	wikipedia.org
10	orkut.com
11	twitter.com
12	indiatimes.com

1.36 The top 12 internet sites in India according to Alexa.com

internet access to every citizen.

Almost all the top 100 internet sites in India, as measured by the traffic-monitoring site Alexa.com, are in English, though these, like many English-language websites in India, will contain some content in Hindi – in adverts, pop-up screens, and comments by users.

SOCIAL NETWORKING

Social networking sites such as Orkut and Facebook are popular in India, especially amongst the under 25s. Orkut had an estimated 15.5 million Indian users at the end of 2009 (India is Orkut's second-largest user base globally, after Brazil), whilst Facebook had around 10.4 million. A new style of low-cost mobile phone (the 'chatphone') was launched in India in 2010.
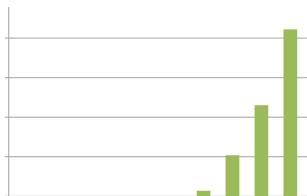
Communications
Trends and issues

» The readership of English language newspapers in India is not growing as fast as that for regional language press, despite a finding that affluent families prefer 'news in English and television in regional language'.

» Hindi appears to be more successful than English in reaching new audiences through television and film.

» Improving roads and transport in rural and urban areas is reshaping demand for English.

» IT has already had a significant impact on the lives of ordinary Indians, though conventional use of the internet is still largely restricted to the young middle classes who have access to computers at work.

SECTION 4: LANGUAGES

Each of India's many languages is located in a complex hierarchy of status and use. Some languages have national reach, some regional and some very local. As the use of English in India grows, its role in Indian society is changing.

The languages of India

India is one of the most multilingual countries in the world, home to several language families and writing systems. Linguistic diversity creates challenges for national development, but may form an important resource in the future.

There is no agreement over the number of languages spoken in India. Each decade, a national census attempts to record the languages spoken by every inhabitant, but interpreting the results has not been easy. The 2001 census recorded 6,661 'mother tongues' – but many of these are simply different names for, or dialects of, the same language.

FOUR LANGUAGE FAMILIES

Most Indians speak a language belonging to the Indo-European family. This means that English and Hindi are historically related languages, as Sir William Jones, a junior judge in the Supreme Court of Bengal, famously observed in 1786. But by no means all Indian languages are Indo-European. In the south and in isolated areas in the north, Dravidian languages are spoken, such as Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, and Malayalam. Elsewhere, especially in tribal areas, languages belong to the Austro-Asiatic family (which also includes Vietnamese) or Tibeto-Burman (which also includes Tibetan). These last two families account for most of the endangered languages of India (see p. 55).

THE SCHEDULED LANGUAGES

Since independence, the official language of India has been 'Hindi in the Devanagri script'. However, English continues in widespread use as an 'associate language'. Only 22 of India's many languages are recognised in the 'Eighth Schedule' of the constitution – the so-called 'scheduled languages'. Over 96% of the population are thought to speak one of these 22 languages as their first language.

NEW LINGUISTIC SURVEY OF INDIA

The government announced that a new linguistic survey of India would be established as part of the 11th Five-Year Plan, at the Central Institute of Indian Languages (CIIL) in Mysore. The last comprehensive survey was carried out between 1894 and 1927.
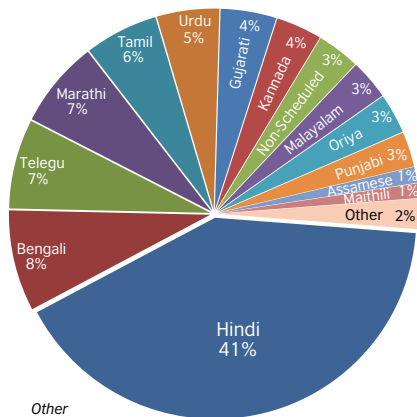

1.37 Pondicherry has three official languages: French, Tamil and English.

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

The scheduled languages have a mainly rhetorical status in the constitution: what is probably more important is whether they have been adopted by any of the states as an official language. States can decide which of the languages spoken within their borders – scheduled or otherwise – should be granted official status for the purposes of regional government. In practice, because linguistic criteria were used when state boundaries were drawn after independence, most states have a majority of speakers from a single language community, making the choice of official language relatively easy. Some states, including several in the north east where there is no simple linguistic majority, have nominated English as their official state language. The official languages of Pondicherry include French.

Hindi 41%
Bengali 8%
Telegu 7%
Marathi 7%
Tamil 6%
Urdu 5%
Gujarati 4%
Kannada 4%
Non-Scheduled 3%
Malayalam 3%
Oriya 3%
Punjabi 3%
Assamese 1%
Maithili 1%
Other 2%

Other

Santali 0.63%	Sindhi 0.25%	Manipuri 0.15%
Kashmiri 0.54%	Konkani 0.24%	Bodo 0.13%
Nepali 0.28%	Dogri 0.22%	Sanskrit 0.001%

1.38 The languages of India according to the proportion of the population who speak them as a first language (Census 2001)

Andhra Pradesh	Telugu
Arunachal Pradesh	English*
Assam	Assamese
Bihar	Hindi
Chhattisgarh	Hindi
Goa	Konkani
Gujarat	Gujarati, Hindi
Haryana	Hindi
Himachal Pradesh	Hindi
Jammu and Kashmir	Urdu
Jharkhand	Hindi
Karnataka	Kannada
Kerala	Malayalam
Madhya Pradesh	Hindi
Maharashtra	Marathi
Manipur	Manipuri/Meitei
Meghalaya	English*
Mizoram	Mizo*

Nagaland	English*
Orissa	Oriya,
Punjab	Punjabi
Rajasthan	Hindi
Sikkim	Nepali
Tamil Nadu	Tamil
Tripura	English, Bengali, Kokborok*
Uttarakhand	English*, Hindi
Uttar Pradesh	Hindi
West Bengal	Bengali
A&N Islands	Hindi, English*
Chandigarh	Punjabi, Hindi
Dadra and Nagar Haveli	Marathi, Gujarati
Daman and Diu	Gujarati, English*
Delhi	Hindi
Lakshadweep	Malayalam, Tamil
Pondicherry	French*, Tamil, English*
* language not in Eighth Schedule	

1.39 Official languages of Indian states and Union Territories

The rise of Hindi

Hindi is the most widely spoken language in India and is the official language of the Union – but in some parts of India, few people speak it. Its present standardised form is a fairly recent creation.

Modern Hindi is a somewhat artificial construction, created to serve as a national language after independence. It was felt in early postcolonial times that any newly independent country needed a single, standardised language – an idea reinforced in India by the model provided by the Soviet Union, which had imposed Russian across the Union. But other British colonies had done something similar at independence, albeit on a smaller scale – for example, Malaysia created modern Bahasa Malaysia from Malay.

Hindi arose from a range of Hindustani vernaculars spoken in northern India, some permeated with Persian (and thus Arabic) vocabulary and written in both the Persian and Devanagari scripts. What emerged in Hindi was a codified, Sanskritised form, written only in a single script (Devanagari), and with additional official vocabulary translated from English. Both Gandhi and Nehru argued in favour of Hindustani becoming the national language, rather than Hindi, but a linguistic partition, in which Urdu and Hindi became clearly separated, ensued.

At independence, it was envisaged that English would be phased out over a tran-
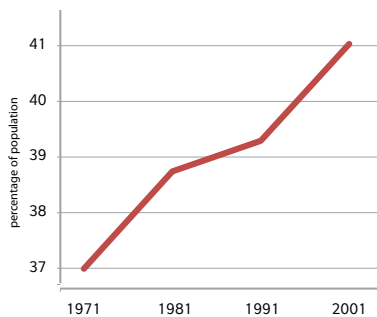
1.40 The percentage of the population reporting Hindi as their first language has been increasing.

sitional period of 15 years. However, after violent resistance in parts of south India to what was seen as the imposition of a northern language, English was accorded a somewhat uneasy reprieve as an 'associate' official language. Hence India has never had a single 'national language'.

A 'Department of Official Language' exists in the Ministry of Home Affairs to encourage the 'propagation and development of Official Language Hindi'.
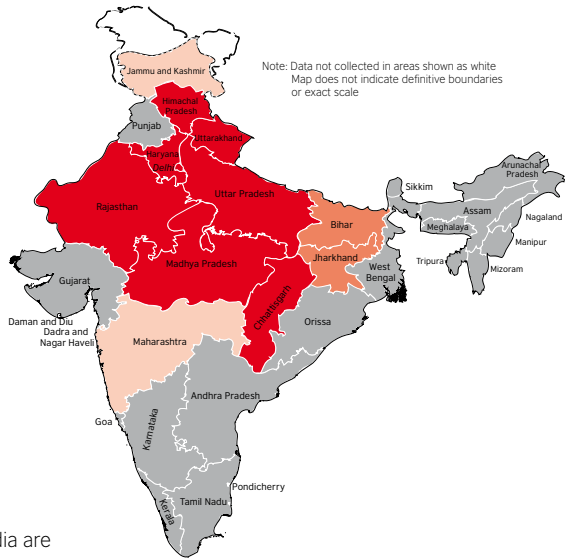
THE DEMOGRAPHIC RISE OF HINDI
The birth rate in the large northern states where Hindi is widely spoken is higher than in many non-Hindi-speaking areas. This means that, over time, the balance of Hindi speakers is changing. Censuses in recent decades show a rise of over 1% per decade in the proportion of Indians claiming Hindi as their first language.

1.41 The 'Hindi Belt'. Hindi is spoken primarily in northern states, including several with large and still fast-growing populations.

Proportion of population who speak Hindi as mother tongue (Census 2001)

■ >80%
■ 50-80%
■ 10-20%
■ >10%

Note: Data not collected in areas shown as white Map does not indicate definitive boundaries or exact scale

THE ROLE OF EDUCATION

Although all children in India are supposed to receive basic education in their mother tongue, it is clear that more children attend Hindi-medium schools than report Hindi as their first language. This, together with the teaching of Hindi in many schools, has helped increase the number of people who speak Hindi as second language.

THE RISE OF HINGLISH

Hindi is now heard in some domains, such as consumer advertising, which used to be predominantly English. However, the reverse trend is also true – the proportion of English in Hindi film dialogues, for example, has increased. Code-switching between English and Hindi, popularly known as 'Hinglish', now features in the speech of many Indians.

According to the 1976 Official Language Rules (framed under the provisions of section 3(4) of the Official Languages Act, 1963, communications from a Central Government Office to State/Union Territories or to any person in:

REGION A: *Shall be in Hindi*
Uttar Pradesh, Uttaranchal, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Rajasthan, Haryana and Union Territories of Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Delhi

REGION B: *shall ordinarily be in Hindi; if in English shall be accompanied by a Hindi translation*
Punjab, Gujarat, Maharashtra and the UT of Chandigarh

REGION C: *shall be in English*
all other states and UTs

1.42 Official language policy regarding the use of Hindi and English by government departments

Minority languages

Although most Indian states were defined along linguistic boundaries, there are many language minorities.

There are three principal kinds of linguistic minority in India:

1 Communities near borders who speak a language which is a major language in the neighbouring state.

2 Communities, often very small, who speak one of the lesser-used languages, such as a tribal language.

3 Minorities which result from migration, many of which can be found in the large cities.

When the state boundaries were established after independence, it was appreciated that however the lines were drawn, they would create minority communities who spoke a different language from the majority in their new state. Their needs were recognised, but not without also noting the danger that providing too many safeguards for linguistic minorities would tend to keep the minority consciousness alive and thereby hamper the growth of a 'common nationhood'.

As India reinvents itself in a new era, of a globalised economy and social mobility, linguistic diversity will prove to be an important resource both economically and, through multilingual development, for national integration.

THE THREE-LANGUAGE FORMULA

One of the key language planning instruments in education is the 'three-language formula', which is intended to negotiate the competing claims of the regional language, Hindi and English.

Providing education for all children in their mother tongue is a problem in many states. Sometimes a de facto 'four-language formula' is used, in which children are taught in the first language, but also have to learn the regional language, Hindi and English. In other cases, children are unable to attend a school that teaches in their mother tongue, and they start their educational career in a language which may not be used at home.
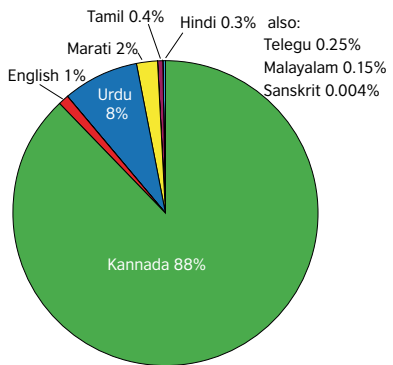
1.43 Karnataka government primary schools by medium of instruction (total 46,937 schools). All states have to provide for significant language minorities by providing at least primary education in the mother tongue.

Pie chart labels:
Tamil 0.4% Hindi 0.3% also:
Marati 2% Telegu 0.25%
English 1% Malayalam 0.15%
Urdu 8% Sanskrit 0.004%
Kannada 88%

ENDANGERED LANGUAGES

India has more endangered languages than any other country, according to UNESCO which has identified 196 Indian languages at risk of extinction. In February 2010, the death of the last speaker of Aka-Bo, a Great Andamanese language was announced – just three months after another language in the Andamans Islands lost its last speaker.

The government's 11th Five-Year Plan proposed a 'new scheme for the preservation and development of languages not covered by the Eighth Schedule', to be managed by the Central Institute of Indian Languages in Mysore. UNESCO's project on endangered languages recognises the importance of traditional knowledge transmission within communities, and the need to strengthen ties between the older and younger generations – often weakened by the choice of medium of education in school.

1.44 India and surrounding areas, showing approximate location of languages listed as endangered in the UNESCO Atlas of Endangered Languages, 2009. Many of these languages are in the Himalayan zone, others in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

REGIONAL LANGUAGE 'NATIONALISM'

Regional languages still provide a platform for political activists in several states. In Mumbai, in 2008, shopkeepers were intimidated by workers from the Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (Maharashtra Reconstruction Party) into removing English-language signs, or ensuring that Marathi-language signboards were more prominent than those in English.

Regional language politics are sometimes aimed at Hindi, sometimes at English, and sometimes at migrant or minority communities.

1.46 Workers hang up a Marathi-language sign, in Mumbai, August, 2008. Police arrested more than 100 workers of the Maharashtra Navnirman Sena for threatening local shopkeepers. (AP Photo/Rajanish Kakade)

Multilingualism

Although India is thought of as a multilingual country, it is not clear how many people actually speak more than one language.

No state in India is wholly monolingual. The nearest is probably Kerala, in south India, where over 96% of the population speak Malayalam (according to the 2001 census). The state with the highest percentage of minority-language speakers is Goa (48%), the largest group of which are Marathi speakers (33%). In some states, including Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Nagaland, and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, no language accounts for half the population.

MULTILINGUALISM VS PLURILINGUALISM

In Europe, a distinction is now made in policy documents between *multilingual* (which describes communities composed of speakers of different languages) and *plurilingual* (which describes individuals who can speak several languages). India is extremely *multilingual*, in the sense that it is home to many languages, and its constitution, education system and working practices recognise this. In Andhra Pradesh, for example, Telugu is the official language, but the state also caters for its substantial minorities through a translation department which renders important legal acts, regulations and notices into Urdu, Hindi, Kannada, Marathi, and Tamil. The situation regarding *plurilingualism* in India is more complicated.

BILINGUALISM IN INDIA

By the time of the 1991 census, almost 20% of the population claimed they knew a second language and over 7% a third one, and the rate of bilingualism was growing at an average rate of 1% every three years. That rate had only slightly slowed according to the 2001 data, published in late 2009, which indicated that a quarter of the Indian population claimed to know a second language, and 8.5% a third.

