

Multilingualism in 21st Century India

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Pluralism

Pluralism is defined as ‘a condition or system in which two or more states, groups, principles, sources of authority, etc., coexist.’¹ Pluralism also ‘refers to a society, system of government, or organization that has different groups that keep their identities while existing with other groups or a more dominant group’². It is ‘bahutva’, a widely discussed concept in 21st century India. It speaks of *co-existence* of many religions, cultures, ethnicities, languages etc., in the country. India is a multi-religious, multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-lingual nation. When we talk of multilingual India, it is not mere co-existence of speakers of many languages of different language families. We speak of a country as multilingual by taking into account the number of languages being used there. Mere presence of a greater number of languages will not, I think, make a country multilingual, although this seems to be the most widely accepted belief. What is more important to be a multilingual nation is a greater number of speakers of a language being conversant with other languages used in that country. I think that this is true multilingualism. In India multilingualism means the extent to which different mother tongues have penetrated into the day today life cycle of its citizens. So, multilingualism is not only coexistence of many languages, sharing of different languages, but it is who shares which language in which geographic territory. Understanding the pattern of existence and use of languages in a country helps in understanding the sociolinguistic position of that country better. Indian multilingualism is unique; it has no parallel anywhere in the world.

Languages in India Today

Latest 2011 count of Indian mother tongues/languages informs that Census had raw returns of 19569 mother tongues. After due processing of this raw data, it has arrived at a list of 121 languages. Among them, 22 languages are part of the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution. Rest of the 99 languages are non-scheduled languages. The scheduled languages are spoken by 96.71% and the non-scheduled languages are spoken by 3.29% population of India.

Pan-Indian Languages

If we deeply look at the data on distribution of Indian languages in the states and union territories, only speakers of Hindi are found in all the states and Union Territories. Next to Hindi, it is Urdu speakers who are found in all the states except in the states of the North Eastern Region of the country.

Enumerating Indian Multilingualism

In the beginning of the 20th century itself the Census of India started enumerating, recording and disseminating information on bilingualism from 1901. Till the 1921 Census, the information was collected to know about the ‘knowledge of English’ only, since for governance and education, British India wanted to know about the spread of English. In 1931 and 1941 Censuses the information about ‘Other language in common use’ was also collected, the Census tried to know the ‘name of language’ that the person knows in addition to his or her mother tongue. The subsequent Census in 1941 and 1951 the question was restricted to ‘only Indian language’. Simultaneously, the Indian census data attracted the scholars to study it for insights in to the statistical and fictional aspects of bilingualism. Uriel Weinreich (1957) in his study *Functional Aspects of Indian Bilingualism* considers ‘... the coverage of bilingualism by the census of India is an event of major significance for the study of language contact and perhaps for the sociology of communication in general.’ He treats bilingualism as ‘... the communication bridge between MT groups. He also comes to the conclusion on his study of 1951 census data, that ‘bilingualism is quite unevenly distributed in India.’

The first census after the reorganisation of the States on linguistic lines was held in 1961 and it expanded the scope of the question to ‘any language’ and ‘number of such languages’ to two languages. After studying the 1961 census data on bilingualism F.C. Southworth (1978) in his paper *On the Need for qualitative Data to Supplement Census Language Statistics: Some Proposals Based on Indian Census* recommends collecting of ‘... (1) information on any languages known beyond the second, and (2) information on the distribution of bi/multilingual speakers in terms of the socio-economic structure...comparative information on the patterns of bi/multilingualism in different age groups would be of importance in making predictions about the future of various languages. Data of the kind suggested, correlating patterns of bi multilingualism with other social indices such as age, sex, education and socio-economic status could be obtained ...’.

Information on ‘Other languages’ was collected in the 1971 census. A change in information elicitation reflects the linguistic concerns of the nation at that point of time. This is an official recognition of India as a multilingual nation. Hence, in 1981, information on the number and names of languages known to the person other than his/her mother tongue was collected. It is recorded in ‘...the order in which he/she speaks and understands them best and can use with understanding in communicating with others. He/she need not be able to read and write those languages. It is enough if he/she has a working knowledge of those subsidiary

languages to enable him/her to converse in that language with understanding.’ The Census of India uses same parameters but uses different terminologies to identify the similar concepts. During the year 1981 it is reported as ‘Persons speaking a language additional to the mother tongue’, in 1991 as ‘Persons knowing three languages. The table -1 shows that by the time the 1961 census was conducted nearly 10% of speakers of Indian languages were bilingual. And by the end of 20th century more than 25% of the speakers of Indian languages were multilingual. In the beginning of the 21st century their numbers increased to more than 33%. It means out of 100 Indian language speakers; 33 persons were multilingual in the beginning of the 21st century. Romaine, Suzanne (2002) in ‘Multilingualism’ cites Grosjean (1982) that ‘it is estimated that ‘... probably about half the world's population is bilingual and bilingualism is present in practically every country in the world’. India may inch to this level in the 2031 Census.

Table-1
Multilingualism in 20th Century India

Census Year	National Bilingualism	National Trilingualism
1961	09.70	***
1971	13.04	***
1981	13.34	***
1991	19.44	7.26
2001	24.79	8.51

[*** No trilingualism data]

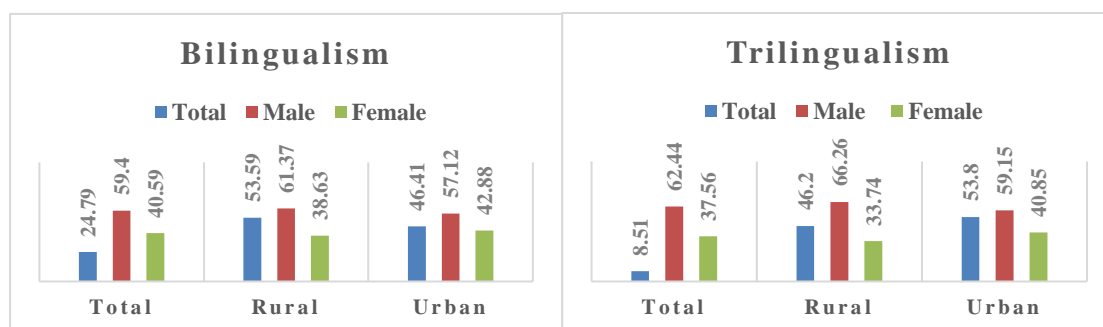
While analysing it is kept in mind that the data collected by the census is on ‘individual multilingualism’ only and it does not fully reflect the multilingualism in the society. From the 21st century in 2001 and 2011 information on the ‘First Subsidiary Language and Second Subsidiary language’ of different mother tongue speakers is collected. These statements ‘first subsidiary language’ and ‘second subsidiary language’ are interpreted as bilingualism and trilingualism for the purposes of analysis in this paper. It may be noted that Indian multilingualism is ‘self-declared’ by the language users and not a result of any evaluation of language competence against any set parameters. The information of population by bilingualism and trilingualism according to the 2001 and 2011 Census are available for researchers to look into the existing pattern of Indian multilingualism. They include all the suggestions of Southworth cited above except data for co-relation of multilingualism to socio-economic status. Additionally, data on rural and urban distribution of multilingualism is also available for researchers. This census information may not be accurate about bilingualism and trilingualism. I think that the present estimate is an underestimation of ground reality. In India, a greater number of people are bilingual and multilingual than reflected by the census.

The Table 2 presents the details of bilingualism and trilingualism from the multilingualism data of Census of 2001, the first Census of the 21st century. The bilingualism (24.79%) is widely spread. More men (59.40%) are bilingual than the women (40.59%). It has to be noted that more rural (53.59%) population is bilingual than the urban (46.41%)

population. So, more rural men (61.37%) are bilingual than urban (57.12%) men. However, more urban women (42.88%) are bilingual than the rural women (38.63%).

Table - 2
Bilingualism and Trilingualism in India: 2001

	Bilingualism			Trilingualism		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
Total	24.79	59.40	40.59	8.51	62.44	37.56
Rural	53.59	61.37	38.63	46.20	66.26	33.74
Urban	46.41	57.12	42.88	53.80	59.15	40.85



In 2001, India had 8.51% trilingual population. They had the knowledge of two more languages in addition to their mother tongue. In this case also like bilingualism, more men (62.44%) were trilingual than the women (37.56%). When it comes to distribution of the trilingualism in rural and urban areas, it is just opposite of the bilingualism. More urban population (53.80%) is trilingual than the rural population (46.20%). However, more rural men (66.26%) are trilingual than the urban men (59.15%). The case is reverse when it comes to trilingualism among women. More urban women (40.85%) are trilingual than the rural women (33.74%).

