

Substandard Status of Hindi in Competitive Examinations in India: Cause and Remedy

Sandeep Kumar Sharma, Ph.D. Scholar & Dr. Sweta Sinha
Indian Institute of Technology Patna, India
=====

Abstract

In India, from the competitive examinations' point of view, Hindi and other Indian languages are placed at a substandard position in the curriculum because marks obtained in the Indian language paper is not included in the determination of the final merit list and is only considered for qualifying to enter the competition. Language policies and planning helped English to become as a dominant and hegemony language over and above all Indian languages. This process obstructed and affected the growth and quality of indigenous languages in the field of education. After independence from the British Rule, it was because of various changes in the socioeconomic development and education of science and technology, English evolved and established itself as a standard language in different streams of education. Candidates who apply for jobs may be asked to qualify in Hindi or other Indian languages to enter the main examinations in popular employment examinations. The same system seems to be followed for admission to many educational institutes across India. Because of this Hindi curriculum remains unchanged and teachers do not get opportunity to improve their teaching quality. As a result the role of teacher in imparting knowledge and language use is reduced. To break this vicious cycle in the existing system, the status of Hindi and other Indian languages should be changed in a way that can provide the teachers with ample opportunities to teach and improve. For the improvement of Hindi in the existing educational system the competitive examinations must include the marks obtained in the Indian language papers so as to attract serious attitude. It is not easy to change the attitude of the learners right away; however, with remedial steps the change can at least be initiated.

Keywords: Hindi evaluation system, Indian language status, teaching and learning of Indian languages, language policy

1. Introduction

Many languages are spoken in India. The official language of the Indian Union is Hindi with English as the associate official language for the Central Government, along with twenty more languages in various states of India. Hindi has the largest number of speakers in India (Census, 2001). Despite having a majority of speakers it has less prestige in comparison to English language in general. India has over half of its population below the age of 25 and more than 65% below 35, and some 41 % below 18. These young people just do not bother to care enough to assert their linguistic allegiance and their loyalty is driven by job market. (Das 2014) Behind the flourishing of English language is its widespread acceptance in the prevalent system of Indian education. Kumar (2009) tries to examine the socio- cultural and multilingual realities of post- independence investigating Hindi in the context of these realities. Through his book, he investigates the functional use of Hindi in various domains. However, it will not be incorrect to say that in India, English is accepted as a medium of instruction in different streams of education. In this context the improvement of Hindi language and its acceptance as a medium of instruction at all the levels of education will change the perception about Hindi and will also help maintain its prestige in different sectors of private and government institutions.

2. Status of Hindi in Educational Institutes

It is a well- known fact that in the matter of culture and language, India has a diversified setting. These socio- cultural background affects teaching/ learning situation. Education is the door to the wider world because all the culture, moral, social, spiritual and aesthetic values are inculcated in the younger generation through education. Education is the most important input for the development of individuals, society and nation. Language plays an important role for the transaction of these elements between the teacher and the taught. But even Hindi speaking parents try to send their children to English medium schools where English is the primary medium of instruction and Hindi just remains as a secondary subject to fulfill the formality of the curriculum. And this should not come as a surprise. According to (Das 2008:49) it cannot be denied that what stood at the very root of economic success has been the availability of an inexhaustible skilled English- proficient workforce. The teaching in school and colleges has become stereotyped and exam- oriented. (Gupta 2004: 22)

In addition, the methods of teaching Hindi adopted mostly the verbal method of instruction. Studies of Verma (1971) could be easily adopted, but teaching Hindi continues to follow the oral method in classroom. Language laboratory is an important tool to learn Hindi but it is only a dream. Because of high cost it is not possible to establish language lab at the primary and secondary levels education. The teachers are lacking in skills and capacities to generate interest among their students. Proper skills in Hindi language are absent in students who struggle with the pronunciation of Hindi language and always make mistakes due to lack of vocabulary in Hindi subjects. The evaluation system does not measure all the aspects of Hindi language and students just pass the examination. Educational institutes - primary, secondary, or higher secondary - use English. Hindi is not given any role or prestige in the education system.