MONOLINGUALISM IS UNNATURAL

It may well be that these figures understate plurilingualism in India. Many respondents do not declare they 'know a language' unless they are literate in it. One of the classic studies of multilingualism in the world's sociolinguistic literature is a study in a village on the border of Maharashtra with Karnataka, carried out by John Gumperz in the 1960s. He showed how villagers used different languages in different 'domains', such as family, business or religion. Such use of different languages for different purposes is widely regarded as a natural predisposition of human beings, and it often means that speakers have partial competences in languages: they require a range of languages in everyday life. Education systems tend to value only some languages and may attempt to eradicate the variety and fluidity in language use that children bring to school. This is one of the ways in which education encourages language loss.

Assamese
Bengali
Gujarati
Kannada
Kashmiri
Konkani
Malayalam
Marathi
Nepali
Oriya
Punjabi
Sanskrit
Tamil
Telegu
Urdu

1.46 The back of a ten-rupee note illustrates several Indian scripts.

THE SCRIPTS OF INDIA

One of the world's first writing systems was created in the Indus valley, where thousands of seals from 4,000 years ago still defy decipherment. The Anthropological Survey of India reports that 25 distinct writing systems are still in use in India. Roman orthography has rarely been used for any Indian language, but this may be changing. Hindi, and other languages, are appearing more often in roman script, a trend which may be accentuated by the growth in SMS messaging.

The use of so many scripts means that many children learning three languages at school also have to acquire literacy in three scripts. Rukmini Bhaya Nair (2009) has nevertheless argued that multilingual education should be seen as a resource rather than an obstacle.

> a child, acquiring, let's say, Bengali, Hindi and English all together may realize that a 'thing' may be called by alternative names and moreover the same phonetic shape may possess different meanings in different languages. For example, the word for 'thing' in Hindi is /chi:z/, pronounced the same as 'cheese' in English, and one can easily imagine a simple question such as 'Who stole my cheese?' having multiple cultural implications in a context where code-mixing as well as cross-cultural wordplay is as common as chalk – or cheese.

TRANSLATION AND INTERPRETING

Multilingualism in Europe has generated a huge translation and interpreting business, helping to preserve the communicative domains of the national languages and ensure transparency of government communication for ordinary citizens.

The National Knowledge Commission has noted the surprising underdevelopment of the translation and interpreting industry in India. Encouraging its growth, including more training programmes, could form a key component of any policy to manage the status of English in national life.

The European experience

Europe now shares many language policy issues with India – including managing the emergence of English as a language of business and lingua franca.

There is a growing parallel between India and Europe in terms of language policy and the challenges of maintaining a balance between regional languages, minority languages and the rising demand for English. The European Union, for example, has:

- a population of around 0.5 billion
- 27 member states
- 23 official languages
- 80 other European languages
- several hundred languages spoken by migrant workers and immigrants from other continents.

The EU's language policy promotes multilingualism and the idea that every EU citizen should learn and speak at least two foreign languages in addition to their mother tongue. In practice, the foreign language curriculum in European countries is now dominated by the need to learn English, so the de facto policy is that children should, in addition to the language of their Member State, learn English and one other European language.

French had long enjoyed a status as the Union language (at least as far as official communications were concerned) but this has been challenged, and overtaken, by English. In 2001, a *Business Week* cover story was titled: 'The great English Divide. In Europe, speaking the lingua franca separates the haves from the have-nots.' As the European Union has expanded, English has become more dominant. English has become not only the language of business across Europe, but also the corporate language of many French, German, Dutch and Spanish enterprises.

The trend across Europe is for schools to begin teaching English in Class 1, treating it as a basic skill rather than a foreign language. This trend began in earnest only after 2000. However, the methods used to teach English are diverse – an increasingly popular trend is towards bilingual schools, which teach through more than one language medium.

As Europe's higher education system becomes harmonised, and students are encouraged to study for at least part of their degree in another country, so more university courses are being taught through English. This has prompted concern about the implications for teachers and learners. In some northern European countries, where around 80% of the adult population can now speak English, a public debate has arisen over the status of the national language and apparent loss of the domains in which it is used.

One of the EU Commissioners has specific responsibility for multilingualism and for encouraging the learning and use of languages. Although European policy is made centrally, decisions about implementation of all language policies, including those relating to regional and minority languages, are made by Member States.

The main policy messages regarding multilingualism in Europe include:

- languages open doors to new opportunities
- one lingua franca is not enough
- anyone can learn a foreign language at any stage of life
- any level of language proficiency is useful – you don't have to be perfect to gain benefit.

LANGUAGES AND EMPLOYABILITY

The European Commission for Multilingualism declared in September 2008:

Linguistic and intercultural skills increase the chances of obtaining a better job. In particular, command of several foreign languages gives a competitive advantage. There is empirical evidence that skill in several languages fosters creativity and innovation: multilingual people are aware that problems can be tackled in different ways according to different linguistic and cultural backgrounds and can use this ability to find new solutions.

A Business Forum for Multilingualism was set up in 2007 to explore the importance of language skills on trade and jobs in the European Union.

One of the biggest challenges in language policy in Europe is now how to balance the universal need for English with the equal need to maintain the vitality of each of the other languages, national and minority, spoken within Europe today. Europe does not yet have a complete answer to this

problem: so far, it has failed to curb the growing dominance of English. Mohanty *et al.* (2009) comment:

The European Union is in principle committed to strengthening multilingualism at all levels of European education systems, but the reality is that English is being strengthened at the expense of other languages by the policies that the EU endorses in higher education, by the working practices of the EU institutions, and education systems in member states that are not geared to creating viable MLE [Multilingual Language Education]. There is in virtually all education systems worldwide an absence of explicit language policies for ensuring multilingualism. (p. 319)

HOW MUCH IS ENGLISH WORTH?

One of the few studies which have tried to assess the value of multilingualism comes from Switzerland, where there exist several national languages (German, French, Italian, Romansch) and where English has become so prevalent, especially in business, that some have claimed it now plays a role as a national lingua franca. The linguistic economist François Grin concluded in 2008 that multilingualism added 9% to Switzerland's GDP.

It is important to note the emphasis on 'multilingualism' here, rather than just 'English'. Grin says:

There are many cases where English is not enough and you need more to get a competitive edge. It's very useful to draw on a rich linguistic repertoire (François Grin, SwissInfo report, 20 November 2008)

Languages
Trends and issues

» The official language of India is 'Hindi in the Devanagari script', but Hindi is not the national language.

» English retains an ambivalent status in India as an 'associate' official language.

» The 22 Scheduled Languages of India account for 96% of the population.

» Each state has declared its own official language or languages. These include Non-Scheduled languages, such as English and French.

» The rising use of English in India has not been at the expense of Hindi, which is also growing in use.

» There are growing parallels between the European Union and India in terms of the number of languages which language policies need to take account of, and the potential tensions between English, regional and minority languages.

SECTION 5: ENGLISH IN INDIA

English plays a complex role in Indian society today which can only be understood by understanding something of its history. For long the preserve a small elite group, demand for universal access to English is growing. But exactly how many people in India speak English, and to what level, remains an enigma.

The story of English in India

The story of English in India might seem a simple one. The British came, colonised, and imposed their language on its inhabitants. The story was actually more complicated, and is still unfolding today.

The British arrived in India in the early 17th century in the form of the East India Company (EIC), more interested in trade than imperial possession. The company at that time needed employees to learn local languages, so they could negotiate the best deals and ensure their agents were not diverting profit into their own pockets.

That situation changed at each renewal of the EIC's charter, often reflecting changing domestic politics in Britain. By the early 19th century the 'core business' of the company shifted from trade to managing India on behalf of the British Crown.

MACAULAY'S MINUTE

For many educated Indians, one name is remembered from this period – Thomas Babington Macaulay. In 1835, as law officer to the Supreme Council, he drafted a document which has become known as 'Macaulay's Minute on Education'. In this he appears to deprecate the value of Indian languages, elevate the qualities of English, and declare that English should henceforth become the medium of education in India.

Not all, however, is as it seems. Macaulay was adjudicating on a narrow legal point: whether the money set aside in the Company's 1813

charter renewal for public instruction could be diverted from supporting classical Indian languages to funding the diffusion of 'useful knowledge' through English. Both sides of the argument – 'Anglicists' and 'Orientalists' – were concerned only with 'higher studies'. That is why Macaulay at one point says:

it is impossible for us, with our limited means, to attempt to educate the body of the people. We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern – a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect.

but goes on to say:

To that class we may leave it to refine the vernacular dialects of the country, to enrich those dialects with terms of science borrowed from the Western nomenclature, and to render them by degrees fit vehicles for conveying knowledge to the great mass of the population.

Mass education was yet to come, both in India and in England, where Charles Dickens had not yet published his first novel. In the first annual report submitted by the Committee of Public Instruction to the government after the resolution to introduce English-medium education, the matter was explained:

We are deeply sensible of the importance of encouraging the cultivation of the vernacular languages. We do not conceive that the order ... precludes us from doing this ... the claims of

The battle over English education had, in fact, been fought and won before Macaulay ever set foot in India

the vernacular languages were broadly and prominently admitted by all parties, and the question submitted for the decision of government only concerned the relative advantage of teaching English on the one side, and the learned eastern languages on the other.

Macaulay's Minute, far from being a central one in the history of English-medium education in India, really deserves little more than a footnote. Macaulay's biographer, John Clive (1973) suggests that 'much of the battle over English education had, in fact, been fought and won before Macaulay ever set foot in India'.

Focus on the Minute has distracted generations from understanding the wider socio-economic and political context in which English rapidly became so dominant in India.

AFTER 1833

The 1833 charter renewal was pivotal in the history of the East India Company. Before, it had been a trading company, albeit with a growing role in administering territories under its control. But the 1833 charter divested it of trading activity, making it little more than an administrative agency for the British Crown.

The Governor-General, Lord Bentinck, was sent to prepare the company for the change by cutting administrative costs. He intended to employ local clerks to replace the 'writers' who had been shipped out at great expense from Britain. Unfortunately, he found a shortage of local 'English-speaking talent', so Bentinck needed to help the seminaries improve the 'employability skills' of their graduates.

WHO WANTED ENGLISH?

Apart from this rather practical and economic need, it seems the British had little desire to impose English on India, though the Anglicists themselves had differing motives. Macaulay was keen to bring into India ideas from modern science and technology, which had begun to transform European society and economies, and he saw English as the vehicle. But British administrators championed vernacular education and largely resisted local pressure to fund more English schools,

However, the shift to local recruitment in the EIC after 1833 meant that well-paid new jobs became available throughout India to English speakers in public service. This alone ensured that higher education became largely English-medium. The British thus successfully created an English-speaking elite.

Lord Bentinck was one of the first to imagine India as becoming one day an integrated national entity. Macaulay himself seemed convinced that British efforts to improve Indian education would eventually result in independence – the loss of the American colonies 50 years earlier was fresh in political memory. But, as Macaulay put it bluntly in a speech to the House of Commons in 1833, before he left Britain for India, 'To trade with civilised men is infinitely more profitable than to govern savages'.

English in India is growing

English is changing its status in India –
from a bureaucratic and elite language,
to one which plays an increasing role in
the lives of all citizens.

The official position of English in India
remains that of a transitional neces-
sity. But this agenda has been overtaken
by events. Economic growth means that
more jobs require English; the expansion of
education means that English is needed by
more people for study; and for a growing,
globalised, urban middle class English is
playing a greater role in both their work and
personal lives.

ENGLISH AS AN ASPIRATIONAL LANGUAGE

In August 2009, the Indian television
channel CNN-IBN carried out a 'State of the
Nation' poll, which confirmed the impor-
tance that most Indians accord English, but
also the ambiguous attitudes the language
invokes:

87%	*feel that knowledge of English is important to succeed in life*
54%	*feel those who can speak fluent English are superior*

but also that:

82%	*feel that knowing the state language is very important*
57%	*feel that English is making us forget our mother tongue*
63%	*feel jobs should be reserved for those who speak the state language.*

WIDENING ACCESS TO ENGLISH

The Dalit movement's demand for English
(see right) is part of a wider desire from
poorer sectors in Indian society for access
to English. The British successfully restricted

English is imagined as:

- a library language
- a link language
- a language of enslavement
- a language of liberation and liberalism
- a language of modernity and development
- a defence against Hindi
- a transactional 'vehicular' language
- a language of geographical mobility
- a language of social mobility
- a language which brings money
- the language of the 'new Brahmins'

Trends encouraging English:

- the growing middle class
- increasing urbanisation
- the shift to a services economy
- widening access to higher education (from 12% participation rate to 30% in a decade)
- increased vocational training
- improved communications/mobility
- more children attending private schools
- English taught in government schools from Class 1
- English-medium streams opening in government schools

the English language to an elite class. Subsequently it became a means for that elite to maintain their status in independent India. But the politics around English have shifted in the last decade. Where populist politicians once secured rural votes by promising to banish English, now there is a powerful grass-roots lobby to extend English to the masses.

Improvements in education, a greater awareness of the wider world brought by television and better communications, and the prospect of well-paid jobs based on merit rather than social background, have fuelled the aspirations of the lower castes. Mukherjee (2009) argues that the traditional elite – especially high-caste, middle-class, urban males – have moved into the more lucrative pastures of the IITs and IIMs, allowing lower-caste workers with English to occupy the fields they have vacated.

Dalit activists such as Meena Kandasamy from Tamil Nadu, and Chandra Bhan Prasad from Uttar Pradesh, argue that English is a key to Dalit emancipation – not just because of the opportunities for social mobility it provides, but because it allows escape from the

1.47 Poster published by Chandra Bhan Prasad, a Dalit activist

traditional caste positioning which is encoded into the regional languages themselves.

They also see English as the language that unites the Dalit movement across India, allowing them to fight a common political cause – a parallel, perhaps, with the role that English played for those who originally fought for India's independence.

How many speak English?

India has a world reputation as being an English-speaking country but no one knows how many people actually know the language.

English has been spoken in India from colonial days, but there is no credible estimate of how many Indians actually know English. For many years, estimates have hovered around 5% or less of the population, which at the start of the 20th century suggests around 10 million speakers, and in 2010 around 55 million. On the other hand, Kachru (2004) suggests 333 million people in India 'use English' – a figure based on a survey by the magazine *India Today* in 1997, which reported that over one third of Indians claimed to speak English. The National Knowledge Commission (2009) claims of English that 'even now, no more than one per cent of our people use it as a second language, let alone a first language'. That figure corresponds to the percentage of respondents in the last Household Survey, whose interviews were conducted in English. However, the 2001 census data (released in late 2009) reports that 10.4% of the population claimed to speak English as a second or third language – that equates to around 126 million speakers in 2010.

As with most things, English proficiency in India is distributed very unevenly across the various socio-economic groups. The reality is that English now plays some role in the lives of all Indians, even those who say they cannot speak or read it.
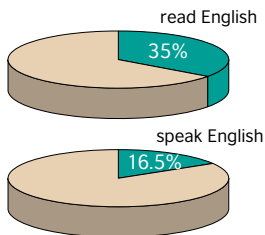
1.48 Proportions of Indian earners who claim reading or speaking ability in English (data based on 2005 survey of earners by the Indian Retirement Earnings and Savings, IRES)

Geography is one determinant: south India has long had a reputation for producing more English speakers than the north; some north-eastern states use English as their official language and educate nearly all children in English; in other states policies towards English have changed over the years leading to a 'missing generation' of English speakers, as in West Bengal.