This paper is an attempt to harvest the 2011 census data on Indian multilingualism from various angles to capture some outstanding aspects of Indian multilingualism.

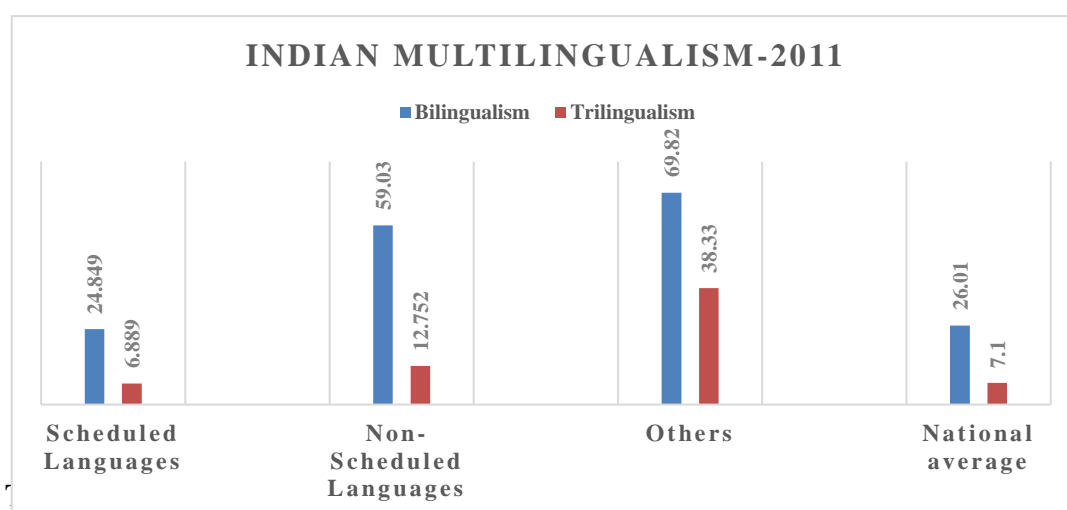
The public, politicians, researchers, scholars and others working on language data of the Census of India are familiar with the widely used terms 'scheduled languages' (96.71%) and non-scheduled languages (3.13%). But this paper unearths the very few known data of another category of languages 'others' (0.16%) from the census data of 2011. Indian multilingualism in 2011 at a glance for all the three categories of languages is provided in the table-3 in a nutshell form.

Table - 3
Indian Multilingualism in Percentages: 2011

Population of India	Details	Bilingualism	Trilingualism
Percentage	National Average	26.01	7.10
		26.90	7.35

96.71	Scheduled Languages	24.849	6.889
3.13	Non-Scheduled Languages	59.03	12.752
0.16	Others	69.82	38.330

There are two national averages each in the table about bilingualism and trilingualism. The first one is an all India average to the total population of the country. The second one is an all India average from the education level, age, gender bilingualism/trilingualism tables. The second table includes the population from the age of 5 years.



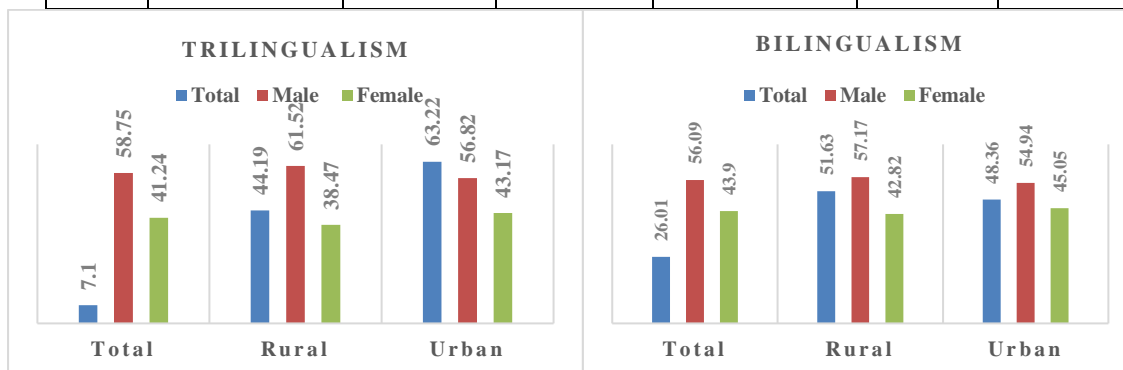
Bilingual per centage of the Speakers of the scheduled languages (96.71%) is 24.849% and 7.10% which is below the national average of 26.01% and 7.10% respectively. Whereas among the speakers of the non-scheduled languages who constitute 3.13% of the population, 59.03% are bilingual and 12.752% are trilingual. This is much above the national average. The same is the case of others who are 0.16% of the population. Among them 69% are bilingual and 38.330% trilingual. This is also much above the national average. This reflects the communicative need of the speakers of these three language groups.

Table – 4 gives the details of bilingualism and trilingualism in 2011. Here more rural (51.63%) population are bilingual than the urban (48.36%) population in India. However, more urban female (45.05%) population is bilingual than the rural female (42.82%) population.

Table-4
Bilingualism and Trilingualism in India: 2011

	Bilingualism			Trilingualism		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female

Total	26.01	56.09	43.90	7.10	58.75	41.24
Rural	51.63	57.17	42.82	44.19	61.52	38.47
Urban	48.36	54.94	45.05	63.22	56.82	43.17



When it comes to trilingual, urban (63.22%) population has more trilingual than the rural (44.19%) population. The rural male (61.52%) population outnumbers urban male (58.68%) population in trilingualism. So is the case with female population. More urban women (43.7%) are trilingual than the rural women (38.47%). This is exactly the replication of multilingualism frame of 2001.

Patterns of Multilingualism

Multilingualism acts as a bridge between speakers of different languages. The choice of one or more languages as the first subsidiary language, second subsidiary language reflects the social, economic, educational and sometimes political need/will of a language community. Table – 5 gives a panoramic view of growth of bilingualism among the speakers of the scheduled languages from the 1961 census to 2011 census. The percentages are to the total population speaking a particular language. For the sake of easy understanding, the languages are listed in the descending order of percentage in the year 2011. On the basis of intensity of bilingualism, 21 scheduled language speakers are grouped into four: (1) languages with high intensity of bilingualism [60% and above] (2) languages with moderate intensity of bilingualism [40% to 60%] (3) languages with average intensity of bilingualism [30% to 20%] and (4) languages with low intensity of bilingualism [20% and below].

In 50 years, the number of bilingual speakers of scheduled languages (except in case of Bodo) in India has more than doubled. Konkani (82.414%) has more percentage of bilinguals and Hindi (11.540%) speakers are least bilingual. Not only is this, but progress of bilingualism among Hindi speakers is very marginal: 1991-11.01%, 2001-11.25% and 2011-11.54%. Sociolinguistic situation of both these languages is reflected in the nature of bilingualism they practice. Hindi speakers do not find much need in knowing another language.

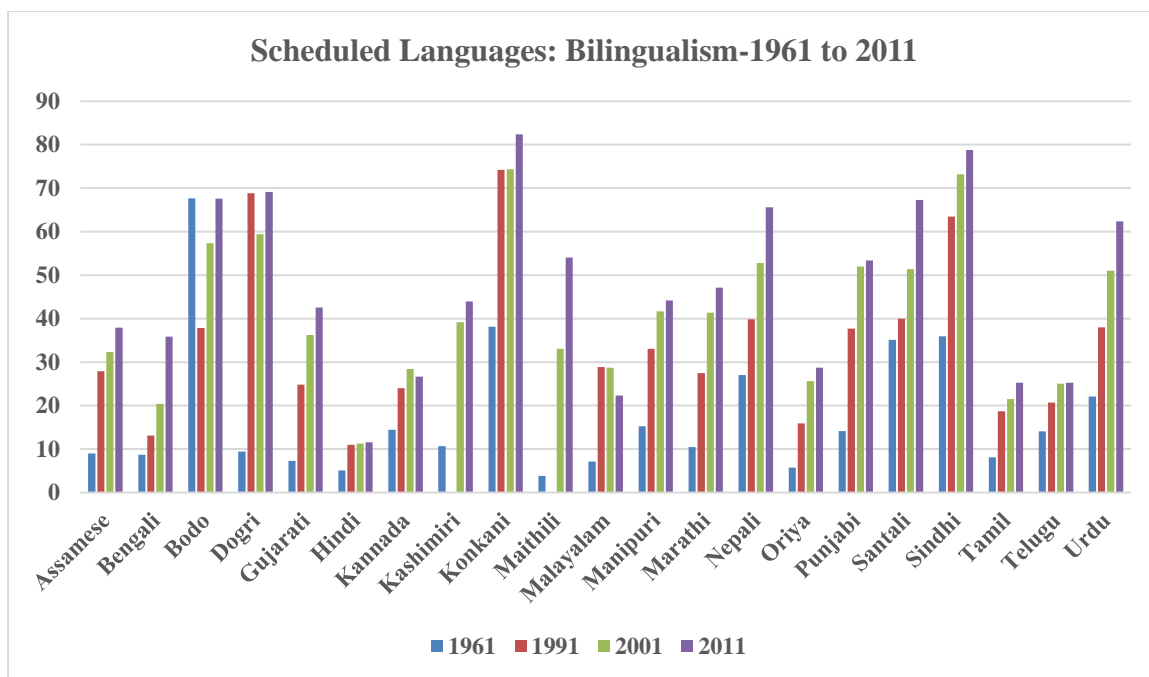
High intensity bilingual languages too share similar sociolinguistic characteristics. It may not be coincidence that Dogri, Bodo, Konkani, Santali, Nepali and Maithili are latest entrants into the elite club of languages called – scheduled languages. Konkani speakers are concentrated in Goa and spread over Kerala, Karnataka, and Maharashtra, etc. Sindhi and