3. Status of Hindi in Employment Examination in India

Hindi language has substandard status in different employment examinations which are conducted by the Central Government of India. In different departments of the central government and state governments (Hindi speaking states), it is mandatory to work using Hindi language. So, there are a few posts like Hindi Officer, Hindi Translator, Hindi Assistant, Manager (Official Language) in different departments and units of Central / State governments in which Hindi is used. The syllabus for government examinations is framed properly as per the need for these examinations. The opportunities have increased manifold with the advent of private sectors like TV and Radio channels and launch of Hindi versions of established magazines / newspapers but this is not the same case in popular employment examinations for positions in Indian government. There are some popular employment examinations organized by central government in India annually but only a few of them offer Hindi medium. The central government conducts some popular employment competitions like **SSC, Bank, Railway, LIC/GIC, Defense**, etc. in which the role Hindi is limited,

- SSC – Hindi Translator, Hindi Officer
- Bank – Gramin Bank , Language Officer
- Competitions like – Assistant/ Stenographer / Typist

In comparison to the Union Government, the provincial (Hindi speaking belt) employment examinations offer Hindi medium in their examinations. Each year several state governments conduct a few employment examinations in which Hindi as a subject is placed according to the

vacancy position. In the rush of global development, the competitive examination authorities frame their syllabus recognizing and identifying with the hegemony of English language in every examination. In general, these examination organizers frame their question papers in Hindi parallel to English so that candidates understand the meaning of the question easily.

So, although Hindi is spoken widely in India and also it is the official language of central government, the examinations that are conducted by the central government follow the hegemony of English language where mostly English is included in the syllabus of the competitive examinations for jobs in different sectors of government and private employment examinations. Hindi is included in examinations which are intended to fill positions that require knowledge of Hindi.

4. Challenges and Ways Ahead: Cause and Remedy

Hindi and other Indian languages face this challenge since the time the British came to India. The widespread use of English meant the spreading of English ways of thinking. English then tended to displace the functions of other languages and even displaced the language itself (Baker 2011: 89). In (Radhakrishna et. al. 2006) the authors try to discuss various issues that pose a challenge in Hindi medium education including government policies and mass perception with respect to Hindi despite 60 % of the people speaking this language. We live in a country where people see education as the means to climb the social and economic ladder. The main cause is the perception of the people, especially those belonging to the middle and upper classes, who expect that their children should get the best education and so they conclude that it is possible only through English medium schools, where Hindi has substandard position in comparison to other subjects. Suggesting methods to enrich Hindi in his book, Kochhar (2006: 319) writes that “It is essential that Hindi should be enriched to meet successfully its delicate and diverse assignments. The Hindi that is needed is not the regional language of the Hindi speaking states but a language which should be enriched by the contributions made by the different languages and which would ultimately become the real link language of the country”.

There is no skill based teaching provided in Hindi language. Due to lack of such skills, a teacher is unable to develop interest in his/her students in the subject beyond the levels of primary and secondary education. So, students never pay full attention to the Indian languages

and they study these only to pass the examination and not to develop their expertise. In employment examinations such as for jobs in banks, there is no use of Hindi although workers in this sector communicate more frequently with common people from rural areas.

The following points indicate the challenges in the development of Hindi in the education system and in popular employment examinations:

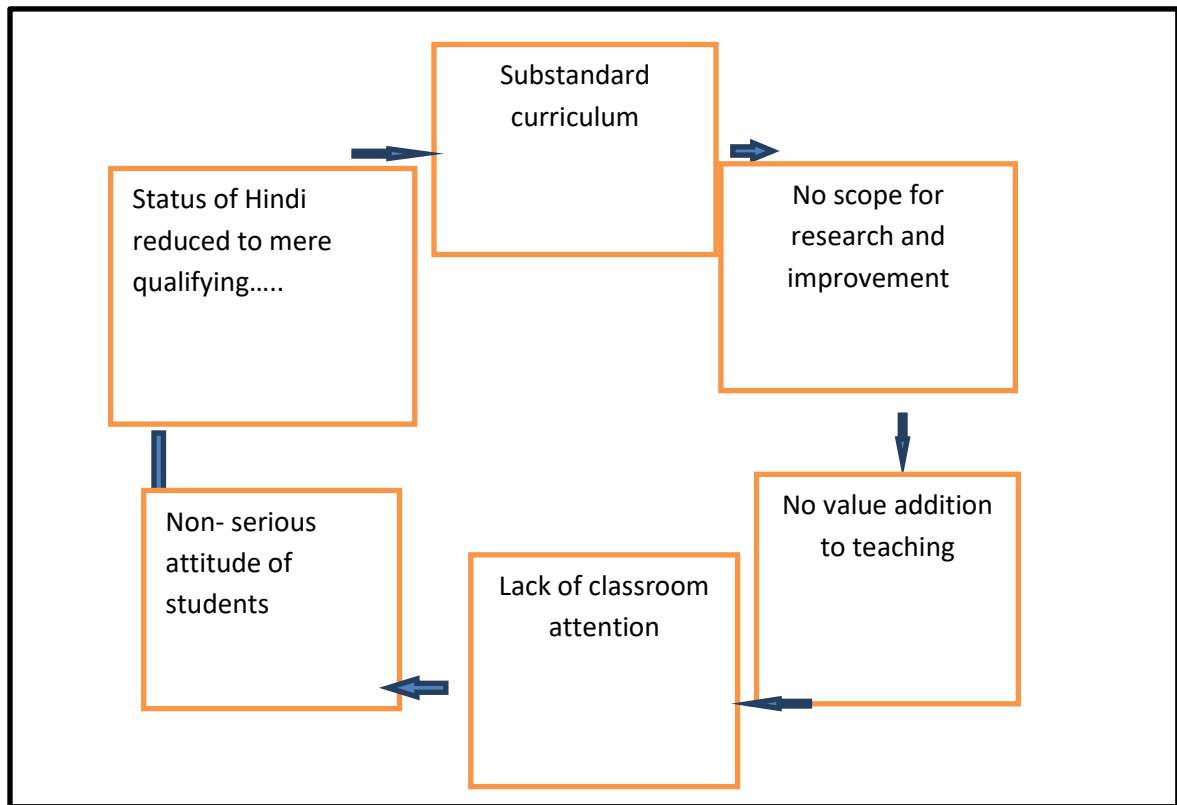
- Perception of assumed superiority of English language
- Lack of skill based learning
- Medium of instruction is English in popular employment sector
- Less attention paid by government on language teaching
- Improper curriculum of Hindi subject in the education system
- Student attitude regarding the Hindi subject