A survey of wage earners in India, carried out in 2005, found that around a third claimed to be able to 'read English', but less than half of those also claimed to 'speak English'. This no doubt reflects the fact that English has for a long time been treated as a 'library language' in India, used for reading textbooks and writing exam papers, but not for conversation. Such an asymmetry across the four language skills is characteristic of most school-leavers from vernacular-medium schools. Professor Rama Mathew described the findings of a test devised at Delhi University:

We realised that our students are something like B1 in reading. If they are B1 in reading, they are A2 in writing and listening and A1 in speaking. (Third Policy Dialogue, Delhi, November 2009)

Such asymmetric proficiency levels may reflect the way English is used in a multi-lingual society, but it makes it even more difficult to estimate overall proficiency levels in the population. What counts as an English speaker, when most Indians know a few words, but only a few have a high level of competence in both local and more standard varieties? One approach is shown in **1.51**. At the centre, less than 1% of Indians are effectively monolingual in English. At the other extreme, about two-thirds are in the white zone – below A1 level of proficiency. Different circles might be needed for each language skill.

High proficiency

Low proficiency
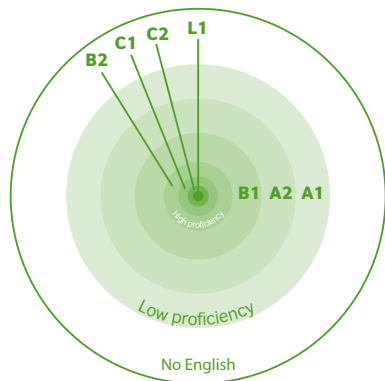
No English

1.49 Circles of proficiency in English. Each band represents a level on the CEFR scale (see right).

English in India
Trends and issues

» The story of how English came to India is still a contested issue in ideological debate in modern India. However, there are intriguing parallels between the arguments over English in the 19th century and those today.

» No one really knows how many Indians speak English today – estimates vary between 55 million and 350 million – between 1% of the population and a third.

» English is now closely associated with wider social and political aspirations. Where English was once a language of the elite, now demand is coming from lower castes and rural areas.

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Learning English in India

English in Indian education

English is in greater demand in India than ever before: parents and employers want it, and public policy increasingly accepts the need to provide universal access to it. But how can opportunities for learning English be provided?

This section of *English Next India* documents the rising demand from parents for English-medium education today and the way education authorities across India are responding by introducing more English into government schools.

Arguments about the medium of schooling have run for many years, often spilling into the law courts. The attempt by the Karnataka government to force English-medium private schools to switch to Kannada medium was one of the more newsworthy recent cases – the Supreme Court in Delhi finally overruled the state government in July 2009, declaring that parents were entitled to choose the medium of education for their children:

> It is very easy to say that children should be taught in mother tongues, but the question is how to survive in this world. The best way out of this controversy would be to make all choices available but let the parents decide.

Hence it seems that the argument which so occupied Macaulay and his colleagues in the 19th century is still very much alive today. The circumstances may appear to be new, but perhaps the underlying problems are not so different. As in 1835, the demand for English is coming from below. Why? Because an English education leads to higher education and better jobs, and it is seen by lower castes as an escape route from social imprisonment. Lord Curzon may have despaired in 1905 over the way universities had become 'degree mills':

> students driven like sheep from lecture-room to lecture-room and examination to examination, textbooks badly chosen, degrees pursued for their commercial value

but is what happens in some of the affiliated engineering colleges today much better?

The problems in the Indian education system are well known and described, not just by activists, but in government policy documents over several decades. Many of the present wave of reforms, for example, show continuity with the report of the Kothari Commission in 1966.

> There is this segregation in education itself — the minority of private fee-charging, better schools meeting the need of the upper classes and the vast bulk of free, publicly maintained, but poor schools being utilised by the rest. What is worse, this segregation is increasing and tending to widen the gulf between the classes and the masses.

This divide between 'private' and 'public' has historically reflected the divide between English-medium and vernacular-medium schools. In other words, an elite minority learns through English medium in school,

is better prepared for the challenge of university courses taught through English, and provides the main source of students on postgraduate degrees, such as the MBA, which lead to the best-paid careers.

One aspect of Indian education today is, however, very different from the mid 19th century. The population was then a great deal smaller, the proportion of children who attended school smaller, and the number of years each child remained in education fewer. So despite the fact that some 19th-century criticisms seem very modern – as if nothing much has changed since the mid 19th century – the reality is very different. The Indian education system has been fighting several battles at once: the battle against a burgeoning young population; the battle towards full enrolment; the battle to extend the years of education; and finally, the battle to improve quality.

HRD Minister, Kapil Sibal, has summed up the challenges:

The mantra for moving forward in the education sector is expansion, inclusion and excellence (India Today, *4 October 2009*)

In the first section I described Indian society and economy as going through several transitions. The education system is also passing through transitions – in addition to the 'battles' above, which can be regarded as transitions with known destinations, we can add another. Indian education now appears to be on the same track as most of the rest of the world in integrating English into the curriculum as a basic skill for all children. The big questions that remain are: how can this be most effectively done, when English teachers are in such short supply? How can we ensure that there is universal access? How long will it take? What will the impact be on other languages?

2.1 Class 5 in a Tamil Nadu school

Where is English learned?

English Next India identifies seven locations in which Indians' proficiency in English is developed. The role and importance of each varies according to the age and career point of the learner, but all play a role in creating English speakers in India.

1 The home and community
It is clear that children who come from homes where English is spoken by parents – or even a domestic helper – gain a head-start in English, and also are supported in schoolwork. Communities also vary greatly in the exposure they provide children to English out of school.

2 Primary school (compulsory education)
The years of compulsory education now provide a new focus for English teaching, but practice and quality varies greatly. Any English skills which are thought necessary as part of a child's general education (i.e. for someone who does not pursue an academic route), need to be acquired by the age of 14, underlining the importance of learning English at primary school.

3 Secondary school
Secondary schools (15–18) have traditionally focused on teaching English as a subject, and/or teaching subjects through English medium. Neither approach is very effective in developing skills in using the language.

4 Private language institutes, coaching colleges, private tuition
It is clear that many parents and learners rely on private supplementation for English learning. Such provision caters for all age groups, but access is better in urban areas and for richer families.

5 Universities/colleges
Universities and colleges have recently become more concerned about the 'employability' of their graduates and many now offer co-curricular courses in English communication skills.

6 Workplace/corporate training
Many employers help make up a skills gap by in-house training. For example, a BPO might recruit a candidate at B1 level and train intensively to B2.

7 Informal life experience – such as overseas study, employment
Informal learning for many Indians plays an important 'finishing role'. Those who study overseas, for example, can expect to come back with improved English skills. Opportunities for overseas study are more available for richer, middle-class families. BPOs who 'train to B2' level often expect employees to improve to C1 level during the first year of employment.
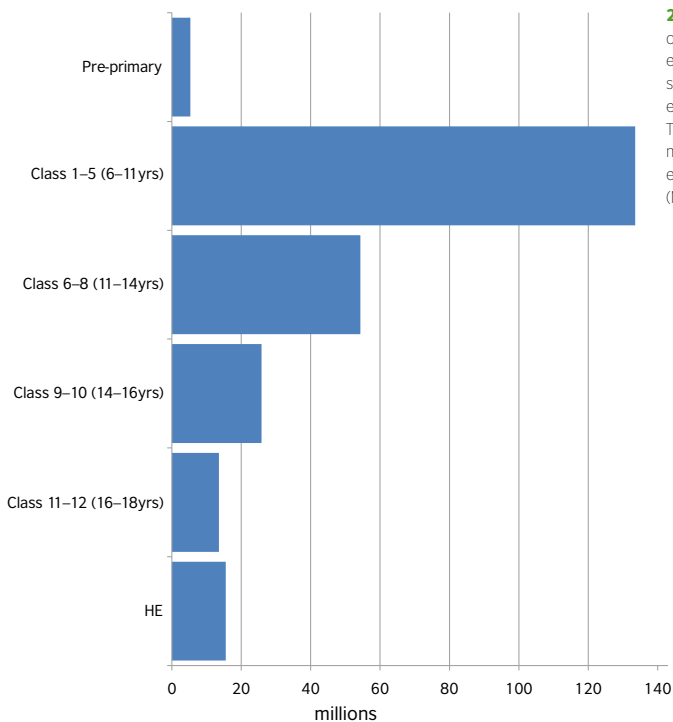
2.2 The numbers of students enrolled at each stage of the Indian education system. There around 25 million children in each year group. (MHRD SES 2007)
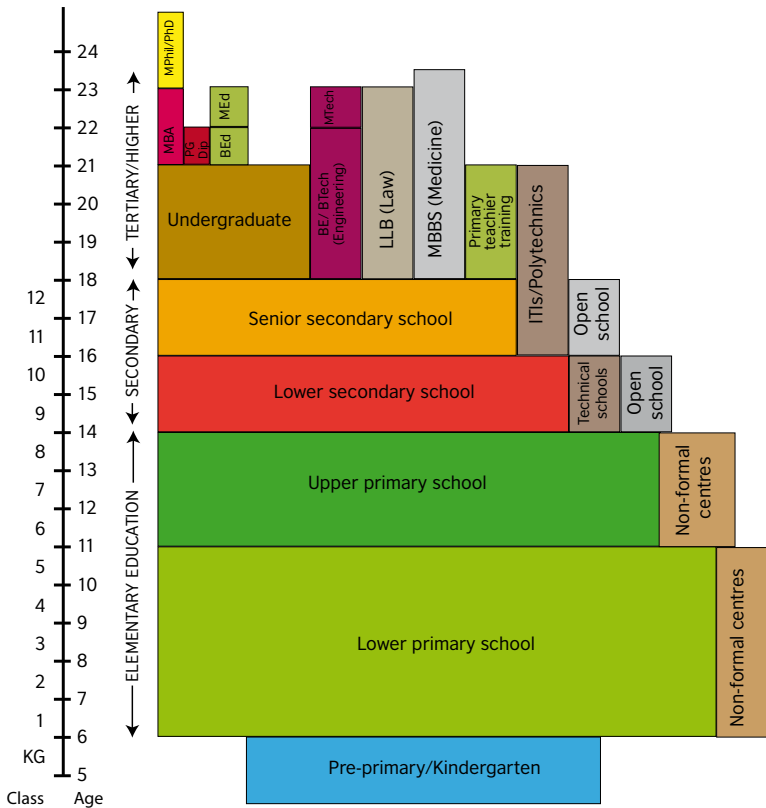
250 million students in education

188 million children in primary schools

over 6 million schoolteachers

1.2 million schools

15 million students in higher education

76% drop-out rate in Bihar, Class 1–8

2.3 India's education system (various sources). The education system loosely follows the British model, and is sometimes described as 10+2+3 (10 years' schooling to matriculation at 16, two years' preparation for university, three years' undergraduate study). There is slight variation between states in the divisions between primary and upper primary, upper primary and secondary, and secondary and higher/senior secondary. Year groups are traditionally called 'Standard', but 'Class' is also used. The US term 'Grade' is also heard, but more recent terminology introduced in the English national curriculum (such as 'Key Stage') is not used.. This book refers to 'Class', followed by an Arabic, rather than Roman, number.

SECTION 1: SCHOOLS

India's education system is the largest in the world, but it has struggled to get children into schools, keep them there, and then provide a worthwhile learning opportunity. This provides the background against which a growing demand for English must now be met.

Towards universal education

India has made significant gains in the quest for universal education – at least in primary schools.

One of the most exciting develop-ments in Indian education in recent years has been the impact of the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) programme – India's 'Education for All' initiative, launched in 2001 with the aim of fulfilling the Millennium Development Goal in India of universal, free elementary education. Many new schools and classrooms have been built, facilities improved and more teachers trained.

At independence, enrolment in primary schools was around 35%, and in secondary schools (15–18 years) 4%. Primary enrolment now approaches 100% in some parts of the country, though this may be inflated by the number of five-year-olds enrolled in primary schools, and by the number of older children kept back because of poor progress.

Attendance in some areas remains poor, however, and drop out rates high. Over 75% of Bihar children drop out before the age of 14.

SECONDARY ENROLMENT

Enrolment in Indian secondary schools (at just over 53% in lower secondary, and 28% in upper secondary) is, according to a recent report by the World Bank (2009) 'far inferior to ... its global competitors in East Asia'. The secondary sector is the next to be tackled: the Rastriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan programme (RMSA) is intended to improve enrolment and facilities in secondary schools.

2.4 Free school dinners have helped enrolment in primary schools, especially among girls. The mid-day meals programme has also benefited local economies.
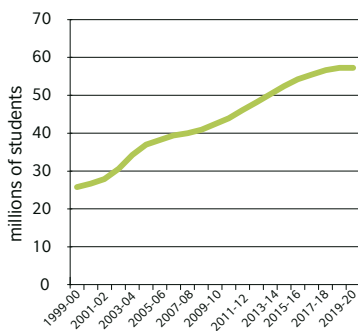
2.5 Historic and projected growth of secondary school enrolment (World Bank, 2009)

Elementary education is now within the reach of all children in our country
– Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh, 8 September 2009

Right to Education Act 2009

The Right to Education Act, which passed into law in September 2009, contains several potentially radical clauses.

- Private schools are expected to offer 25% of places free of charge to local children from disadvantaged communities.
- No teacher shall engage in private tuition or private teaching activity.
- Teachers need to meet minimum qualifications. Any who do not, must acquire them within five years or lose their job.
- Teachers should work a minimum 45-hour week, and maintain 'regularity and punctuality' in attending school.
- A minimum of two teachers per school where enrolment is 60 or less.
- A minimum 40-week academic year for Class 1–5 and a minimum four-hour day.
- Government schools will set up a management committee consisting of at least 75% parents and 50% women, which will monitor the use of funds and prepare a school development plan.
- Children should be admitted to the class appropriate to their age and should not be held back. If required, special support should be given to allow a child to catch up.
- Any child who completes elementary education (Class 8) shall be awarded a certificate.

The journey to universal education

1944 Sargent Report
recommends universal, free, compulsory education between the ages of 6 and 14.

1950 Constitution Article 45
'The State shall endeavour to provide, within a period of ten years from the commencement of this Constitution, for free and compulsory education to all children until they complete the age of 14 years.'

1986 National Policy on Education
'by 1995 all children will be provided free and compulsory education up to 14 years of age'

1992 National Policy on Education
'it shall be ensured that free and compulsory education of satisfactory quality is provided to all children up to 14 years of age before we enter the twenty-first century'

2002 86th Amendment to the Constitution
The right to primary education is now a fundamental right of an Indian citizen. Article 45 is rewritten: 'The State shall endeavour to provide early childhood care and education for all children until they complete the age of six years'.

2009 The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Bill, 2009

2.6 The ubiquity of the SSA logo is a reminder of the investment being made in elementary education.

Improving quality

The priority in schools must now be to improve the standard of learning, whilst continuing to improve infrastructure.

For many decades, the focus in Indian education has been on increasing the number of children attending school and providing basic facilities such as new schools and classrooms, drinking water, toilets and blackboards. In many areas, even this project is incomplete – government schools in India are much less well equipped than, say, their counterparts in China.

Towards the end of the 1990s, the attention of donors and NGOs shifted to the question of what was actually happening inside the classrooms. In 1996, a team of researchers investigated the quality of learning in primary schools in five states in north India. Their landmark study, called PROBE (Public Report on Basic Education), was published in 1999. They found that although enrolment was high, attendance at school was very poor; that boys, on average, spent less than three years at school, and girls less than two; that this was not because of parental attitudes or use of child labour but because of the hidden costs of 'free education', poor access to schools, and the low level of academic progress experienced by children who managed to attend.

Since the PROBE report, some states have carried out their own surveys of learning outcomes, which have confirmed low levels of learning and poor progress in India's pri-

mary schools. A national picture of learning outcomes in rural areas is now provided by ASER (Annual State of Education Report), part of Pratham, India's largest educational NGO. In their 2008 survey, (ASER 2009) they report:

Sadly, even though most children are enrolled in school, they do not appear to be learning very much. In general, learning levels appear to be stagnant or declining, with for instance, only 41% across Grades 1 to 8 being able to read simple stories in 2008 as opposed to 43.6% in 2005. Similarly, only 27.9% children across grades could do simple division sums in 2008, as compared to 30.9% in 2005.