Urdu were known as stateless languages after the reorganisation of states on linguistic lines. Since, Sindhi speakers are spread over many states, they have no alternative other than knowing one or more additional language/s. Speakers of Urdu are spread all over the country, it helps them to know other language/s. Nepali speakers though in less numbers are spread over different states; this induces them to become bilingual. Bodo and Santali are mother tongues of Tribal population; the geographic, social and cultural context necessitates knowledge of another language/s for them.

Table – 5
Scheduled languages: Bilingualism -1961 to 2011

	Language	1961*	1991	2001	2011
I	High				
1	Konkani	38.177	74.20	74.38	82.414
2	Sindhi	35.932	63.45	73.19	78.792
3	Dogri	9.450	68.83	59.44	69.143
4	Bodo	67.70	37.87	57.38	67.610
5	Santali	35.152	40.02	51.43	67.323
6	Nepali	27.048	39.83	52.81	65.639
7	Urdu	22.090	38.00	51.03	62.351
II	Moderate				
8	Maithili	3.810	**	33.03	54.036
9	Punjabi	14.163	37.69	52.01	53.354
10	Marathi	10.471	27.47	41.37	47.161
11	Manipuri	15.265	33.08	41.67	44.203
12	Kashmir	10.695	*	39.21	43.961
13	Gujarati	7.315	24.85	36.25	42.526
14	Assamese	8.969	27.91	32.35	37.952
15	Bengali	8.658	13.09	20.40	35.825
III	Average				
16	Oriya	5.752	15.94	25.63	28.753
17	Kannada	14.436	24.04	28.44	26.622
18	Telugu	14.039	20.68	25.02	25.273
19	Tamil	8.110	18.74	21.51	25.267
20	Malayalam	7.115	28.85	28.75	22.288
IV	Poor				
21	Hindi	5.105	11.01	11.25	11.540

[In 1961, it is the percentage of persons speaking a language in addition to their mother tongue.]



Though there is an increase in percentage of bilingual speakers among Kannada and Malayalam speakers from 1961-2011, there is a negative development between 2001 and 2011; Kannada [28.44 % < 26.622%], Malayalam [28.75 % < 22.288%]. In case of Malayalam attrition of bilingualism seems to have started from 1991 itself [28.83 % < 28.75%]. The progress of bilingualism among Telugu speakers between 2001 and 2011 is highly marginal [25.02% > 25.273%].

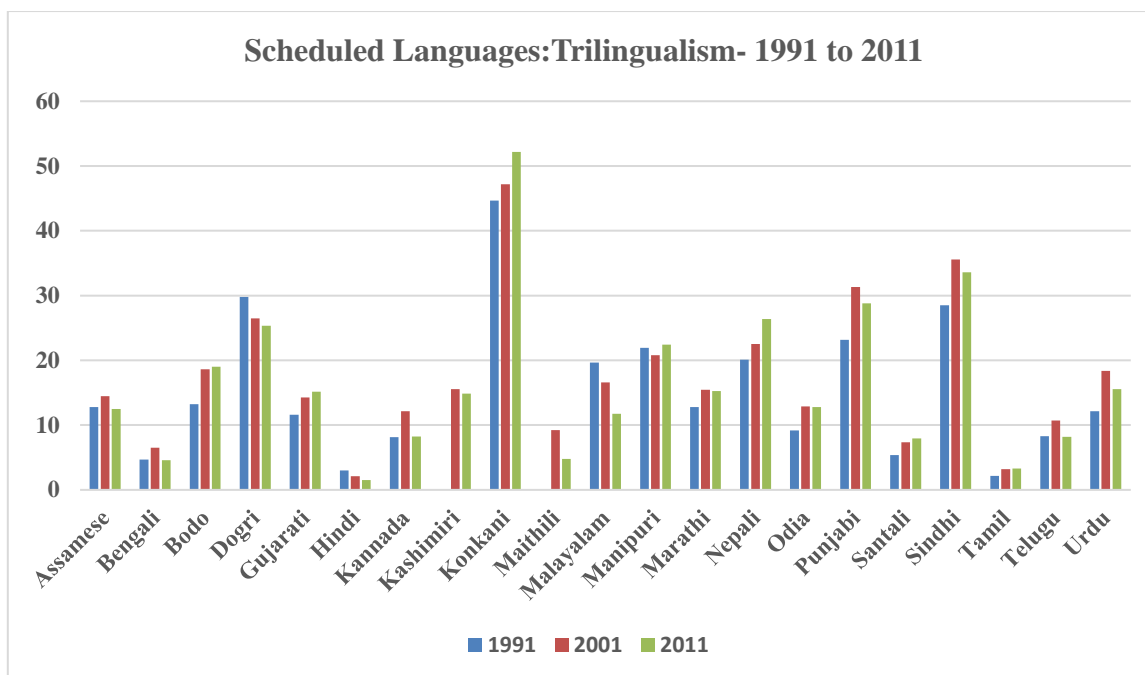
One of the important observations on Indian bilingualism is that the speakers of Dravidian scheduled languages are not bilingual to the extent other scheduled language speakers are. This seems to be the significant feature. Indian bilingualism in case of most of the scheduled languages has almost got stabilised and poised for growth in the coming decades. However, progression or regression of bilingualism of Kannada and Malayalam speakers needs to be studied when the next 2021 census data on multilingualism is available for analysis.

The table-6 illustrates the trilingualism among the speakers of the scheduled languages from 1991 - 2011. When we compare the percentage of trilingual in 1991 and 2011, there is a negative growth among the speakers of Dogri [29.77% > 25.356%], Assamese [12.78% > 12.300%], Malayalam [19.04% > 11.765%], Telugu [8.30% > 8.200%], Bengali [4.69% > 4.564%], and Hindi [2.98% > 1.495%]. If we compare the same between 2001 and 2011, there is a negative growth in speakers of Sindhi [35.58% > 33.581%], Punjabi [31.30% > 28.812%], Urdu [18.37% > 15.557%], Marathi [15.45% > 15.265%], Kashmiri [15.55% > 14.854%], Odia [12.88% > 12.775%], Kannada [12.15% > 8.252%] and Maithili [9.25% > 4.770%].

Table – 6
Scheduled Languages: Trilingualism-1991to2011

	Language	1991	2001	2011
I	High			
1	Konkani	44.68	47.18	52.157
2	Sindhi	28.51	35.58	33.581
3	Punjabi	23.15	31.30	28.812
4	Nepali	20.11	22.54	26.356
5	Dogri	29.77	26.49	25.356
6	Manipuri	21.92	20.81	22.429
II	Moderate			
7	Bodo	13.24	18.64	18.99
8	Urdu	12.14	18.37	15.557
9	Marathi	12.76	15.45	15.265
10	Gujarati	11.59	14.25	15.167
11	Kashmiri	*	15.55	14.854
12	Odia	9.19	12.88	12.775
13	Assamese	12.78	14.47	12.500
14	Malayalam	19.64	16.60	11.765
III	Average			
15	Kannada	8.12	12.15	8.258
16	Telugu	8.30	10.69	8.200
17	Santali	5.36	7.35	7.962
18	Maithili	**	9.25	4.770
19	Bengali	4.69	6.52	4.564
20	Tamil	2.16	3.19	3.287
IV	Poor			
21	Hindi	2.98	2.13	1.495

*Census was not held. ** Was not a scheduled language at that point of time.