In reality, the number of Indian languages used in the school has decreased over the period of time due to the overlapping of the English language. Trends in society demand greater attention to English-oriented subjects and medium of instruction. In the race for globalization every sector follows the English language as the *lingua franca*.

Following points on the remedy may be considered to establish a proper place for the Hindi language in the education system to improve the status of Hindi employment examinations,

- Perception should be changed about Hindi language
- Medium of instruction must be in the mother tongue
- Proper attention of the government on Hindi language education
- Curriculum should be changed effectively
- Hindi should be given importance in every sector of education and employment
- In the context evaluation, help the students to change their view about Hindi language
- Every sector of the education must arrange some specific time for remedy program
- Strengthening of the scheme for training and research in functional Hindi

Figure 1- Vicious cycle representation: Cause and Effect of Reduced status of Hindi in employment examinations in India



5. Conclusion

Hindi is used by the majority of people in India. It is also the Official Language of the Union of India. But due to the hegemony of English language Hindi occupies a substandard position in the Indian society. Ravel (2006) reiterates the importance of language as the primary medium of communication. Language is very crucial to the whole process of communication. The perception of people that best education is possible only through English medium schools and institutions needs to change. People perceive English as primary and Hindi and other Indian languages secondary languages. This concept is rooted in every sector of life and economic activity, etc. -- it may be private, academic, or administrative system. In India Hindi language has substandard status in different employment examinations conducted by the Central Government of India. In different departments of the central government, as well as state governments (Hindi speaking states), it is mandatory to work using Hindi language. So, there are a few posts like Hindi Officer, Hindi Translator, Hindi Assistant, Manager (Official language) in different departments and units of Central / State governments in which Hindi is included in the

syllabus for government examinations. For the improvement and elevation of Hindi in the existing educational system, selection of candidates must include the marks obtained in the language papers in the competitive examinations in order to attract serious attitude towards Hindi learning and use in the education system. It is not easy to change the attitude of the learners right away; however, with suitable remedial steps the change can at least be initiated.

References

- Baker, Collin. (2011). *Foundations of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*. USA: Mc Naughton & Gunn Ltd.
- Das, A. K. (2008). "Role of English Language in Indian Economic Development". *Language in a Global Culture: bridge or Barrier?* Bangkok: Ramkhamhaeng University Press. Pp 49- 56.
- Das, A.K. (2014). "The Linguistic Division in India: a latent Conflict?" In *Linguistic Conflicts*. 21.
- Gupta, Pratibha (2004). *Socio- linguistic Constraints in Teaching English*. New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company.
- Kumar, Uday (2009). *Status of Hindi in India*. Read worthy Publications Pvt. Ltd. USA.
- Kochhar, S. K. (2006). *Pivotal Issues in Indian Education*", New Delhi: Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd.
- Radhakrishna, S., Ramdaat, S. and Ambalal, N. (2006). *Hindi Bhasa aur Uski Samasyae*. Jaipur: Children Book House.
- Ravel (2006), *Method of Teaching English*. Ahmedabad: Nirav Publication.
- Verma, (1971). "A Study of Methods and Means of Teaching Hindi", in M B Buch (ed. 1983) *The third survey of research in education*. NCRT. New Delhi.

Sandeep Kumar Sharma
Ph.D. Scholar
skvpsharma@gmail.com

Dr. Sweta Sinha
Assistant Professor of Linguistics
apna1982@gmail.com

Department of Humanities and Social Sciences,
Block 6, Floor 5, Room No. 519/6,
Indian Institute of Technology Patna, Patna 801103, Bihar, India