In 2009, the PROBE team published an update on their 1996 survey, reporting that enrolment was now much better, but the quality of teaching was not. In almost half of schools, no teaching was going on at all at the time of the visit.

*Even in schools where teaching was going on, children were getting a raw deal. Mindless rote learning still dominated the classroom. We came across children chanting mathematical tables for several hours. Children 'read' paragraphs from their book after having memorised it. When asked even a simple question, they faltered; when asked to 'read' anything outside the text, they often could not. We frequently found children copying blindly from the blackboard or the textbook without comprehending it (*Frontline, *14 March 2009)*

The poor performance of children in the bulk of government primary schools has multiple

causes, some relating to the teachers and their training, some to the institutional contexts in which they work, some to the methodologies and textbooks they use, and yet others to the social background and family circumstances of the students themselves. This makes it extremely difficult to identify any single intervention which might remediate the situation. It also means that improvement at primary level will take much longer to achieve than is needed to meet the dual aspirations to improve access to secondary and higher education, whilst improving the quality of learning outcomes at each stage.

The situation seems scarcely better in secondary schools. The World Bank carried out a small-scale assessment of learning outcomes in Rajasthan and Orissa, using similar tests as used in the PISA international surveys. In a report released in September 2009, they concluded that the results:

suggest that the quality of instruction and learning is very low. ... On the other hand, the top performing 5% of students in Orissa and Rajasthan performed far higher, on average, than most of their peers around the world, including in OECD countries (Das and Zajonc, 2007). The sheer size of India's student population translates this small percentage into a large absolute number of high performing children.

English has traditionally been taught mainly in secondary schools, meaning that in some states the majority of children never attend an English lesson. Those who do are unlikely to acquire many functional skills in English. John Kurrien, Director of the Centre for Learning Resources, a Pune-based NGO, looked more closely at the written English skills of 100 Class 10 students in Maharashtra. He concluded that passing state exams was no indicator of actual writing ability:

Class 10 students [100 students in eight rural and two urban government regional medium schools] — most of them selected by their teachers as among the best in English — were asked to write as much as possible about their favourite film star.

*About half of these 'best' students were unable to write a single correct sentence, or at best could manage only one correct sentence. While less than 10 per cent were able to write more than five correct sentences, the subsequent board examination results declared a few months later indicated that more than 80 per cent of all candidates passed in English in the state. (*The Times of India *22 July 2008)*

The track record of secondary schools in developing written English skills is dismal, but now the priority is for speaking skills, and to start the business of English teaching in primary schools.

This will require well-trained and qualified teachers, using communicative methods to engage young learners, but introducing the teaching of English into schools where trained teachers and suitable textbooks do not exist will magnify educational failure.

The great language divide

There is great diversity in the Indian education system, but one division has affected it all since the 19th century – the medium of instruction.

Apart from in those states which have adopted English as their official language, the general pattern in India has long been for children in government schools to be taught in a regional language, and for children in private schools to be taught through English.

This is the pattern which was envisaged by the British administration in the 19th century, by the likes of Macaulay and Bentinck. Lord Curzon, in an educational review in 1905, confirmed that approach:

As regards the vernaculars, which must for long be the sole instrument for the diffusion of knowledge among all except a small minority of the Indian people, we found them in danger of being neglected and degraded in the pursuit of English, and in many cases very bad English, for the sake of its mercantile value. By all means let English be taught to those who are qualified to learn it; but let it rest upon a solid foundation of the indigenous languages, for no people will ever use another tongue with advantage that cannot first use its own with ease.

THE ENGLISH-SPEAKING ELITE

A small percentage of the Indian population belongs to an elite layer of society which is able to negotiate each stage of the education system with relative ease. Many speak
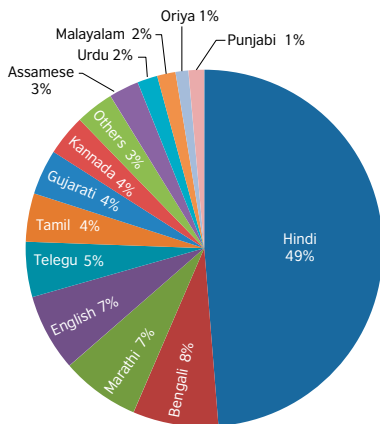
2.7 Proportions of children taught through each language medium at primary school (Based on DISE data, 2008)

English to some extent before they enter primary school, or come from homes in which English is spoken. They hear people speaking in English every day. They see their parents reading a daily newspaper in English. They attend a well-equipped English-medium school staffed by well-qualified teachers.

The term 'convent school' is often used as a generic term for the best English-medium private schools, indicating their origin as a place that sought to provide students not only with high levels of scholarship, but also values. Students from such schools provide a high-flying intake to universities, especially institutions such as IIMs and IITs, which do not apply reservation quotas.

This demographic group was frequently mentioned in interviews with employers in the corporate sector as a major source of recruitment. Some interviewees admitted that they specifically target convent-school-educated candidates.

SERIAL MONOLINGUAL EDUCATION

The medium of education has long been a site of ideological struggle in India. The three-language formula, first codified in 1968, has guided educational policy, and envisages that all children will have a first, second and third language by the end of their compulsory education. However the way such languages are taught does not create trilingual citizens, and minority-language speakers often suffer from having the regional language designated as their 'first' language.

In most states, primary education is provided in regional and minority languages, in addition to English. Only 7% of children officially attend English-medium primary schools, though this figure probably under-estimates the real number.

The principle allows most children to begin their education in their mother tongue. In the case of minority-language children, such as those who speak tribal languages, more is now being done to support mother-tongue learning in early years, but it is typically seen as a transitional arrangement, preparing children for study in the regional language as soon as possible.

At each stage in the education system, the three-language formula expects that a language other than the current medium of education will be taught as a subject, often as a preparation towards shifting to study through that language at the next educational level.

Secondary education is often associated with a move up the language hierarchy, with most schools teaching either through the regional language, Hindi or English. However, only around 60% of the 14–16 age group reach this stage, and there is significant drop-out during the secondary years, with only 28% of students reaching Class 11–12. At college and university, the proportion of courses taught through English is very much higher, though the participation rate in higher education is only around 12%.

This approach might best be called 'serial monolingual' education but it illustrates the usual working of the three-language formula. This remains the policy at a national level. HRD Minister Kapil Sibal recently restated the policy:

> We need our children to learn mother tongue, Hindi and English -- mother tongue for better understanding of the subjects at elementary stage, Hindi at secondary stage for integrating to national level and English at university level for connecting to the world (Indian Express, *14 September 2009)*

However, a broad consensus seems now to be emerging that a goal of Indian education should be to create multilingual speakers.

The privatising of Indian education

The private sector has always played an important role in Indian education, but in recent years there has been a significant increase in parents sending their children to private schools.

More parents across India, both rich and poor, are sending their children to private schools. The government's 11th Five-Year Plan notes:

> Nearly 60% of secondary schools are with private management both aided and unaided, almost in equal proportions. The share of government and local body schools and private aided schools has shown a declining trend with private unaided schools showing an increase from 15% in 1993–94 to 24% in 2001–02 and further to 30% in 2004–05 … The doubling of the share of private unaided schools indicates that parents are willing to pay for education that is perceived to be of good quality. The factors underlying this perception include better English teaching, better monitoring and supervision of students' performance, better attention, attendance and accountability of teachers.

ASER reports that even in rural areas more children now attend private primary schools, and more boys than girls are likely to attend. Their first survey in 2005 showed that 16.4% of children attended private schools; by 2008 this had risen to 26%. ASER also found that in Himachal Pradesh, enrolments in private schools rose from 7% to 24% in three years, despite the fact that here government schools were outperforming the private sector in

2.8 An English lesson in one of Delhi Public Schools – a chain of private schools

2005. The increase may reflect parents' desire for English-medium education.

Although the trend is for more parents from poor backgrounds to choose private schools, such schools vary greatly in quality. Indeed, the (1999) PROBE survey found:

> English-medium instruction is a big selling point of private schools. … But … there is a great deal of variation in the credibility of English instruction, with teachers themselves knowing little more than a few sentences in English in some unrecognised schools. Most parents, alas, cannot tell the difference. (PROBE I, 1999)

Some states, such as Karnataka, have tried to enforce regional language medium on private schools, but a judgement by the Supreme Court in July 2009 established the right of parents to choose English-medium schooling. The central government has announced plans to make it easier for private schools to be set up, and explore more forms of private-public partnership.

The reason private schools have multiplied so fast is that the state-run ones are rotten – *Economist* 9 November 2006
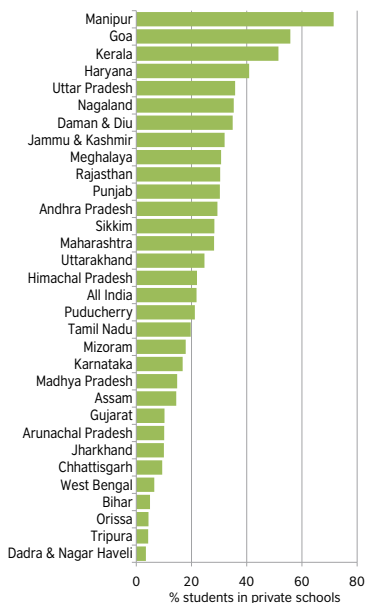
2.9 Percentage of rural children aged 6–14 attending private schools (ASER 2010)

2.10 Neighbourhood English-medium schools are springing up in both towns and villages.

A puzzle about private schools

Teachers in government schools are paid better, often have higher educational qualifications and are better trained than their counterparts in many private schools. Children nevertheless seem to learn better in private schools. Why might this be so?

A part of the answer lies in the different relationship between parent and school. The school, and the teacher, depend on maintaining a good customer-focused relationship with the parent. If parents feel the child is unhappy, or is not learning, then they will withdraw their child. This relationship may be closer in rural and slum areas, where many unrecognised, private schools are small, single-room affairs and teachers often live in the same area. Children, especially in Class 1, may be given more attention in private schools.

Teachers in government schools are typically of a higher caste than the children they teach. Some research suggests that this social relationship is re-enacted in the government classroom: lower-caste children are more often beaten, for example, and less often praised. Higher-caste children may bully classmates of a lower caste.

Teachers in government schools who offer private tuition out of school may not go out of their way to ensure the children learn in class. ASER surveys show, however, that children in private schools are also more likely to receive additional private tuition.

Ever more English

English has become a more important part of Indian education during the last decade. It is now introduced into schools at an earlier age and more children are learning through the medium of English

More children in India are being taught through English, not just because of the rise of private schools but because English is increasing in government schools.

In Mumbai, the Corporation (BMC) has found recruitment to its Marathi-medium schools is falling, whilst that of its English-medium schools is rising. From 2010, vernacular-medium schools will be allowed to teach science and maths through English, from Class 1.

Other state governments are responding to the competition from the private sector by switching schools to English-medium, or introducing English-medium streams.

Andhra Pradesh introduced English-medium teaching in 2008 from Class 6 in 6,500 high schools in rural areas, in a bid to 'offer convent-type English-medium education to the children of the poor'. In Tamil Nadu, some primary schools have had to be closed through lack of pupils – due to a combination of falling birth rates and a drift to private schools. Chennai Corporation has responded by opening its own English-medium classes in selected schools in 2009. They are likely to be oversubscribed. *The Times of India* quoted one mother, a domestic help:

I work at three houses, and it is difficult for me to afford a private English-medium school for my child. Still I send my daughter there because I want to hear her speak English. If Chennai Corporation is starting English-medium schools, I will definitely consider enrolling my child there. (The Times of India, *22 February 2009*)

In Delhi, the Municipal Corporation announced that it would start an English-medium stream in 267 primary schools in 2010–11.

ENGLISH FROM CLASS 1

In many states, even where English medium is not adopted, English is now being introduced into the curriculum of government schools from Class 1. Maharashtra was one of the first to implement such an innovation when in 2000 it began teaching English five hours a week. The NCERT estimated that by the end of 2009, around 20 states were teaching English from Class 1.

2.11 RIESI (Regional Institute of English South India) in Bangalore has trained and supported teachers implementing the Karnataka primary English project.

> The destiny of India is now being shaped in her classrooms.
> – Education Commission 1964 (Kothari Report)

In Karnataka, an informal project was introduced in 2007, focusing on speaking and listening, games, and storytelling. It provided teachers with support through regular teleconferencing sessions via EduSat. Such approaches can be considered 'language awareness' projects.

West Bengal embarked on a more formal project, supported by the British Council, creating new text books which incorporate communicative teaching methods, adapted for use in village schools. Each child has colourful workbooks and lessons are lively, involving songs and dance. The British ELT expert Ray MacKay, who trained the textbook writing team explained:

> *We are working with large numbers of poorly trained teachers in under-resourced schools with large classes of English language learners. Many of those children are hearing English for the first time. We are starting with low expectations and this is going to be a long term project. (*Guardian Weekly*, 11 December 2008)*

TOWARDS NATIONAL STANDARDS

With the growing use of English medium, more schools are abandoning regional exam boards and affiliating to central ones – either the CBSE or CISCE. These boards have greater prestige and offer a nationally understood standard – both often sought after by parents who desire English-medium education for their children. CBSE also implements the NCERT curriculum recommendations closely, and is the first to reflect changes in central government policy.

2.12 Children in a West Bengal village school enjoy their new-style English lessons.

The number of students who leave school with English-medium qualifications which have a national currency is thus increasing. This is likely to help the mobility of students across state boundaries – especially if Class 12 exams become used as the main entrance qualification for universities.

One remaining constraint on mobility is that university candidates often lose their eligibility for a reservation quota outside their own state. This may change if the 'unique identification card' project is successfully implemented by central government.

The first-generation learner

The current attempt to bring English to the masses depends very much on how successfully first-generation learners can acquire the language. But making high-quality provision available for these pupils is the greatest challenge of all.

A quarter of children in lower primary schools are now first-generation learners who have little support from the family and community, and must rely for their learning on what happens in school. But most of such learners attend schools where teachers themselves have little English.

Where such children attend English-medium schools, it is often because of sacrifices made by their family – an additional stress for learners. It may also be difficult for the child to deal with the different worlds of home and school. Faust and Nagar (2001) describe how the English-medium school represents modernity, whilst the home and neighbourhood represents tradition. The alienation which this causes is:

> gendered, class-based, and generational: mothers, aunts, grandparents, and members of lower castes and classes become more distanced from the students, who increasingly come to identify with the culture of English speakers.

> It is their keen familiarity with the benefits bestowed by an English-medium education and with the economic marginalisation and social indignity suffered by those who cannot speak fluent English, that compels middle class families to enrol their children in English-medium schools.

First-generation learners often have to act as family 'interpreters', helping their parents understand notices or letters that contain English, or acting as a go-between with school and officials.

Many of the challenges faced by the first-generation learner of English are wider ones affecting access to education by lower caste children. Meena Kandasamy, a Dalit social activist, summarises the situation:

> Dalits are being systematically kept out of education. They aren't allowed to enter it and, where they are allowed, they aren't allowed to exit with degrees. It is a tough choice between 'Do Not Enter' and 'Drop Out'. (Meena Kandasamy 2008)

ENGLISH IS LACKING IN THE ENVIRONMENT

Children in village schools are less likely to hear English being spoken, or see it on signs or advertising. Even in towns, English is more prominent on the main roads than in the side streets, both in written and spoken form. In the rural areas, there is a similar distribution: away from the highways, English is less used.