We can hypothesize that some of the speakers of these languages who reported a language as a second subsidiary language in 2001 might have shifted in 2011 to state that language is now their first subsidiary language. This could be realised by comparing 2001 and 2011 bilingualism statistics of Sindhi [73.19%>78.792%], Punjabi [52.01%>53.354%], Nepali [52.81%>63.639%], Dogri [59.44%>69.143%], Urdu [51.03%>62.351%], Marathi [41.37%>47.161%], Kashmiri [39.21%>43.961%], Odia [25.63%>28.753%] and Assamese [32.35%>37.952%]. In case of Malayalam and Kannada there is a reduction in the in percentage of population reporting first and second subsidiary languages. The reasons for the same are to be investigated further.

This analysis of trilingualism among the speakers of the scheduled languages suggests that it is not a stable/a sustainable development like bilingualism among most of them.

Language Choice and Bilingualism

When we analyse bilingualism, it is essential to look into the way scheduled language speakers look at knowing Hindi, the Official Language of the Union of India and English the Associate Official language. Hindi is also one of the languages of the education system in most of the states except Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry. English is the contribution of British rule to schooling in India as a subject and also as a medium of instruction at different stages of education. In the Indian context, English is learnt as second or third language due to schooling whereas Hindi is mainly learnt and partially acquired contextually since it is widely used in the media, as part of entertainment. Most of the other languages are learnt due to their coexistence.

The Table -7 and the chart illustrate the choice of the scheduled language Speaker's between Hindi and English as first subsidiary language [FSL] in 2001 and 2011. When we

analyse the information, 5 patterns emerge. In the first group of languages majority of the population prefer Hindi as FSL. Among them in 2001 and 2011 there does an increase in the number of people know Hindi as the FSL and decrease in the number of persons knowing English as the FSL. The languages of this group are: Dogri, Gujarati, Marathi, Maithili, Punjabi, Santali, Sindhi and Urdu. Nepali is also included in this group though there is a slight increase in English as FSL. The second group has 7 languages. The majority of speakers of these languages have English as FSL in 2011, there is a reduction in English choice and an increase in their choice of Hindi. The languages of this group are: Malayalam, Manipuri, Telugu, Odia, Bodo, Kashmiri and Bengali. The third group has two languages Tamil and Konkani. Majority speakers among them declare English as FSL. In case of them in 2011 there is an increase in their choice of both Hindi and English. The fourth group is unique. It has only Kannada though the speaker's choice is English, in 2011 both Hindi and English percentage has decreased. Percentage of Hindi speaker's choice of English as their FSL has decreased in 2011.

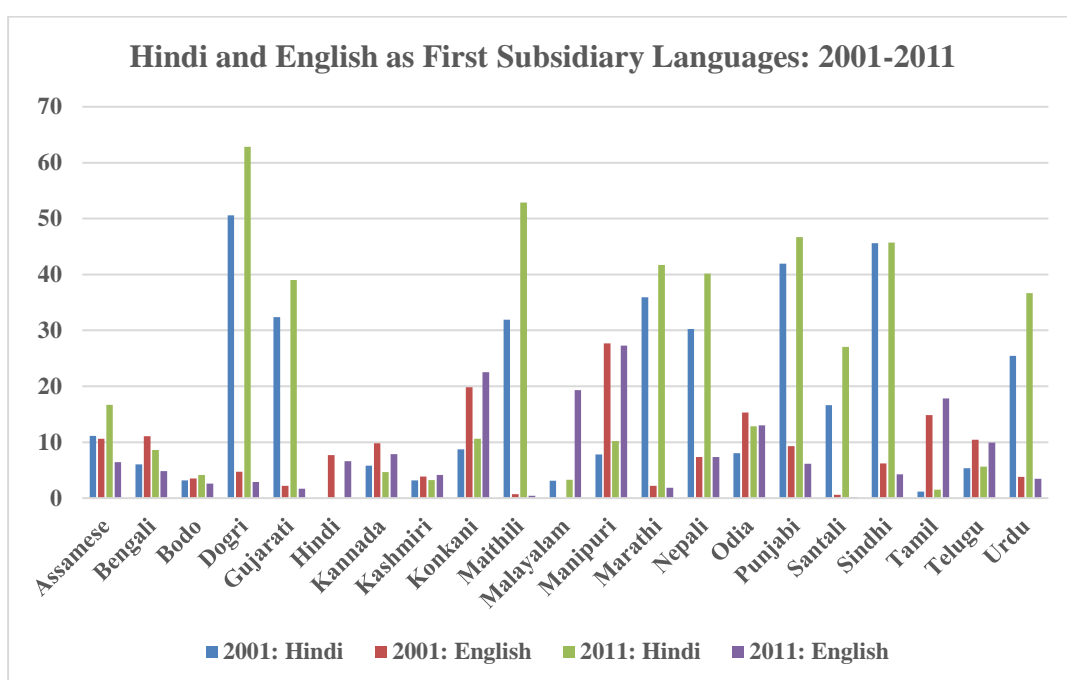
Table-7
Scheduled Language Speaker's Choice of Hindi and English
as First Subsidiary Language- 2001:2011

		Language	2001	2001	2011	2011
	I	Hindi majority				
Family *			Hindi	English	Hindi	English
I-Aryan	1	Assamese	11.13	10.6	16.704	6.433
I-Aryan	2	Dogri	50.61	4.74	62.824	2.903
I-Aryan	3	Gujarati	32.40	2.22	39.005	1.690
I-Aryan	4	Maithili	31.92	0.70	52.889	0.424
I-Aryan	5	Marathi	35.93	2.22	41.733	1.860
I-Aryan	6	Punjabi	41.94	9.31	46.663	6.147
A-Asiatic	7	Santali	16.64	0.60	27.041	0.208
I-Aryan	8	Sindhi	45.58	6.22	45.742	4.244
I-Aryan	9	Urdu	25.45	3.79	36.674	3.459
I-Aryan	10	Nepali	30.27	7.34	40.183	7.379
	II	English majority				
Dravidian	11	Malayalam	3.12	21.24	3.264	19.311
T-Burmese	12	Manipuri	7.81	27.67	10.234	27.302
Dravidian	13	Telugu	5.37	10.47	5.655	9.953
I-Aryan	14	Odia	8.05	15.32	12.850	13.005
T-Burmese	15	Bodo	3.15	3.54	4.167	2.57
I-Aryan	16	Kashmiri	3.17	3.86	3.217	4.159
I-Aryan	17	Bengali	6.03	11.08	8.615	4.844

Dravidian	III-18	Tamil	1.14	14.88	1.495	17.856
I-Aryan	19	Konkani	8.75	19.85	10.598	22.544
Dravidian	IV-20	Kannada	5.81	9.82	4.672	7.894
I-Aryan	V-21	Hindi	X	7.68	X	6.606

*I-Aryan= Indo-Aryan, A-Asiatic=Astro-Asiatic, T-Burmese=Tibeto-Burmese

Out of 10 languages in the first category of languages with majority Hindi bilingualism, it is evident that 9 languages belong to the Indo-Aryan family. Only Santal belongs to Astro-Asiatic family. In the English majority bilingualism category, 4 belong to Dravidian another 4 belong to Indo-Aryan and 2 languages belong to Tibeto-Burman family. Hindi is yet to gain entry in a big way into the second group of languages as first subsidiary languages.



Non-Scheduled Languages and Multilingualism

This category of languages in India is not created by the Constitution of India or through any government declaration. It has got created by the convention that if a language is not listed in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution it is a non-scheduled language. As we already saw, the 2011 prepared a list of 121 languages after processing the raw returns of the mother tongues. Among them, 22 languages are part of the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution. Rest of the 99 languages are called non-scheduled languages. These non-scheduled languages are spoken by 3.13% of the population of India. So far this group of languages has performed one major task. That is, as and when there was a demand it has contributed languages to the Eighth Schedule.

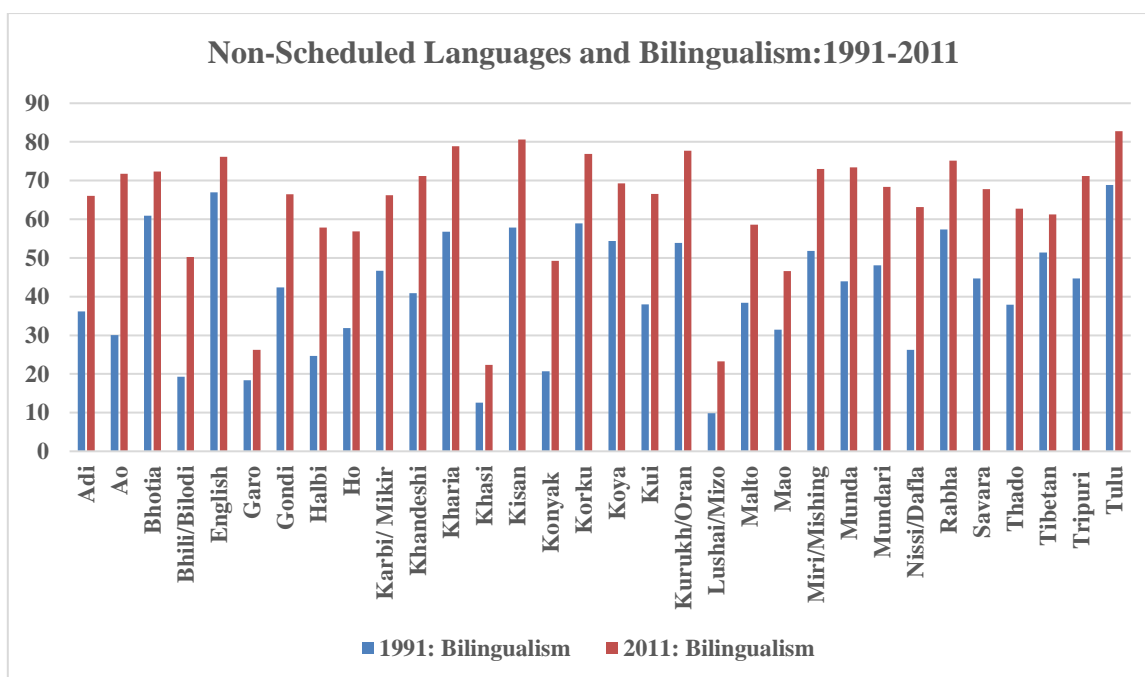
Bilingualism

In order to have a glimpse of multilingualism among these 99 languages, 32 languages from this group were chosen. The table -8 lists thus selected 32 non-scheduled languages in a user-friendly way in the descending order of percentage of speakers in 2011.

Table - 8
Non-Scheduled Languages: Bilingualism % 1991: 2011

	Language	1991	2011		Language	1991	2011
1	Tulu	68.89	82.805	17	Kui	37.96	66.549
2	Kisan	57.83	80.628	18	Gondi	42.34	66.463
3	Kharia	56.77	78.877	19	Karbi/ Mikir	46.68	66.211
4	Kurukh/Oran	53.85	77.708	20	Adi	36.17	66.079
5	Korku	58.94	76.876	21	Nissi/Dafla	26.22	63.150
6	English	66.99	76.177	22	Thado	37.89	62.725
7	Rabha	57.34	75.156	23	Tibetan	51.40	61.289
8	Munda	43.93	73.432	24	Malto	38.43	58.620
9	Miri/Mishing	51.81	72.997	25	Halbi	24.68	57.864
10	Bhotia	60.94	72.3705	26	Ho	31.83	56.877
11	Tripuri	44.73	71.214	27	Bhili/Bilodi	19.31	50.265
12	Ao	30.02	71.758	28	Konyak	20.72	49.276
13	Khandeshi	40.88	71.174	29	Mao	31.45	46.600
14	Koya	54.36	69.245	30	Garo	18.35	26.251
15	Mundari	48.12	68.384	31	Lushai/Mizo	9.88	23.287
16	Savara	44.71	67.776	32	Khasi	12.60	22.312

All these are spoken by not less than 200,000 of population in the 2011 census and conventional listing of languages in the alphabetical order is dispensed with. The national average of bilingualism among the non-scheduled languages is 59.03%. This is the double the national average of 24.849% of bilingualism of speakers of the scheduled languages.



More percentage of speakers of these languages are bilingual than those of speakers of the scheduled languages. It can be seen in the chart that the bilingualism is on the rise in all these languages. One cannot find regression in any language. The 23 non-scheduled languages out of 32 listed above have bilinguals above the national average of bilingualism of this category of languages. It is amazing to note 13 languages record bilingualism percentage above 70%.

Trilingualism

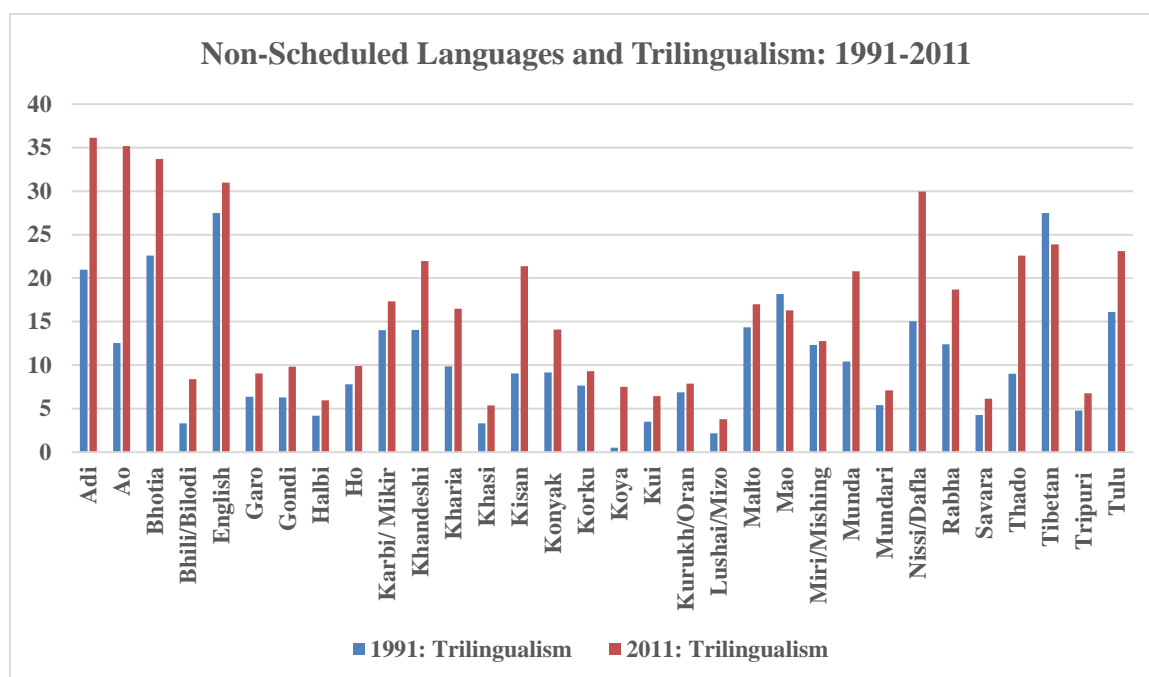
The table -9 lists the same 32 non-scheduled languages in the hierarchy of number of second subsidiary language speakers from maximum to minimum at the end of the list.

Table - 9
Non-Scheduled Languages and Trilingualism-1991: 2011

	Language	1991	2011		Language	1991	2011
1	Adi	20.99	36.140	17	Konyak	9.17	14.094
2	Ao	12.54	35.171	18	Miri/Mishing	12.33	12.771
3	Bhotia	22.60	33.693	19	Ho	7.80	9.911
4	English	27.50	30.964	20	Gondi	6.31	9.812
5	Nissi/Dafla	15.05	29.960	21	Korku	7.66	9.310
6	Tibetan	27.5	23.886	22	Garo	6.35	9.048
7	Tulu	16.1	23.120	23	Bhili/Bilodi	3.32	8.402
8	Thado	9.0	22.586	24	Kurukh/Oran	6.87	7.891
9	Khandeshi	14.04	21.969	25	Koya	0.52	7.496
10	Kisan	9.05	21.381	26	Mundari	5.40	7.102
11	Munda	10.40	20.784	27	Tripuri	4.8	6.788
12	Rabha	12.41	18.696	28	Kui	3.51	6.429

13	Karbi/ Mikir	14.01	17.337	29	Savara	4.26	6.139
14	Malto	14.35	16.987	30	Halbi	4.20	5.977
15	Kharia	9.88	16.471	31	Khasi	3.30	5.378
16	Mao	18.19	16.293	32	Lushai/Mizo	2.19	3.794

The average trilingualism among the speakers of non-scheduled languages is 12.752%. This is also double the national average 6.889% of trilingualism among the speakers of the scheduled languages. Here also 18 languages are having trilingual population above the national average of 12.752% for non-scheduled languages.



It is evident from the table as well as chart that trilingualism is progressing at different rates in different languages. There is no regression in any language.

Hindi Bilingualism

The table -10 lists the 32 non-scheduled languages in the hierarchy of number of speakers enumerated as they know Hindi as the first subsidiary language. Languages with a maximum number of such speakers are listed first and minimum speakers are listed at the end. Information about the language family of each language is also given. In a way this table is self-explanatory. Among the 32 languages, speakers of 14 language fall in the category where more than 20% claim that Hindi is their first subsidiary language.