Some schools counter this by introducing more English into the school environment by, for example, placing notices prominently in English, and deliberately including English into assemblies. In the classroom, some schools are successfully using audio materials, such as the 'interactive radio' lessons designed by the 'Centre for Learning', an NGO in Pune. One benefit of such schemes is that teachers learn alongside the pupils.

First-generation learners need the best of learning
environments but usually have to make do with the worst

2.13 Children at Levi Strauss Centre for Learning,
Bangalore – a school run by the Parikrma Foundation

WELFARE IS AS IMPORTANT AS GOOD TEACHING
The Parikrma Foundation, a Bangalore-
based NGO, has established four schools
which provide children from slum commu-
nities with a quality of education normally
associated with the better private schools.

Nearly all the children become confident
and fluent English-speakers, who perform
well across the curriculum. Parikrma say
this success is due not just to the quality of
their teachers, but also to the support for
the learners' families, including other sib-
lings and parents, and community outreach.

The Parikrma model demonstrates that it
is by no means impossible for children from
poor families to become fluent speakers of
English through school intervention, but the
level and quality of support required is not
available in government schools.

PROGRESS TAKES SEVERAL GENERATIONS
Progress among the cohort of first-gener-
ation learners will be slow. By the second
generation, more children in the class will
have parents who speak some English, their
teachers will have better English, and more
English will be in the environment.

The global picture

The introduction of English teaching in lower primary schools in India reflects wider trends in English education around the world.

Across the world, English has traditionally belonged to the 'foreign languages' curriculum and was typically taught from the age of 11 or 12 (Class 6). The age-proficiency relationships which this traditional EFL model was expected to generate during the school years is shown in the 'escalator' (**2.14**) Each step on the escalator matches an age (shown in the circle) against an expected level of proficiency, as expressed in three currencies: the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), the relevant Cambridge ESOL exam, and an IELTS level.

JUST SIX YEARS OF STUDY

The traditional approach allows only six years of learning before leaving secondary school or entering university which, in most school timetables, does not allow students to reach the proficiency level required for university study through English.

As English proficiency came to be seen as a necessary criterion of 'graduateness', universities in many countries began to require students of any subject to reach a certain standard of English proficiency before they could obtain their degree. This often aspired to be around IELTS 6.0 but in practice, given the poor starting levels of students and, at times, indifferent

motivation, rarely exceeded FCE/IELTS 5.5. This level is not regarded as sufficient for academic study through the medium of English, or for professional use.

NOW IN PRIMARY SCHOOL

A minimum proficiency level in English is increasingly regarded as an entrance requirement for university. This is now the norm in many European countries, and in some universities in China. Even where university teaching is not conducted through English, students may be expected to be able to understand English textbooks.

The growing role of English in higher education is one reason why a new global orthodoxy has emerged: learners begin in primary school, where they learn the basics of the language, then develop English as a language of study in secondary school. This model generates completely different age-proficiency relationships, as shown in **2.15**, and prepares students better for university.

Another motive for embedding English into the basic curriculum is because it has become a global lingua franca which will be useful for all students, especially those who get jobs in the services sector. For this reason, some countries now expect all school-leavers to attain a level equivalent to at least B1. Achieving this in India will be a challenge, since compulsory schooling is completed by age 14. There is, however, a need to decide on a minimum level of English as one of the expected outcomes of universal education.

2.14 Desirable age-proficiency levels in the traditional EFL curriculum. Although patterns varied from country to country this did not matter much as little else was dependent on a student's knowledge of English.
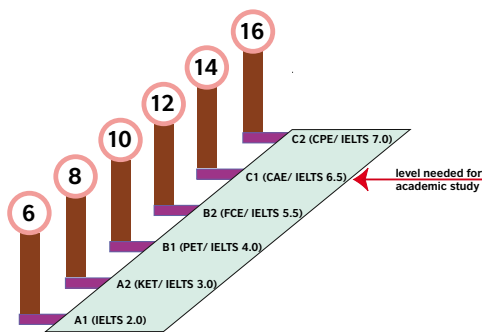
2.15 Idealised age-proficiency levels in the global English curriculum. In this model, English learning has become 'mission-critical' for all students.

INDIA IS LOSING GROUND

In the last ten years, many countries have made large investments in English teaching. It can no longer be safely assumed that India has more English speakers than China, for example.

Up the English escalator

A new orthodoxy has emerged in the education systems of many countries across the world.

1 Teach more courses at university through English, or at least expect students to be able to access study materials – such as textbooks – in English.

2 Begin teaching at least part of the curriculum through English at secondary school. Possibly provide specialist support by English teachers.

3 Start teaching English at primary school – preferably Class 1 but at least by Class 3.

As a consequence of the new orthodoxy, the relationship between age and expected levels of proficiency in English has shifted – with major implications for textbooks, curriculums, methodologies, and assessment. English learning at basic – and sometimes intermediate – levels is becoming a childhood matter across the world.

The new orthodoxy also means that much of the world is catching India up in terms of the English proficiency of their populations. India needs to expand the base of English speakers to keep up.

The danger of English

Several state governments have bowed to public pressure and introduced English-medium streams in their schools. This may not be the best approach for children.

In the minds of many parents, it seems that English-medium education is the best. This seems to be the reason for both the growth of private schooling and the increased shift towards English as a medium of instruction in some government schools. English-medium schools have obtained much of their academic reputation from the fact that parents who were wealthy enough to pay the fees were themselves well educated, and often English-speaking at home. Some private schools today maintain their exclusivity by using the educational level of parents as an admission criterion and insisting on a 'donation', which only the wealthiest can afford. The top-ranking private schools are well resourced and employ well-trained and experienced teachers.

However, English-medium by itself brings no special magic – there is no point in teaching through English if the teachers and children are not up to it. The result is a child who has neither English nor much education and the social divide is increased.

BCT English proficiency in Taiwan (Class 10 equivalent)

Taipei   Rural

Percentage of students

Proficiency band
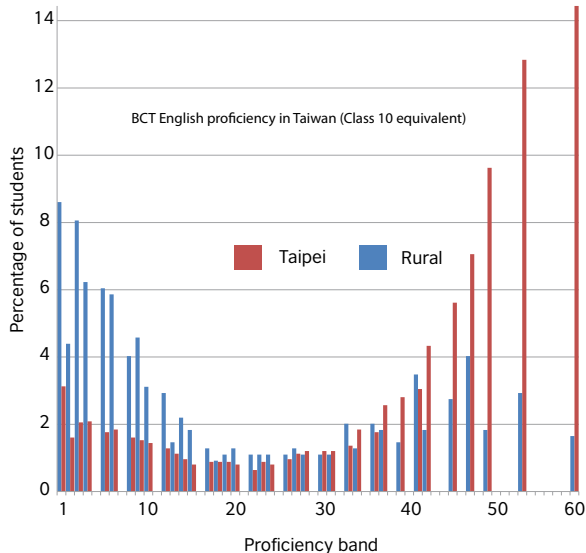
2.16 India appears to suffer from the same problem as many other Asian countries: the education system creates two populations – one of which speaks English well, another which fares badly. The U-shaped distribution (left) shows the difference between rural and urban schools in Taiwan in the Basic Competence Test (BCT) in English, which students take at age 15–16.

Such a distribution has significant implications for widening enrolment in post-compulsory education and for improving English skills in the general population.

There is no point in teaching through English if the teachers and children are not up to it

1 *Language awareness* work. Now being used in some states, such as Karnataka, to bring English into lower primary schools even where the teacher's English poor.

2 *English as a subject* – with the focus on written texts, vocabulary and grammar. Teaching methods often include students reading aloud from the book in turn, or in chorus; writing on the blackboard; students copying from the board or textbook; question and answers.

3 *Teaching through English.* This is only effective in helping students to learn English if special language support is also provided. If a subject is simply taught through English, little learning will take place. In Europe, the dual teaching of English in the course of teaching a subject is called 'Content and Language Integrated Learning' (CLIL).

4 *Teaching communicative language skills.* This seems most popular at present at the two ends of education: for young learners and in 'finishing' classes in institutes and universities. Practice of skills form a key component of teaching.

Method 1 is useful preparation and also can be used as vehicle for developing multilingualism. Method 2 and method 3 (unless given the right resources) increase the English divide. Method 4 improves skills, but requires good English teachers, who are only available in better schools.

Malaysia reverses English policy

Malaysia, as a former British colony, used to have many teachers who knew English. That changed after independence, when Bahasa Malaysia became the national language and the medium of instruction in most government schools. Concerned that standards of English had declined to the extent that it threatened Malaysia's international competitiveness, the Malaysian government switched the teaching of science and maths to English medium in 2003. Six years later, in July 2009, they announced the policy was to be reversed, after concern that children's learning had suffered.

The education minister, Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin, admitted that only 10% of primary teachers were sufficiently proficient in English when the policy was introduced. The emphasis has now shifted to improving the quality of English teachers and teaching English more effectively in schools.

The Malaysian experience shows the dangers of introducing a 'one size fits all' national policy, without first ensuring that it can be effectively implemented.

The time has come for us to teach our people, ordinary people, English as a language in schools.
– National Knowledge Commission, 2009

Teacher training

There is a need to improve the skills of teachers at all levels in the education system, but the current demand for English has created a crisis.

India does not have sufficient English-proficient teachers to deliver the programmes now being embarked on. This is a familiar challenge faced by most countries in the world which aspire to provide English to all their children, but in India the scale of the problem is greater. Some countries regard it essential to import 'native speaker' teachers to supplement local teachers – an approach which tends to cause as many problems as it may solve.

India has long been a net exporter of English teachers, supplying schools and universities elsewhere in the world, including Singapore and the Middle East. Some Asian countries have, in recent years, accepted that Indian teachers can be regarded as 'native speakers'.

The 11th Five-Year Plan aspired to 'universally introduce English in Class 3 onwards'. In practice, several states have gone further and are now attempting to introduce English in Class 1. It is doubtful that teachers at lower primary level will be able to do this successfully.

The standard of English among teachers often reflects their own level of education, and tends to be particularly poor among older teachers in lower primary schools, many of whom are taught in the District
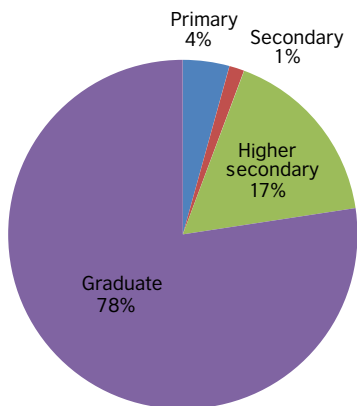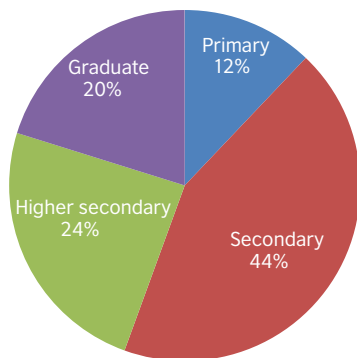
2.17 Academic attainment of primary school teachers. The contrast in the academic qualifications of primary school teachers in rural Orissa (top) and Delhi (bottom) is striking. (7th Educational Survey)

2.18 Diploma teacher trainees in a DIET in Tamil Nadu

2.19 BEd. (English) students at EFL University, Hyderabad, are trained to make low-cost teaching aids.

Institutes of Educational Training (DIET) or private colleges to Diploma level. The educational background of trainee teachers varies greatly from state to state, however. Teachers at upper primary and secondary (Class 5 and above) usually have better qualifications.

In some states, the majority of teachers in Class 1 have a proficiency in English which has proved to be too low to be measured on the CEFR.

According to Cambridge Assessment, the testing body of Cambridge University, UK, the recommended minimum language requirement for an English teacher is CEFR B1. However, that is below the level expected by an undergraduate student studying in English, which is usually taken to be C1.

In 2009, the British Council was asked by the Tamil Nadu government to test the speaking skills of a group of upper primary teachers prior to a training programme. The teachers were required to have a BA or equivalent in English and to have undergone earlier training, so the group cannot be regarded as representing the general range of teachers. Most of the group reached the B1 threshold, but few reached C1.
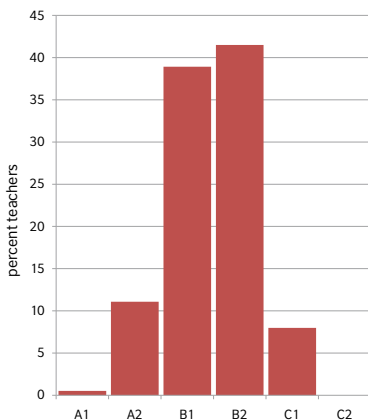
2.20 The spread of spoken English proficiency levels of selected Class 5 teachers in Tamil Nadu
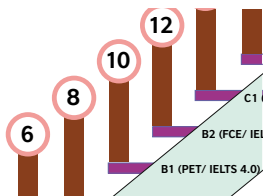
Schools
Trends and issues

» India has significantly improved enrolment in primary schools, though actual attendance is less impressive in some states.

» The focus has now moved to improve enrolment in secondary schools.

» The the passing of the 'Right to free and compulsory education' act in 2009 represents a landmark in Indian education, but implementing its provisions will take time.

» There is considerable concern about the quality of learning that takes place in government schools.

» Private schools have multiplied in India and a recent notable trend has been for poor families, in both rural and urban areas, to send their children to private schools. Part of their motive is to allow their children to acquire English.

» Many state governments are responding by offering English-medium provision themselves, and providing English lessons from Class 1.

» There is a danger that the rush to English in primary schools will widen the social gap in educational outcomes.

SECTION 2: BEYOND SCHOOL

The main function of schools is to prepare children for life when they leave. For the more academically oriented, that means preparing for university or further study. For others, it usually means preparation for employment. This section looks at the role of English in both higher education and the workplace.

Expanding and improving quality

The government mantra for higher education in India is 'expansion, inclusion and excellence'. Low standards of English may prove an obstacle to all three.

The higher education system in India is a hierarchical one in terms of prestige: at the apex are 'Institutions of National Importance' (INIs), including the IIScs, IITs, IIMs, and NITs. These are intended to be globally competitive institutions. There were 13 such institutions in 2006, but the number had expanded to around 50 by 2009. Below these INIs are the Central Universities – around 30 in 2009, and below that the State Universities – around 250.

However, the vast majority of graduates in India study in one of the many thousands of 'affiliated colleges', an increasing number of which are private institutions (over 75% engineering and medical colleges, and 66% of management and teacher training colleges, according to the *Economic and Political Weekly*, 2010). Since student enrolment in these disciplines has recently surged, this represents a significant growth of the private sector in higher education.

Students in these colleges sit exams set by the universities. This system of affiliation, established by the British on the then model of London University, is regarded as one of the main obstacles to achieving excellence. Less than 2% of higher education institutions award their own degrees.

Indian universities barely register in world
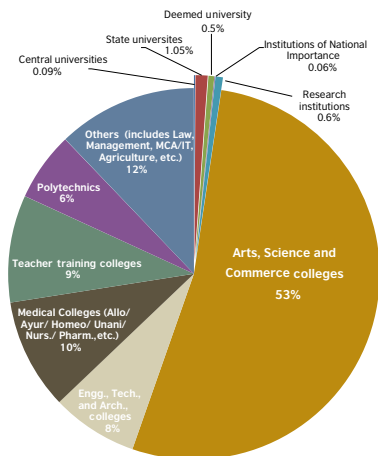
2.21 Where students are enrolled. Most students graduate from affiliated colleges, not autonomous universities. (Selected Educational Statistics, 2006–2007)

rankings of academic quality: only two appear in the *QS/Times Higher Education* top 200, and (a different) two in the 'Top 500' world ranking published by Shanghai Jiao Tong University, China.