Table - 10
Non-scheduled Languages and Hindi Bilingualism: 2011

Family*		Language	%		Language	%	Family
A-Asiatic	1	Korku	72.743	17	Kisan	4.844	Dravidian
Dravidian	2	Kurukh/Oran	67.639	18	Tulu	4.549	Dravidian
A-Asiatic	3	Mundari	53.923	19	Ao	4.424	T-Burmese

T-Burmese	4	Nissi/Dafla	49.887	20	Khandeshi	3.893	I-Aryan
Germanic	5	English	48.919	21	Khasi	3.774	A-Asiatic
T-Burmese	6	Adi	48.574	22	Lushai/Mizo	3.251	T-Burmese
I-Aryan	7	Halbi	48.363	23	Karbi/ Mikir	2.969	T-Burmese
A-Asiatic	8	Kharia	46.811	24	Mao	2.512	T-Burmese
Dravidian	9	Gondi	44.754	25	Thado	2.444	T-Burmese
A-Asiatic	10	Ho	34.532	26	Konyak	2.154	T-Burmese
Dravidian	11	Malto	33.506	27	Rabha	1.900	T-Burmese
I-Aryan	12	Bhili/Bilodi	32.941	28	Miri/Mishing	1.583	T-Burmese
T-Burmese	13	Bhotia	31.957	29	Tripuri	0.915	T-Burmese
T-Burmese	14	Tibetan	22.42	31	Savara	0.912	A-Asiatic
A-Asiatic	15	Munda	17.876	31	Koya	0.356	Dravidian
T-Burmese	16	Garo	5.332	32	Kui	0.214	Dravidian

*I-Aryan = Indo-Aryan, A-Asiatic =Astro-Asiatic, T-Burmese=Tibeto-Burmese

It is observed in this table – 10 that out of 32 non-scheduled languages 17 languages have less than 6% Hindi bilinguals, 10 belong to the Tibeto-Burman, 4 to the Dravidian, another 2 to the Astro-Asiatic and one to the Indo-Aryan families.

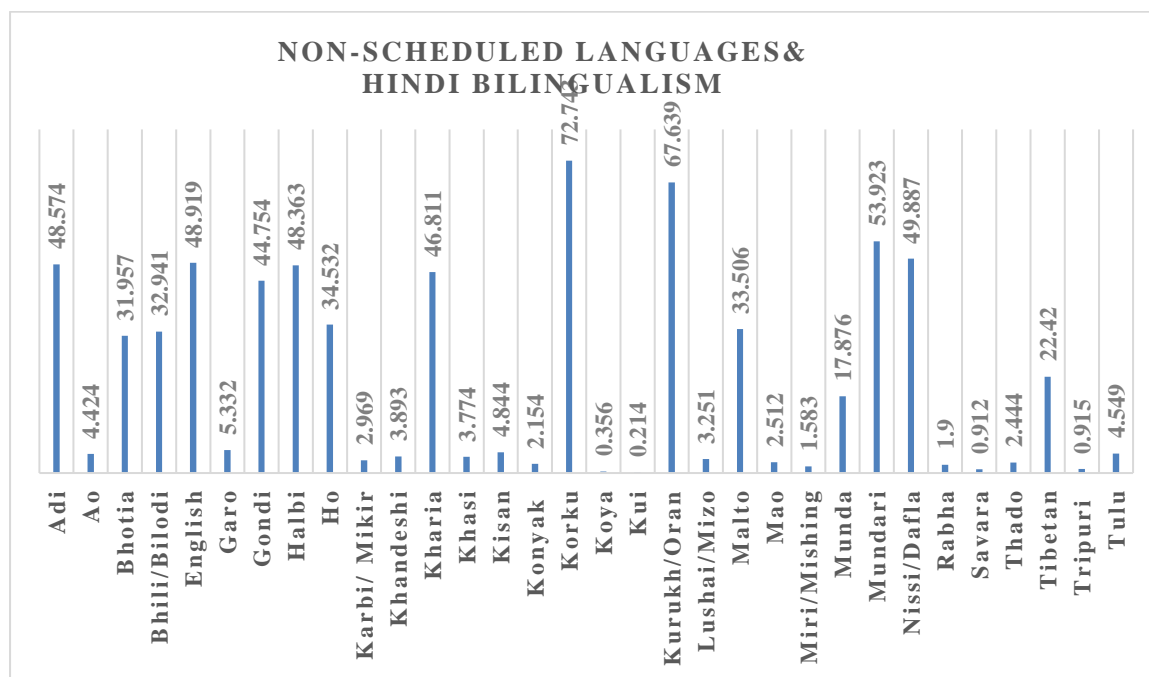


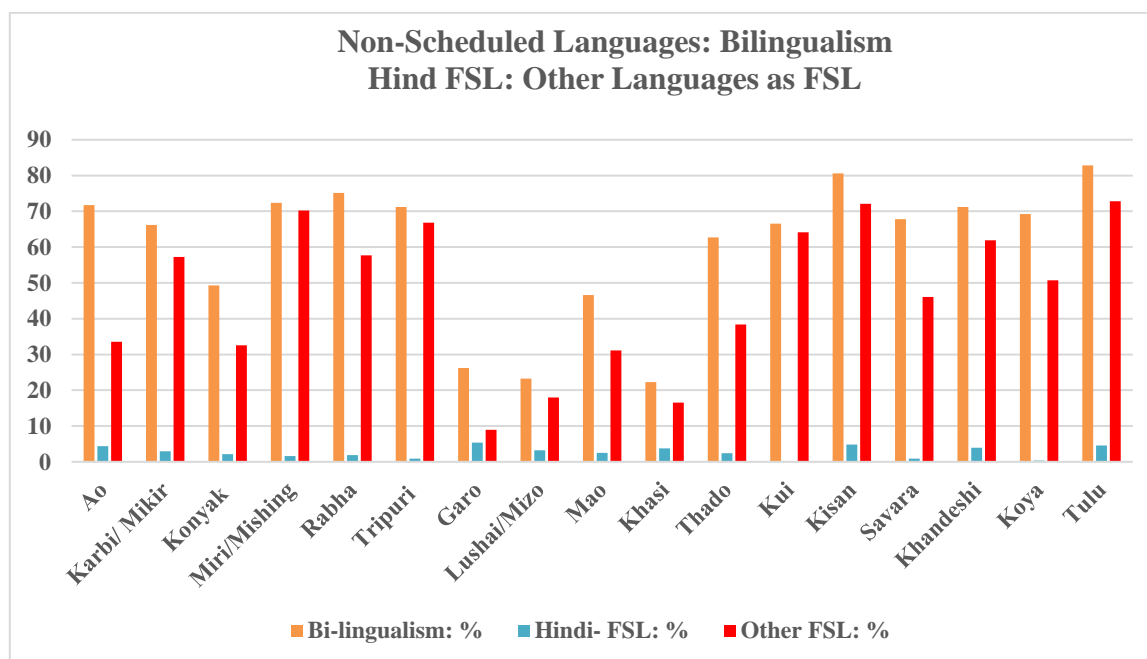
Table-11
Non-scheduled Languages
Bilingualism-Hindi: FSL* and Other Languages as FSL- 2011

	Non-Scheduled Languages	Bi-lingualism %	Hindi-FSL: %	Other FSL	%
1	Ao	71.758	4.424	Assamese	33.553

2	Karbi/ Mikir	66.211	2.969	Assamese	57.219
3	Konyak	49.276	2.154	Assamese	32.556
4	Miri/Mishing	72.370	1.583	Assamese	70.229
5	Rabha	75.156	1.900	Assamese	57.726
6	Tripuri	71.214	0.915	Bengali	66.781
7	Garo	26.251	5.332	English	8.985
8	Lushai/Mizo	23.287	3.251	English	17.942
9	Mao	46.600	2.512	English	31.136
10	Khasi	22.312	3.774	English	16.569
11	Thado	62.723	2.444	Manipuri	38.366
12	Kui	66.549	0.214	Odia	64.126
13	Kisan	80.628	4.844	Odia	72.111
14	Savara	67.776	0.912	Odia	46.053
15	Khandeshi	71.174	3.893	Marathi	61.867
16	Koya	69.245	0.356	Telugu	50.703
17	Tulu	82.805	4.549	Kannada	72.854

*First Subsidiary Language: FSL

In order to understand depth and direction of bilingualism among the non-scheduled languages, 17 languages with less than 6% of bilingualism in Hindi were chosen. It was found that most of the speakers had declared their neighbourhood language as their first subsidiary language. The people are not less bilingual, but less bilingual in Hindi, and highly bilingual in the neighbourhood language. The chart below clearly demonstrates this.