FOREIGN UNIVERSITIES

Restrictions on foreign universities operating in India are likely to be relaxed and several are already planning to open facilities or joint programmes. Imperial College, London – one of the highest-ranking world universities, which helped set up IIT-Delhi in the 1960s – may be one of the first. But its Rector, Roy Anderson, explained:

*At the moment it would not be possible to establish joint degree programmes with Indian universities because they lack a research environment … India has world-class research facilities either within industry or government institutes. But, it is important to note that over 90% of the world's basic discoveries come from universities.(*The Times of India, *7 September 2009)*

ACHIEVING INTERNATIONAL EXCELLENCE

The globalisation of knowledge, and of higher education itself, is contributing to an increasing use of English as the medium of education. In Europe, for example, where a single European Higher Education Area has been created to encourage mobility of students and teachers between countries, there has been a notable shift to English-medium teaching.

Anders Flodström, head of the Swedish National Agency for Higher Education, for example, has predicted that all university education in Sweden will be delivered through English within 10–15 years. In the Netherlands, 34% of all programmes in higher education are in English, in Denmark 21%. Most English-medium programmes in European universities have begun since the year 2000, and are still most common in engineering and technology.

The MHRD plans a massive expansion of higher education – setting a goal of 30% participation by 2020. At the same time, it wishes to de-recognise many 'deemed' universities. How it can do this whilst ensuring improvement in quality remains to be seen.

2.22 The career of Venkatraman Ramakrishnan, who was awarded a Nobel Prize for chemistry in October 2009, illustrates the international nature of science. Born in Tamil Nadu, BSc from M S University in Baroda, Gujarat, PhD from Ohio University, post-doctoral study at Yale, now a senior scientist at the MRC Laboratory of Molecular Biology in Cambridge, UK, his research was partly conducted at Brookhaven National Laboratory in the US.

The Indian education system is able to produce Nobel-winning scientists, but the majority of students perform at a low standard compared with other countries. Low proficiency in English among both students and teachers may be one of the reasons. for this. (AP Photo/Alastair Grant)

Our students are going to France to study nuclear physics – in English. – Vice-Chancellor, Delhi University

English in the universities

Do students have good enough English to allow them to study successfully in university? Or is this one of the major causes of low performance?

Students seeking to study in an English-speaking country are required to have a proficiency level in English of at least C1 on the CEFR – this equates to about Band 6.5 of the IELTS test – one of the most popular tests taken by international students. The C1 level is also regarded as the minimum required for professional employment in any business which uses English as its working language.

There is no data on the proficiency levels of students in Indian universities and colleges. Vice-chancellors and professors, however, even in top-tier institutions, talk of a large skills gap, even at postgraduate level, between the actual level of students and that expected by employers – this suggests a level well below C1 perhaps a distribution like that shown in **2.23c**.

We do have a snapshot of the proficiency range of Indian students taking IELTS (**2.23a**). These students are a self-selected group, most of whom aspire to study at postgraduate level in British or Australian universities, and so might be expected to be better than the general undergraduate intake. Even so, only a third of these students reach the C1 level. IELTS candidates from the Philippines do better than those from India. Although we cannot infer that the overall student population in the Philippines is any better than in

India, this is the kind of distribution that India needs for its overall intake, if acceptable international standards in higher education are to be achieved.

THE IMPACT ON THE QUALITY OF LEARNING

Where teachers and/or students have a proficiency level below C1 in any of the four skills, quality of education will suffer. The C1 level allows a speaker, or writer, to communicate with the precision required in higher studies, and to fully participate in the discussions and debate which form a necessary part of any quality university classroom. Students who are less proficient will be marginalised and tend to fall back on note-taking and rote learning. This was the analysis made by Henry Whitehead, Bishop of Madras, at the end of the 19th century, (see box, right) and it still applies today.

This is not a peculiarly Indian problem – it now is also observed in Europe, as university courses shift to English-medium. Airey (2009) compared the experience of Swedish students who attended physics lectures in both English and Swedish. He concluded:

When taught in English the students in our study asked and answered fewer questions and reported being less able to follow the lecture and take notes at the same time. Students employed a number of strategies to meet these problems by asking questions after the lecture, changing their study habits so that they no longer took notes in class, reading sections of work before class or – in the worst case – by simply using the lecture for mechanical note taking. (Airey, 2009)

Do students have good enough English to allow them to study successfully in university?
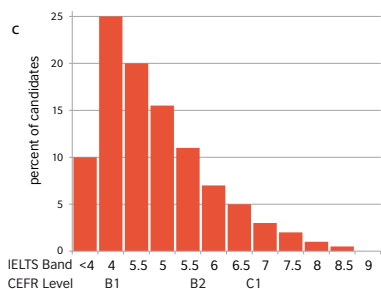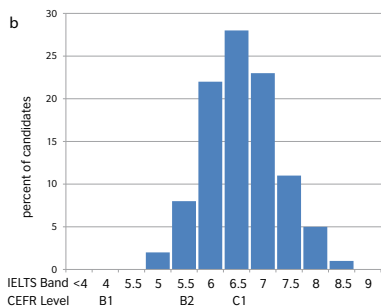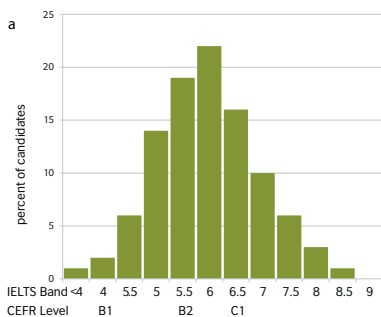
Henry Whitehead (Bishop of Madras), 1890s

It is no exaggeration to say that at least 60 per cent of the students at the various universities ought not to be there at all. They have not got a sufficient mastery of English to warrant their being taught through it advanced subjects. The double burden of mastering their subjects and thinking in a foreign language is far too great a strain on them. It crushes their individuality and power of independent thought and fosters and intensifies one conspicuous fault of Indian mentality, an excessive reliance on the memory. ... before the university examinations it was pathetic to go round the hostel [of Presidency College, Calcutta] and see and hear them preparing for the great ordeal. In each room sat a student Indian fashion on a chair with his legs tucked under him, his body swaying to and fro, his eyes fixed on a notebook, as he repeated over and over again in a droning chant and committed to memory the abstract of a textbook given in his college lectures. A special word was invented for this process: "to by-heart" ...

Many of the tutors that I knew in Calcutta avowedly gave up the attempt to educate and aimed only at enabling as many of their pupils as possible to scrape through the examinations. First class men from Oxford resigned themselves to dictating slowly paraphrases of Milton and Shelley and spelling the long words as they went along. One eminent professor of philosophy openly told his pupils not to read their textbooks, but to get up by heart the notes that he dictated. Another English professor, who was a member of the University Senate and principal of a large college, described to me how he used to study carefully the papers that had been set in philosophy during the last few years, and devote his lectures entirely to supplying answers to the kind of questions which he guessed were likely to be asked on the next occasion.

2.23 Distribution across proficiency bands of IELTS candidates in 2007 (a) in India (b) in the Philippines. The distribution of the overall student population in India may look something like (c). However, it needs to look like (b) if aspirations to 'excellence' are to be met.

English in vocational education

Vocational education has long been a Cinderella in a world in which academic study is more highly valued. Policy documents show growing concern at the vocational–academic divide and a desire to improve provision in vocational and technical education.

English is a vocational skill. It substantially improves labour mobility and improves employment outcomes … Accelerated English learning classes must be included in vocational training curriculums and attempts must be made to incentivize English instruction.

For centuries, Indian craftspeople and artisans have created great architecture and art. But these people acquired their skills mainly informally, and children today are still often born into their future occupations, This has made it difficult to expand skilled trades quickly in India and to regulate them in the ways required by modernity. Vocational education has long been neglected in a world in which academic study is more highly valued. The National Knowledge Commission noted in 2008:

NSS data (61st round 2004–05) indicates that of the individuals in the labour force aged 15–29, only two per cent have received formal vocational training and another eight per cent reported to have received non-formal vocational training. This figure is far higher in developed countries. … A part of the unemployment problem emanates from the mismatch between the skill requirements of the market and the skill base of the job seekers.

The 11th Five-Year Plan envisages a fast expansion of vocational education provision, with special emphasis given to 'last mile employability-related soft skills', which include English:

In late 2009, the government announced plans to establish 10,000 new Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) in rural areas.

At present, many businesses feel they have to remedy deficiencies in the education system through in-house training, and resent the additional cost. However, it is not always clear where responsibility should lie: employers in all countries tend to complain about the literacy and communication skills of school-leavers and graduates. The role of public education is not just to train for jobs, but to create citizens with skills that can be adapted to many career eventualities, and who can exercise their rights and responsibilities – including in their role as consumers – in a democratic society.

Larger Indian businesses are already partnering with government departments to help improve the English and employability skills of both students in colleges and those in Class 10–12. The Delhi branch of the Confederation of Indian Industry, for example, worked with the Municipal Corporation of Delhi to implement a pilot programme in Delhi schools. Many large companies have similar relationships with local colleges, helping ensure that students acquire communication skills before they graduate.

ENGLISH IN THE WORKPLACE

A problem faced by any general-purpose 'English for the workplace' training course is that job-related skills are often specific to context. Each work domain has its own special requirements with regard to communication: there may be particular kinds of reports or forms to be filled in, or perhaps interactions with customers need to conform to a corporate policy. For these reasons, workplace English training is best carried out using materials taken from the workplace itself. In India the main focus seems now to be on the idea of 'English for employability', but the research for *English Next India* has highlighted the equal importance of English skills in career progression – the glass ceiling for non-English speakers who have got their first jobs is very low, even in trades, the retail sector and hotels.

ROLE PROFILING

BPOs face a particular challenge: they need large numbers of proficient speakers of English, but work in a very cost-sensitive market. Role profiling allows employers to identify the minimum level of skill required to carry out a particular job function. For example, **2.24** shows a profile designed by the British Council for a BPO, in which 'listening comprehension' and 'sociolinguistic appropriacy' are required at higher levels than writing. The lower profile shows how the overall requirement for 'spoken interaction' at the B2 level in the CEFR can be further subdivided into separate sub-skills.
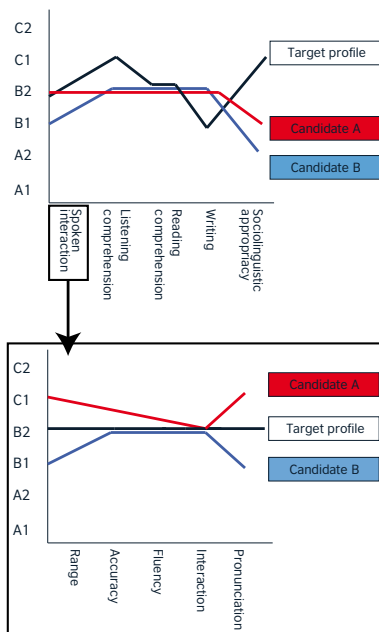
2.24 An example of role profiling using the CEFR, used by the British Council for use in a BPO

Profiling helps recruiters select candidates, but can also be used to audit the skills of existing employees and so identify areas requiring further training.

However, the value of profiling lies partly in the need to make explicit the competencies needed in particular job roles – what an employer imagines is needed is not always what an employee actually finds most crucial in everyday work.

Employability skills

What are the 'employability skills' needed by school-leavers and graduates? Why are employers always complaining that new recruits and candidates lack them?

There are two dimensions to the 'talent pool' crisis in India: first, is the education system producing a sufficient number of graduates? Second, is the quality of those it does produce good enough? Much of the 'talent pool' crisis in India at present relates to the number of graduates who apparently lack 'employability skills'. NASSCOM, the IT-BPO industry organisation, complains about the 'low employability of existing talent with only 10–15% employable graduates in business services and 26% employable engineers in technology services'.

This perceived shortfall needs to be put into perspective. Employers have complained about 'falling standards', or a 'skills gap' in most countries, ever since national education systems were invented. For example, employers make similar complaints in the UK about the employability of graduates seeking work in the IT sector:

It's surprisingly hard to find graduates which have a combination of the technical skills and the right soft skills' … The skills shortfall appears to be worsening … two-thirds of the [employers] panel felt graduates did not have the right skills for business (Silicon.com, 6 September 2009)

There are at least two reasons for this perennial skills shortage. First, a fast-moving and expanding economy needs an ever more skilled workforce, year on year. Any education system struggles to upgrade the level of its students fast enough. Second, the question of employability is not just a symptom of a failing education system: it is also a part of an ongoing debate in all countries about the role of universities and schools, and the respective merits of 'training' versus 'education'. Should schools and universities be training people for specific jobs, or equipping their students with skills which will have a broader and longer-term value? 'Employability skills' fall uneasily between these two categories.

The debate about 'employability skills' in India also reflects the gap between expected social behaviour in a modern, urban society and perceived norms amongst the uneducated, rural classes. Teamlease, India's largest recruitment agency, offers a short course which its chairman, Manish Sabharwal, describes tongue-in-cheek as 'tuck your shirt in, take a bath, shave, and look at me in the eye'.

Many of the 'soft skills' sought after by employers are thus not especially related to the English language, but do relate to the kind of interpersonal skills that more school-leavers and graduates will need as the services sector expands. IT-BPO companies have specific requirements for these skills to be delivered through English, but if the domestic economy (including BPO),

continues to grow as expected, workers will in future need these skills in other Indian languages.

In particular, the ability to switch between languages – to carry out customer-facing duties in one language and internal work (dealing with managers, reading instructions and briefings, filling in forms, attending meetings) in another – will be increasingly in demand. The traditional allocation of English to the workplace and regional language to the private sphere will change.

Many of the better universities now provide co-curricular courses in English communication and in soft skills to ensure that their graduates are employable. The larger employers are also working closely with the universities and colleges which supply their new recruits. But many colleges do not provide such courses, or do not have the qualified staff to do so. This forces students into private sector 'finishing schools' to bridge the gap.

Many employers, however, now follow the maxim that you must 'hire the attitude, and train the skills'. That is, they look for certain character traits and habits which cannot easily be changed by short-term training. Some of these, however, may reflect early education. For example, it is difficult to imagine that children now following the activity-based learning schemes introduced in Tamil Nadu schools will not be more independent and confident learners later in life. 'Ability and willingness to learn' are now two of the most sought-after skills.

What do employers want?

Although most jobs in the corporate sector now require English, many of the 'soft skills' which make graduates employable are not language specific. Typically, employers ask:

- *Are you punctual and dressed appropriately?*
- *Can you work in a team?*
- *Have you a confident, polite manner?*
- *Are you an analytic but creative thinker?*
- *Can you explain ideas patiently and clearly?*
- *Can you handle telephone calls well?*
- *Can you communicate appropriately to other employees who may be more or less senior?*
- *Are you familiar with standard office software?*
- *Are you able to learn new technologies and business processes quickly?*
- *Can you make clear presentations to colleagues?*
- *Can you communicate well to speakers from another culture or social background?*

Most workers in the services sector – whether in offices, BPOs, hotels or shops – need to communicate in at least two different directions: to clients (whether in India or abroad) and within the chain of management (both up and down, and with peers) in their own organisation. Here workers may require:

- *both spoken and written English language skills – can you tell the difference between a manager's request and an instruction?*
- *knowledge of specialist terms within the trade, profession, organisation or relating to legal issues (such as health and safety) requirements*
- *ability to shift appropriately between informal and formal varieties of several languages.*
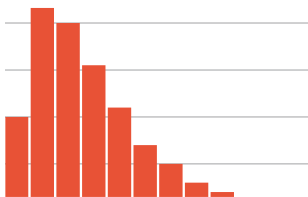
Beyond School
Trends and issues

» Higher education in India is beset by many of the same problems of quality as schools. The mediocrity of most of the sector is to some extent disguised by the high achievement of a small elite.