Bilingualism: Age and Gender

The Census of India is using the term 'sex' instead; in this paper I am using the term 'gender'. Now we are discussing about 26.90 % of bilinguals in India and their distribution

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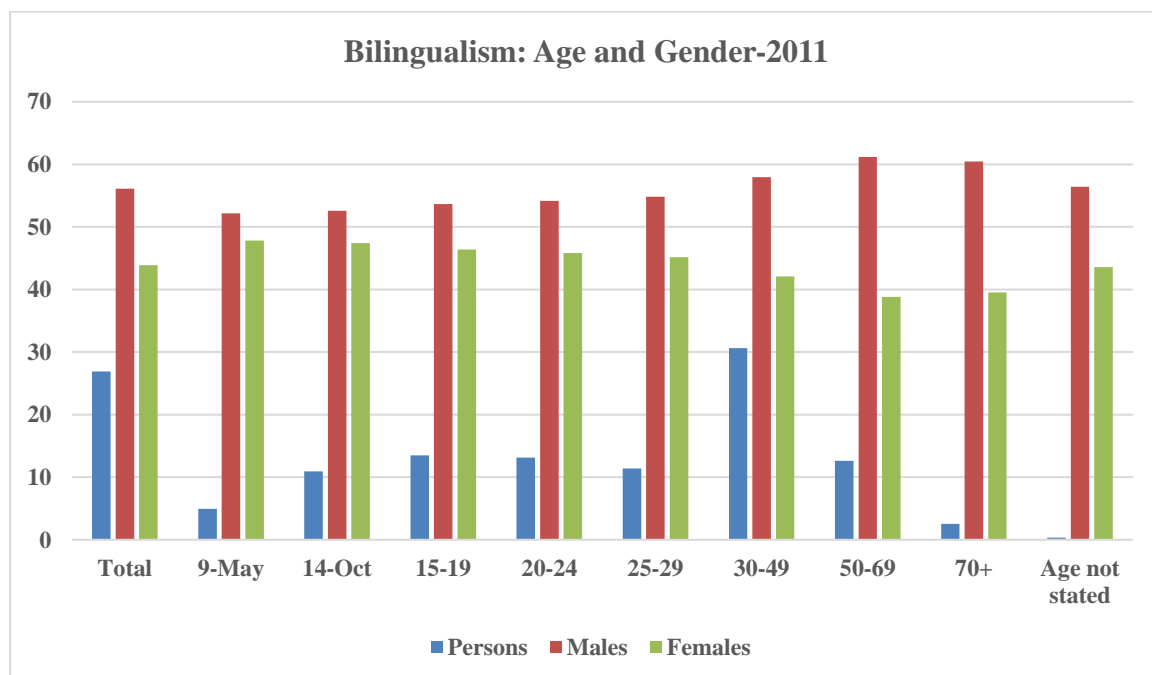
Multilingualism in 21st Century India

across categories of age and gender. Distribution of the differences across these categories is illustrated in the table – 12. Maximum persons are bilinguals in the age group of 30-49 [30.62%]. This group has people born after 1947, the year in which India attained freedom. They are product of the new education system. In this group more males [57.93%] are bilingual than females [42.07%].

Table - 12
Bilingualism Age and Gender: 2011

Age group	Persons	Males	Females
Total	26.90	56.10	43.90
5-9	4.97	52.19	47.81
10-14	10.95	52.58	47.42
15-19	13.47	53.63	46.37
20-24	13.13	54.15	45.85
25-29	11.40	54.82	45.18
30-49	30.62	57.93	42.07
50-69	12.61	61.18	38.82
70+	2.53	60.46	39.54
Age not stated	0.32	56.43	43.57

The second age group is of 50-69 years. Some of them may belong to pre independence era and more of them are of post-independence period, 12.61% of them are bilinguals. All of them may not be products of new education. It is important to note that this group has very less females [38.82%] as bilinguals and more males [61.18%] than any other groups. The next groups are of 15-19 [13.47%] and 20-24[13.13%] age groups. This seems to reflect exposure to education and wider involvement in socialisation.



Other age groups in the descending order are: 25-29[11.40%], 10-14 [10.95%], 5-9[4.97%],70+ [2.55%] and age not stated [0.32%].

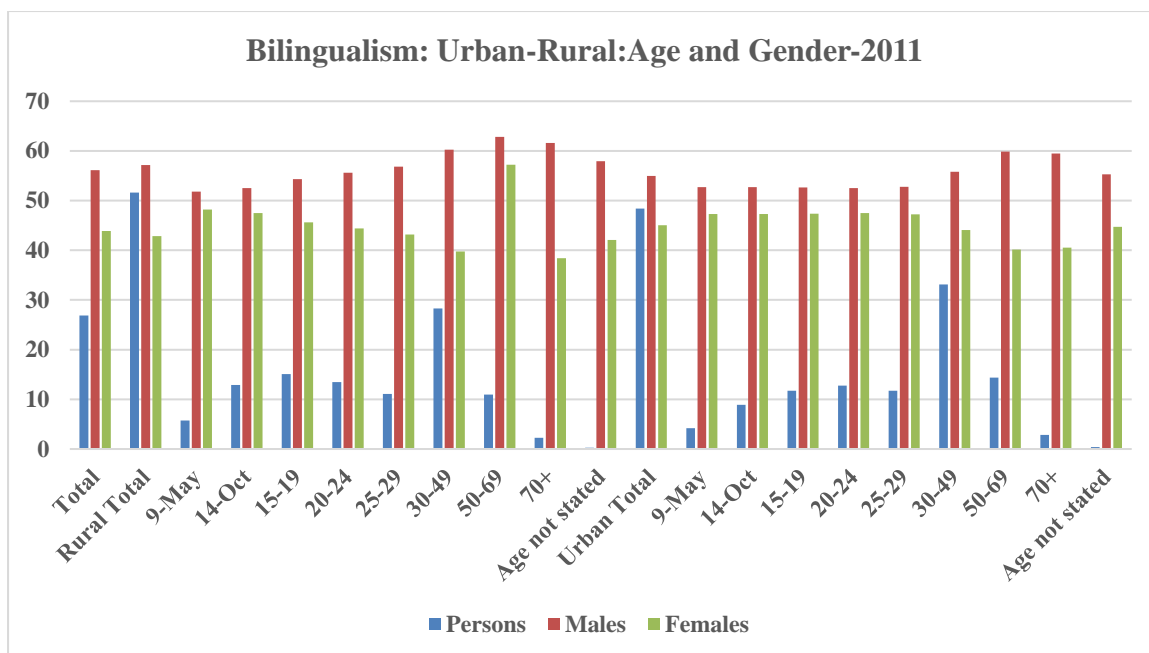
Bilingualism: Urban- Rural: Age and Gender

Table – 13 provides the details of bilingualism among the urban – rural population and their correlation with age and gender. More rural [51.63%] population are bilingual than the urban [48.37%] population. Also, more rural men [57.17%] are bilingual than the urban men [48.17%]. When we compare this with the 2001 statistics, one can find the significant difference in both the categories. Percentage of male bilinguals has decreased [57.12% to 54.95%] and that of female bilinguals has increased [38.62% to 42.83%].

A clear-cut division is visible in rural and urban bilingualism and age groups. In the age groups from 5-9 to 20-24, more rural population are bilingual and from the age groups 25-29 to the rest, more urban population are bilingual. In both the categories and in all the age groups more male population are bilingual than the corresponding female population.

Table - 13
Bilingualism: Urban- Rural: Age and Gender

Age-group	Rural			Urban		
	Persons	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females
Total	51.63	57.17	42.83	48.37	54.95	45.05
5-9	5.71	51.82	48.18	4.17	52.72	47.28
10-14	12.88	52.51	47.49	8.88	52.69	47.31
15-19	15.09	54.35	45.65	11.73	52.63	47.37
20-24	13.47	55.60	44.40	12.76	52.51	47.49
25-29	11.10	56.84	43.16	11.73	52.79	47.21
30-49	28.27	60.22	39.78	33.13	55.83	44.10
50-69	10.96	62.81	37.19	14.38	59.85	40.15
70+	2.24	61.62	38.38	2.84	59.48	40.52
Age not stated	0.28	57.94	42.06	0.38	55.26	44.74



When we attempt to rank the age groups in the rural and urban categories from maximum bilinguals to the minimum bilinguals, a differing picture emerges and they do not correspond with each other. In rural it is (1) 30-49 (2) 15-19 (3) 20-24 (4) 10-14 (5) 25-29 (6) 50-69 (7) 5-9 (8) 70+ and (9) Age not stated. In urban it is (1) 30-49 (2) 50-69 (3) 20-24 (4) 15-19 and 25-29 (5) 10-14 (6) 5-9 (7) 70+ (8) Age not stated. This may reveal that the reasons for being bilingual in rural and urban areas could be different for different age groups.