» An increasing number of colleges are private institutions, but do little more than prepare candidates for exams offered by a small number of awarding universities.

» Standards of English amongst students is thought to be generally too low for effective English-medium learning at this level.

» There are ambitious plans to expand vocational education, and English is earmarked as one of the vocational skills which need to be taught. Little thought seems to have been given to any needs analysis for vocational students, however, or to the question of where suitable teachers will be found.

» Although most graduates are currently regarded by employers as being unemployable, many of the soft skills they require are not specifically related to English.

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Policy implications

English in a development context

Some of the challenges relating to English in Indian education are shared by other countries at a similar stage of economic and social development. Others are probably unique to India.

Improving education is seen as a key ingredient in human and economic development, allowing millions to escape from poverty; population growth to be slowed; and the health and social welfare of ordinary people to be improved.

CAPACITY PROBLEMS

Achieving such goals requires a huge investment in education at all levels, and a shortage of resources is a common problem in development contexts.

In India, however, this is not now the main problem. Several interviewees complained that although they regarded funding and budgets sufficient, they were unable to ensure these resources reached the schools and classrooms. This again is a common problem in development contexts and has several causes.

One is a problem of corruption – which especially plagues projects in relation to infrastructure development, procurement and recruitment.

Innovation may also be hindered by highly bureaucratic procedures in government departments – sometimes themselves a legacy of attempts to make it difficult for corrupt employees to redirect funds and equipment, or designed to provide employment for more people. But such procedures also make it difficult to ensure projects are effectively and quickly delivered. Bureaucratic complexity also reduces transparency and accountability to external stakeholders.

A lack of capacity in managing and delivering large-scale public-sector projects, from policy to local reality, is an even larger problem. Huge projects (in terms of the numbers of children and teachers affected) are typically managed by astonishingly small teams. There is a lack of trained and experienced project managers, of people who can monitor and supervise projects, and of trainers at all levels. These shortages make it very difficult to scale up successful pilot projects to a point where they have significant social and economic impact.

THE ROLE OF NGOS

NGOs play an important role in delivering educational reform partly because, being outside the state bureaucracy, they can create their own, more efficient, systems of project management. Information and experience can flow more freely upwards from practice to senior manager level. Although there is a danger of NGOs pursuing their own agenda, there are many examples in India of good working partnerships between NGOs and government departments. However, the work of NGOs is often poorly coordinated and sometimes government departments see NGOs as a way of outsourcing difficult problems.

POLITICAL WILL

Education in development contexts also often suffers from vagaries of political will – unrealistic public aspirations may be fuelled by politicians' promises and lead to rapid policy switches. Old policies may be abandoned by incoming politicians. There may be undue pressure to make an impact on the electorate before the next election. Such lack of continuity adds to the difficulty of developing and growing an effective education system, and is especially damaging to language education.

In a country like India, where much of the electorate is poorly educated or illiterate, it is difficult to achieve a well-informed public debate about language choice in education. At worst, it may reduce the political will for genuine educational improvement amongst the masses because this would make it more difficult for politicians to 'buy' votes. The fight over mass education is thus also about political culture: electorates who are educated and well informed make different political decisions, and need to be persuaded in different ways from those who are under-educated. In India, access to English also provides access to the national political debate.

LANGUAGE POLITICS

Language politics in developing countries add further to the difficulty of introducing effective educational reform. There may be regional tensions and loyalties surrounding different languages, often related to tribal or other social, religious and ethnic divisions. Many developing countries are former colonies, in which a European language is added to the mix, often as a language of privilege. In former colonies which were not British (such as Francophone or Lusophone African countries), both English and the former colonial language typically fight for position in educational policies.

In multilingual countries, language policy is almost always a contest about power and identity, not just an issue about which forms of education are most effective from an economic or pedagogic point of view. Decisions about the medium of instruction, and which languages are taught, provide an important gatekeeping mechanism – determining who gains access to the best jobs and to future cultural, economic and political power.

TEACHER SUPPLY

Teacher supply is another recurrent problem in developing countries, especially where the population is growing rapidly. The pool of educated adults is small in comparison to the large numbers of children who need to be taught. In some countries this situation is made worse by the impact of HIV/AIDS or conflict.

English teachers tend to be in especially short supply. Anyone who can speak English can usually find a much better-paid job elsewhere in the economy, making both recruitment and retention of English teachers difficult, particularly in rural areas.

Existing English teachers who have spent their careers teaching grammar and literature may not have the skills to teach spoken English – now regarded as the starting point for most English curriculums.

Increasing the amount of English in the curriculum is typically a part of wider educational reforms, in which teachers of other subjects need to be redeployed. Labour laws may require otherwise redundant teachers (of physical education, for example) to be retrained as English teachers.

Teaching English to young learners is a special challenge in development contexts: teachers of younger age groups often have a lower level of education than secondary teachers, and are least likely to have good English language skills.

WHAT IS UNIQUE ABOUT INDIA?

This discussion provides a useful reminder that many of India's challenges with regard to English language education are shared by other developing countries. Indeed, some countries face even greater challenges than India: Cameroon's population of 16 million speak as many languages as in India, but the country has the added complication of two former colonial languages – French and English – and the widespread use of Cameroonian Pidgin English.

What makes India unique is the combination of size and complexity. China is the only developing country which can match India for size – in both population and economy – but it has a different language situation, lacks a colonial legacy related to English (outside Hong Kong) and educational decisions are taken in a different political context. India is also unusual in having built its recent economic growth on human capital, rather than natural resources (e.g. oil) or low-cost labour (manufactured exports).

IS ENGLISH A DISTRACTION?

There is an urgent need in India to improve the quality of education at all levels, and to broaden access to it. English has become the hallmark of a good education in India, for historical reasons connected to the development of the elite classes. But has English now become part of the problem, by creating an unhelpful distraction from more serious underlying issues? Will the demand for universal access to English ultimately lead to a greater inequality in Indian society? These are some of the difficult questions which policy-makers have to confront.

English Next India has unhelpfully uncovered evidence for both points of view. Access to English in Indian society has traditionally been inseparable from access to privilege. Wider access to English is now demanded by employers, parents, lower castes, in rural and urban areas alike.

But there is also considerable evidence that, without care, a greater emphasis on English in education will allow only a few more to benefit, and possibly make the situation of the majority even worse.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

This part of the book identifies some of the key policy issues related to English in India, drawing on the analysis made in earlier sections, and on a debate which a draft edition of the book stimulated amongst delegates at a conference organised by the British Council in Delhi in November 2009. Edited contributions to the *Third Policy Dialogue* are included in this section, and full webcasts of the original contributions can be accessed* at:

http://englishnext.in/0

* Anyone experiencing difficulty in accessing the videos should write to the Head of English and Exams, delhi.enquiry@in.britishcouncil.org

English and the economy

Is India's talent pool running dry? How important is English to the economy and to getting jobs in India today?

Anecdotal evidence suggests that a little English will help maids, drivers and even a street beggar earn more, and that it helps workers find jobs in neighbouring states. But there has been little systematic research on the opportunities that English provides, or on what kind of English such workers might need.

A SHORTAGE OF TALENT?

Surprisingly few large employers complain that there is a critical shortage of talent in India – perhaps reflecting the fact that the total number of jobs in the organised sector has scarcely increased during two decades of economic growth. Employers do, however, complain about the increasing burden of training and warn that if the services sector continues to grow as hoped, even the 'trainable pool' may run dry. The education system, they say, must take responsibility for ensuring entrants to the workforce have good communication skills.

A SHORTAGE OF JOBS

The mismatch between jobs and skills runs two ways: there are probably too few jobs in India requiring English (or indeed higher levels of education) to justify the investment being made in it by individuals, families and government. For example, a recent study (IIPS, 2010) found that unemployment rates amongst young people in Andhra Pradesh were markedly higher amongst those had completed secondary education. Manish Sabharwal, Chairman of the recruitment agency 'Teamlease' provides a possible answer to this puzzle. He argues that there is a missing 'middle' in the job market: the white-collar jobs which require English.

THE GEOGRAPHY OF JOBS

Others, however, point to the important role English plays in finding work in the city, and the magnifying impact of remittances on the education and welfare of rural families. The geographical distribution of jobs is very uneven. English is not just a skill which increases employability – it also helps job-seekers be more mobile.

Sandhya Chintala, NASSCOM
http://englishnext.in/5

We are not looking for trainable candidates as much as we are looking for readily employable candidates. In the next 10 years the anticipated growth for this industry will be in currently untapped verticals like public sector, healthcare, media, utilities, new customer segments and new geographies which will drive up to 80% of incremental growth. Almost 30% of the incremental growth will be addressed by small and medium businesses(SMBs) ... So, how can a few companies look after the talent pool on their own?

Manish Sabharwal, Chairman of the recruitment agency 'Teamlease'

English is like Windows. It is an operating system. Your employment outcomes are higher if your labour mobility is higher. So the unintended consequence of the Baptists [missionaries] going to the North East [of India] is that a migrant from the North East, whether it is Shillong or wherever, gets 8000 rupees a month with me while a migrant from UP and Bihar gets 3500 rupees a month. Why? Because they speak English and they go to the front office. …

There is a missing middle in our job market. The 'hero or zero' market, right? You are either working in the unorganised sector, Rs 3000, or you are working with Infosys at Rs 30,000. What happened to the average skill, Rs 8000 jobs?

Som Mittal, President of NASSCOM

As India aspires to grow 8–9% and integrates with the global economy, the service industry will grow, and the moment you talk about service industry, it is about people interacting with people, and in communication, language becomes important. And that's not only true for people in the organised sector, it is as true for people who are in tourism, for people driving taxis, for people who are guides, for people in hotels. … it could become a hindrance if we didn't have more people able to communicate in English and understand English.

Meera Shenoy, Executive Director of EGMM

The rural youth, especially the poor, are very motivated. If the employer is good, they stay with him for longer. And the other important thing which is now happening is the rural markets are becoming very important. The rural youth know these markets best. … The importance of English is not just the first job – if they use their English in companies like McDonald and Café Coffee Day, then they move quickly up to the next rung of supervisors.

All impact studies show that when the poor get a job, the first thing they do is they retire high cost debt because the moneylender's debt is extremely high and that really keeps them in the vicious circle of poverty. The second thing they do is if that boy or girl is not educated, always the younger brother or sister is educated. They invest in assets like land or a roof above the head and the family gets out of poverty in a sustained manner because versus erratic income for the first time fixed income starts coming in month in and month out and even if the job is in the urban area, he sends back money home.

English in Indian education

Schools and universities now need to develop spoken English skills, but the present curriculum, teaching methods and exams are not set up to deliver this.

The key issues regarding English in government schools are now probably:

1 What is the best age at which to introduce English teaching?

2 Should some subjects be taught through English-medium, and if so, which, and when?

3 What level should be expected at age 14 (now the school leaving age)?

3.1 indicates a possible progression – preparing Class 12 students for university entry, and school leavers at age 14 with basic conversational proficiency as a life skill. In theory, this can be achieved with quality teaching starting in Class 3, or less intensive teaching starting in Class 1. The present reality at Class 8 is shown by **3.2**, which indicates the scale of improvement still needed.

EXAMS AND ASSESSMENT

Many educationists are concerned at the lack of any Indian exam which assesses English proficiency. Professor Rama Mathew, from Delhi University has said:

> I strongly believe that we need an Indian test which can assess our learners' language proficiency at different levels. (Third Policy Dialogue, Delhi, November 2009)

CIEFL attempted to establish NELT (National English Language Test) but found the difficulties insurmountable. Its successor, EFL-U, has now set up the All India English Language Testing Authority, (AIELTA), which expects to trial its first tests in 2010. However, the new AIELTA test will not assess spoken English.

Changes in school assessment in Class 10 and Class 12 will have implications for English. The introduction of continuous
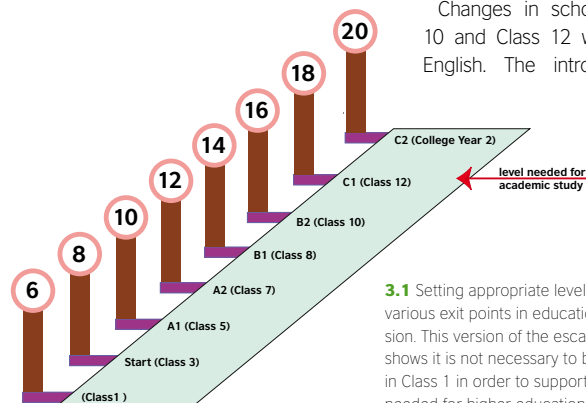
3.1 Setting appropriate levels of English proficiency for various exit points in education is now a key policy decision. This version of the escalator (see also **2.14**, **2.15**) shows it is not necessary to begin formal English teaching in Class 1 in order to support progression to the level needed for higher education.

Proportion of rural children in Class 8 who can read and understand simple sentences in English (ASER 2010)

- 🟥 < 25%
- 🟧 25-50%
- 🟩 50-75%
- 🟩 >75%

Note: Data not collected in areas shaded grey
Map does not indicate definitive boundaries or exact scale
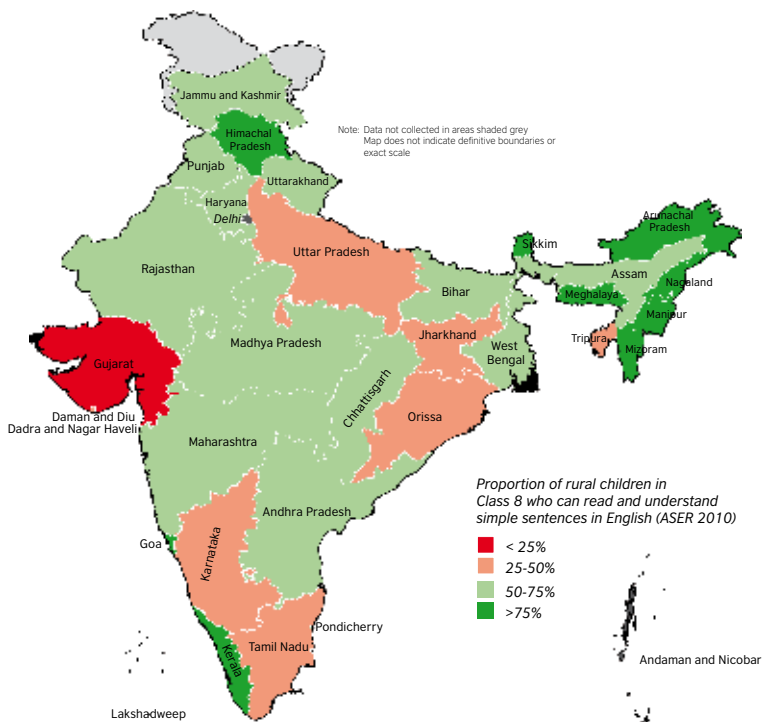
3.2 Percentage of Class 8 children in rural schools who can read and understand easy sentences (ASER, 2010)

assessment in schools in place of Class 10 exams, for example, may provide an opportunity for developing informal, school-based assessment of a student's speaking skills. The intended use of Class 12 exams for university entrance will make it desirable to provide an assessment of English proficiency, in all four skills, to enable colleges and universities to know a student's capacity to study through English. If access to higher education is expanded, as planned, then secondary education may become a major focus for English language learning and testing.

ENGLISH IN HIGHER EDUCATION

English Next India has identified low standards in English as a weakness in Indian higher education. This will be made worse by any expansion in enrolment. Although English courses are now offered by the better institutions, these are too often focused on 'employability' skills rather than study skills.

Unless more university courses are taught in Hindi and regional languages, increased enrolment in higher education also implies an aspiration that at least 30% of the population acquires advanced English skills.

English in multilingual contexts

The three-language formula has long provided India with an educational solution to language diversity. However, it will need to be changed if levels of English proficiency are to be raised without lowering skills in other languages.

The argument over the place of English in Indian education is more heated than ever. Educationists and development agencies have long advised the use of the child's mother tongue as the medium of instruction in primary education. Rarely in educational circles has expert consensus on any matter been so consistent, over such a long period of time. A meeting of experts convened by UNESCO in 1951, for example, concluded:

> we think all children should at least begin their schooling in their mother tongue, and that they will benefit from being taught in their mother tongue as long as possible

Though they also wryly note:

> Since the desire to learn the second language may be very great – enough to make the child or his parents impatient with this approach – it may be wise during the first or second year to supplement the major teaching in the mother tongue by a small amount of oral initiation into the second language.

Recent research has confirmed the importance of sustained learning in a first language, suggesting that children studying through English medium can suffer from an academic disadvantage for at least seven years – even though they may achieve conversational proficiency in just two years.

A MULTILINGUAL APPROACH

No country can now avoid the need to nurture language diversity. It is an important factor in ensuring inclusive education, but is also an increasingly important economic resource. NCERT's current curriculum frameworks encourage the idea of multilingual education in India:

> The aim of English teaching is the creation of multilinguals who can enrich all our languages; this has been an abiding national vision.

However, the debate in India seems still too focused on the question of *which* language should be the medium of education, rather than on how to create bilingual children.

Developing a multilingual competence is not just a matter of acquiring linguistic skills. It is also about the development of communities and maintaining social cohesion through a period of rapid social change. Too often, school education creates a divide between parents and children, and a loss of traditional community values and indigenous knowledge. Some of the work now being done in tribal communities – such as in Orissa and Andhra Pradesh – may offer new bilingual approaches in classrooms which can be adapted elsewhere in India.

Professor Usha Dutta, NCERT
http://englishnext.in/6

English does not stand alone. It needs to find its place along with other languages in India so that the languages spoken by children strengthen English learning and teaching.

Secondly, I think it also has to be seen in relation to other subject areas because treating English separately has created a lot of problems in the Indian schools. A language-across-the-curriculum perspective is of relevance to primary education. We need to integrate it with the teaching of other subject areas like mathematics, environmental science, art education, etc..

Meera Shenoy, Executive Director of EGMM
http://englishnext.in/7

I found actually it made no difference whether it was an English school or a vernacular school. The language was the same, the communication levels were the same, reading and writing was the same.

Chetan Bhagat, Author
http://englishnext.in/8

I always say Hindi is like the mother, English is like the wife, and you can love both. Just don't ask who you love more – ever.

Professor Ajit Mohanty, Zakir Husain Centre for Educational Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University
http://englishnext.in/9

English is gradually being moved to Grade 1. Regardless of the fact that it has been shown in India … that it isn't required. It's more … Ministers of Education competing with each other to cater to the popular demands – the uninformed choices of people.

Multilingualism in India is not just a number of languages. It's a way of life, a life in which languages complement each other. Languages are porous; they move into each other. As a result, you need multiple languages. Therefore, education should become multilingual in India. Develop mother tongue competence and then develop English at a later point in time to have better English and faster learning of English

English teaching cannot be monolingual. … In multilingual societies, multiple languages can be used to communicate in the classroom … it is perfectly all right to use a child's mother tongue, to use the child's languages in the classroom. … it's necessary to use a multilingual method of teaching of English in the classroom where children are encouraged to think about languages and that reflection, that awareness of languages or metacognitive or metalinguistic skill is what makes language teaching more effective. … it's not a question of how many languages we have, it's a question of whether there is an adequate methodology to inculcate that multilingual competence in each child.

English and social aspiration

English is seen by many in India as a means of escape from the confines of their social position and lack of opportunity.

English in India has historically been a key part of the mechanism of exclusion, because of its very unequal distribution in society. Ironically, it is now it is seen, possibly by hundreds of millions of people, as a means of inclusion.

SELF-IMPROVEMENT

In a society where public education has largely failed the masses, self-help plays an important role. The life histories of those who have escaped from poverty often indicate the importance of libraries, and the dictionaries, newspapers and books they contain. With determination, a reading knowledge of English – perhaps enough to fill in forms, and even take an exam – can be acquired outside the classroom.

Speaking skills represent more of a problem. Here the thousands of private institutes providing part-time English courses play a crucial role and often form a supplementary component in the academic career of most students. Unfortunately, this sector is unregulated and very variable in quality.

If there were an Indian test of proficiency in English it would be much easier for both students and employers to evaluate the effectiveness of such language schools.

SOCIAL MOBILITY

In India, social aspiration and a desire to learn English are closely connected – a knowledge of English is an indispensable sign of belonging to the middle class.

However, there are signs that, as more people learn English, the barriers to social mobility will be raised. Where the divide used to be between those who knew English and those who did not, social stigma will shift to the *kind* of English someone speaks.

Although the focus has so far been on English, social mobility in Indian society now also requires some knowledge of Hindi, and an understanding of the norms of code-switching and mixing popularly known as 'Hinglish'. For those in non-Hindi speaking parts of the country, this represents a further barrier, but it indicates how the growth of English in India has not been at the expense of Hindi.

IS INDIAN SOCIETY BECOMING TOO ENGLISH?

There is concern amongst some commentators that the growing middle classes are becoming too anglicised and westernised, losing their distinctive 'Indianness'. This is sometimes described as the tension between the identities represented by 'India' and 'Bharat'.

As the ranks of Indian English speakers are swelled by new arrivals from vernacular-medium schools, it is inevitable that varieties of Indian English will continue to evolve as will social attitudes towards them.

Nandan Nilekani, Chairman, Unique Identification Authority of India and co-founder, Infosys Technologies Ltd
http://englishnext.in/10

I believe English is about access, it is one of the tools of access that we need to provide all our people. I have always advocated the teaching of English to everybody so that they get access to modern society. … English has been limited to a few people, and people who have not learned English have been denied a chance to participate in society, because a lot of our education, a lot of our jobs, are in this English-speaking world. … If you really want inclusive growth, part of inclusive growth is making English access ubiquitous.

Chetan Bhagat, Author
http://englishnext.in/11

One of the big uses of my books in small town India is that of using it as a tool to learn English. I was invited to a talk in Bastar, a backward area ten hours' drive from the nearest airport of Raipur. I asked them 'who reads Chetan Bhagat in Bastar?' They said 'tribal kids, they use your books to learn English'. It shows you the hunger. For my recent book, we did a round of simplification editing, so that the book is more accessible to Indians. Of course, critics in India hate me for it. But that's what critics do anyway, and if I am getting a chance to aid transforming a young person's life, I am not going to pass up on that.

Madhav Chavan, President and CEO of Pratham Education Foundation
http://englishnext.in/12

There is something about the way you do business which comes from your own earth, your own soil, your own wisdom, which is carried in your own language. I see a lot of people in the urban Indian population, young people, who actually have no roots whatsoever. …they really don't know India and who the rest of India is, what they say and why they say it. They have completely lost the Indian idiom. Which is not a good thing to happen. So, while English is a desirable thing to have, we must ask this question as to whether India's first language is going to be English, or second language or third language or is it a language of choice whenever you want it. … I am afraid sometimes, that India is so dominated by people who can speak English and who cannot speak any other language. I don't mind if it is dominated by people who speak two or three languages.

We are too busy being flat with the rest of the world. Of course, you can go to New York and speak all the English you want – American English. But when you deal in India, to make your Indian population comfortable, I think it is possible for corporate India to speak Indian English, or Hinglish, and say 'this is who I am'.

Managing change

One of the biggest challenges is how to introduce and manage a major innovation such as English in primary schools, reconciling the tensions which often exist between the needs of different stakeholders.

Making change happen in several millions of classrooms, as is required in India, cannot be accomplished by following a single or simple recipe: contexts, cultures and histories across India are too diverse. But all successful change in language education involves three principles:

1 *It requires a partnership between all stakeholders*. Stakeholders include all parts of the education system (from school principals to exam boards), parents, community leaders, politicians and employers. In a development context, there often exists a bewildering array of stakeholders and identifying them and ensuring they become enthusiastic about a change project may be a challenge.

2 *Continued support over time*. Many unsuccessful projects have failed to support teachers, schools and communities after the initial investment or training. Implementation takes time, and obstacles and needs change as a project develops.

3 *Recognition that teachers possess important experience*. Any training programme needs to recognise that stakeholders – especially teachers – have knowledge and experience which will be crucial to the project's success. Positioning them as unknowledgeable is likely to lead to failure. They need to be made partners.

THE PROBLEM OF SCALE

It is difficult enough to make change happen on a small scale – even in a single school. A far bigger challenge is how then to scale it up. Manish Sabharwal observed, in the *Third Policy Dialogue*, that what works in a pilot may not work on a large scale without a redesign:

> A baby and a dwarf are both small but the baby is going to grow and the dwarf is going to stay there. The difference between a baby and a dwarf is not in the food, it is in DNA, it is in componentisation, temporisation, standardisation, human capital investments, and technology investments.

TIMESCALES

The project to create a population of English speakers is a long-term one which will take several generations. It took the northern European countries, where the majority of the adult population can now speak English, 50–60 years to reach this stage.

NGOs have demonstrated how parents, siblings and extended families play a crucial role in improving educational attainment in India. This intergenerational process shows that continuity of political will and investment needed is to achieve universal access to English. A vital ingredient of success is patience.

3.3 The introduction of Activity Based Learning (ABL) in Class 1–4 has transformed classrooms in Tamil Nadu.

Som Mittal, President of NASSCOM
http://englishnext.in/13

One the things that scares me is how are we going to scale our programmes? Are we going to tweak our system or are we going to disrupt our system? I think given the scale of the issue and given the opportunity that exists, we need to disrupt the system. … We sometimes worry that this country is becoming a country of pilots. It's good. Those pilots are good. But then how are you going to disrupt the process … if we have to make a large-scale change, all of us collectively have to find ways of getting that access

Martin Wedell, Director of International Development at the School of Education, University of Leeds, UK
http://englishnext.in/14

It's a big challenge for a teacher to move from the familiarity of a more transmission-based classroom to the much more unpredictable world of being a facilitator. … the transition has often been thought to be: 'Okay. It's just a matter of training. We just need to train the teachers'. Training them appropriately would be hard enough, but … there are also invisible changes that need to take place in many minds if teachers are going to be supported to make that transition. The changes to societal assumptions about what a good teacher is, what the classroom should be like, and how good learners behave…. I would say that it really represents a professional culture change.

Afterword

Throughout India, there is an extraordinary belief, amongst almost all castes and classes, in both rural and urban areas, in the transformative power of English. English is seen not just as a useful skill, but as a symbol of a better life, a pathway out of poverty and oppression. Aspiration of such magnitude is a heavy burden for any language, and for those who have responsibility for teaching it, to bear. The challenges of providing universal access to English are significant, and many are bound to feel frustrated at the speed of progress. But we cannot ignore the way that the English language has emerged as a powerful agent for change in India. Its impact has already been felt in government policies, in new electoral dynamics, and a whole new sector of the economy that has provided an engine of economic growth. This force needs to be co-opted in whatever ways possible to improve the lives of the hundreds of millions of Indians who remain in poverty and social exclusion.

India has a long experience of managing language diversity, and a theme of this book has been the importance of bringing minority languages into the mainstream. How can the benefits of English be enjoyed without damaging the potential that India's multilingualism brings, as a source of unique identity in a globalised world, of cultural richness, and an important future economic resource?

This is a challenge recognised by an increasing number of countries – not least in Europe. If India follows this path, it will find many overseas friends happy to share experience, and who will look to India for inspiration. India can play a significant role in developing the international agenda created by the growing use of English as a global language.

Key sources

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NCERT
*National Council of Educational Research
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Apex body for curriculum development.

Acts as a research organisation dedicated
to education reform and the modernisation
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NCTE
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ABBREVIATIONS

Social Activists and Writers

Chandra Bhan Prasad, Dalit Ideologue
Meena Kandasamy, Writer and Social Activist
Gurucharan Das, Writer
Mark Tully, Writer and Broadcaster

Schools and Colleges

Shyama Chona, Principal, Delhi Public School (DPS)
Dilip Bera and children in Baradabar Jeleypar village school, West Bengal
Government Higher Primary School Hosakere Halli, Bangalore
Government Higher Primary School, Mallathahalli, Bangalore
PSBB School, KK Nagar, Chennai
Nungambakkam Girls High School, Chennai
Hindu Senior Secondary School, Chennai
Corporation Primary School, Chennai
Parikrama Foundation School, Bangalore
Government College of Education for Women, Coimbatore
Municipal Middle School, Padmavathipuram Thirupur
K.S.C. Boys Government. Higher. Secondary School, Tamil Nadu
Saradha College of Education
Panamarathupatti Higher Secondary School, Salem
China Kondalampatti Primary school, Tamil Nadu
Senguthapalayam Middle School, Erode, Tamil Nadu
Kavinadapadi Girls Higher Secondary School, Erode, Tamil Nadu

The review team in India and UK

Uma Raman, Head Skill Enhancement, HCL Technologies, BPO Division
Maya Menon, Director, The Teacher Foundation
Amol Padwad, President, English Language Teachers' Association of India (ELTAI) and Head, Dept of English, J.M. Patel College
Vijeta Arya, Training Executive, Orange Business
Philida Schellekens, Consultant and Researcher, The Schellekens Consultancy Services

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ASER	Annual State of Education Report
BPO	Business process outsourcing
CAE	Certificate in Advanced English
CBSE	Central Board of Secondary Education
CEFR	Common European Framework of Reference
CIEFL	Central Institute for English and Foreign Languages (Now EFL-U)
CIIL	Central Institute of Indian Languages
CISCE	Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations
CPE	Certificate of Proficiency in English
DIET	District Institutes of Education Training
DISE	District Information System for Education
ELT	English language teaching
EFL	English as a foreign language
EFL-U	English and Foreign Languages University
ESOL	English for speakers of other languages
FCE	First Certificate in English
IANS	India-Asian News Service
IAS	Indian Administrative Service
IELTS	International English Language Testing System
IGNOU	Indira Gandhi National Open University
IT	Information technology
IIM	Indian Institute of Management
IIS	Indian Institute of Science
IIT	Indian Institute of Technology
ITES	Information Technology Enabled Services
ITI	Industrial Training Institute
KET	Key English Test
MHRD	Ministry of Human Resources Development
NCAER	National Council for Applied Economic Research
NCERT	National Council of Educational Research and Training
NCEUS	National Commission for Enterprises in the Unorganised Sector
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NIT	National Institute of Technology
NUEPA	The National University of Educational Planning and Administration
PET	Preliminary English Test
PROBE	Public Report on Basic Education in India
SSA	Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan

FIGURES AND TABLES

David Graddol is a British applied linguist, well-known as a writer, broadcaster, researcher and consultant on issues relating to global English. He is the Managing Director of The English Company (UK) Ltd and Managing Editor of linguistics books and journals for Equinox Publishing. David is a joint editor of the journal English Today, and is a member of the editorial boards of several academic journals, including Language Problems and Language Planning and Visual Communication.

David Graddol researched and wrote *The Future of English?* for the British Council in 1997 which helped establish a new agenda and framework for understanding the international development of English. In 2006, he produced a second landmark report for the British Council called *English Next*.

The British Council published *The Future of English?* and *English Next* by David Graddol in 1997 and 2006 respectively. *The Future of English?* addressed the roles and importance of English in the world and made reasoned extrapolations as to its future developments. *English Next* drew attention to the speed of the change and considered the policy implications and impact of such a change.

English Next India examines the complex nature of English in both the education and employment sectors in India and aims to set out an agenda for debate. David Graddol analyses demographic and economic trends and suggests how they may influence language policies that will impact on India's future.

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