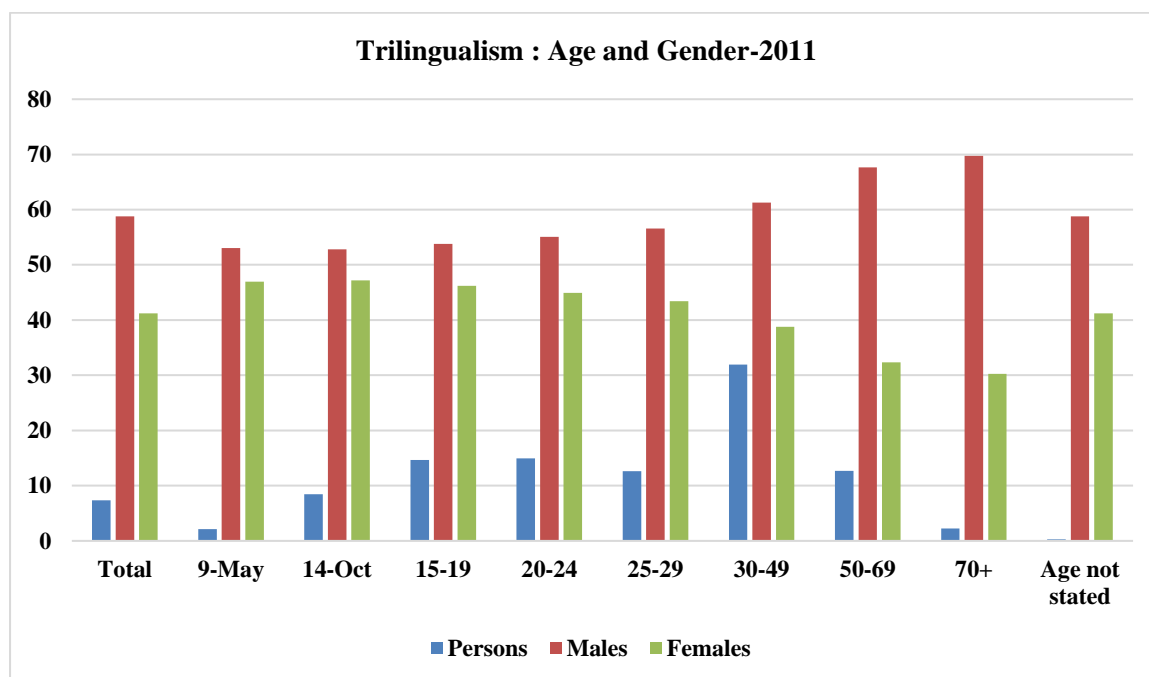
Trilingualism: Age and Gender

Number of persons reporting that they know a second subsidiary language (trilingualism) stands at 7.35% in 2011. The table -14 illustrates their distribution across categories of age and gender. In all categories of age like bilingualism, less female population are trilingual than the male population.

Table - 14
Trilingualism: Age and Gender

Age group	Persons	Males	Females
Total	7.35	58.76	41.24
5-9	2.14	53.04	46.96
10-14	8.44	52.81	47.19
15-19	14.68	53.80	46.20
20-24	14.92	55.07	44.93
25-29	12.62	56.59	43.41
30-49	31.93	61.25	38.75
50-69	12.69	67.66	32.34
70+	2.27	69.72	30.28
Age not stated	0.30	58.79	41.21

Maximum persons are trilingual in the age group of 30-49 [30.93%]. This is similar to bilingualism. This group is of post-independence era and product of the new education system. Unlike bilingualism, here the second group is that of 20-24 age group [14.92%] followed by the 15-19 age group [14.68%], exposed to third language early in their life. A glance at the bilingualism [4.97%] and trilingualism [2.14%] of the age group 5-9 indicates the late exposure of this age group to the second subsidiary language. The same could be said about the age group 10-14 whose bilingualism is 10.95% and trilingualism is 8.44%.



Trilingualism: Urban- Rural: Age and Gender

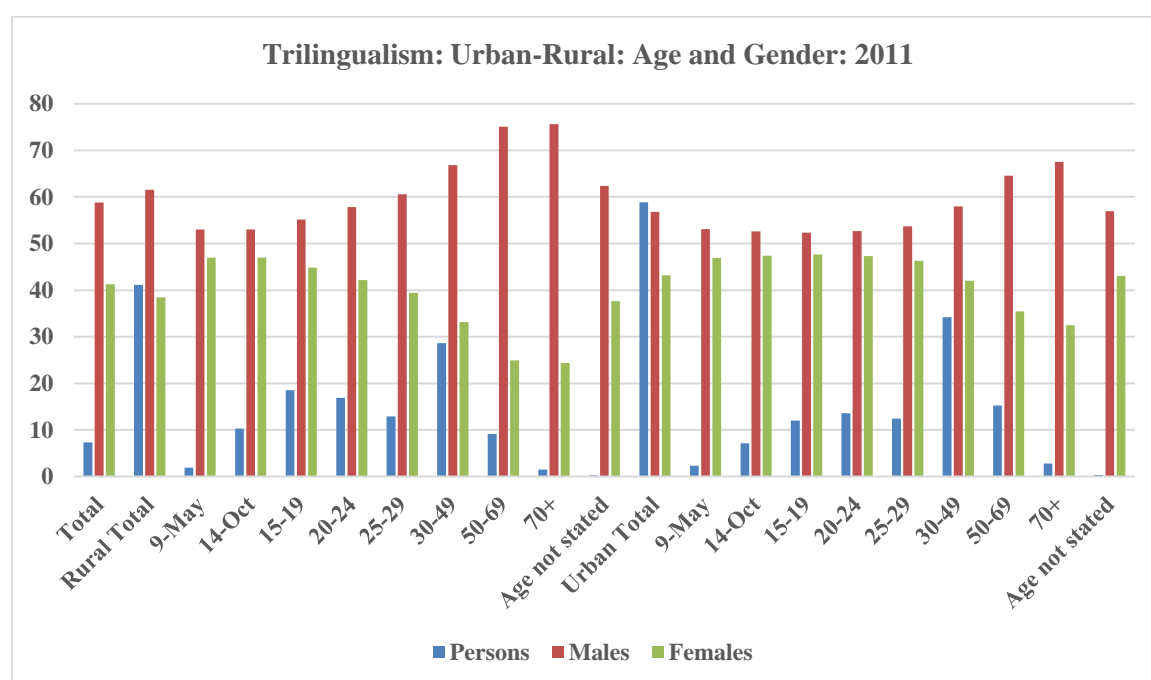
Table-15 demonstrates that in India trilingualism is an urban phenomenon unlike bilingualism which is a rural phenomenon. In urban areas 58.86% persons and in rural areas 41.14% persons are trilingual. In all age categories a smaller number of females are trilingual than the males. Maximum percentage of persons in the age group of 30-40 is trilingual in both rural [28.66%] and urban [34.23%] sectors. The second place among the rural persons is of the age group 15-19 [18.54%] and in the urban group is that of 50-69 [15.21%] age group. This reflects the exposure of the respective age groups in both the categories to the second subsidiary language.

Table -15
Trilingualism: Urban- Rural: Age and Gender

Age Group	Rural			Urban		
	Persons	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females
Total	41.14	61.53	38.47	58.86	56.83	43.17
5-9	1.90	52.99	47.01	2.31	53.07	46.93
10-14	10.28	53.03	46.97	7.14	52.60	47.40
15-19	18.54	55.13	44.87	11.99	52.36	47.64

20-24	16.86	57.83	42.17	13.57	52.67	47.33
25-29	12.91	60.59	39.41	12.42	53.68	46.32
30-49	28.66	66.85	33.15	34.23	57.98	42.02
50-69	9.09	75.05	24.95	15.21	64.57	35.43
70+	1.51	75.60	24.40	2.80	67.51	32.49
Age not stated	0.25	62.35	37.65	0.33	56.91	43.09

When we compare the trilingualism statistics with the corresponding statistics of 2001- the following important observations could be made. Male trilingual population has decreased from 62.43% to 58.76% and female trilingual population has increased from 37.56% to 41.24%. At the same time urban male trilingual population has decreased from 59.15% to 56.83% and the urban female population has increased from 40.84% to 43.17%. Similarly, in the rural sector male trilingual population has decreased from 66.25% to 61.53% and female trilingual population has increased from 33.74% to 38.47%. This indicates that in both urban and rural areas percentage of trilingual males is decreasing and females is increasing.



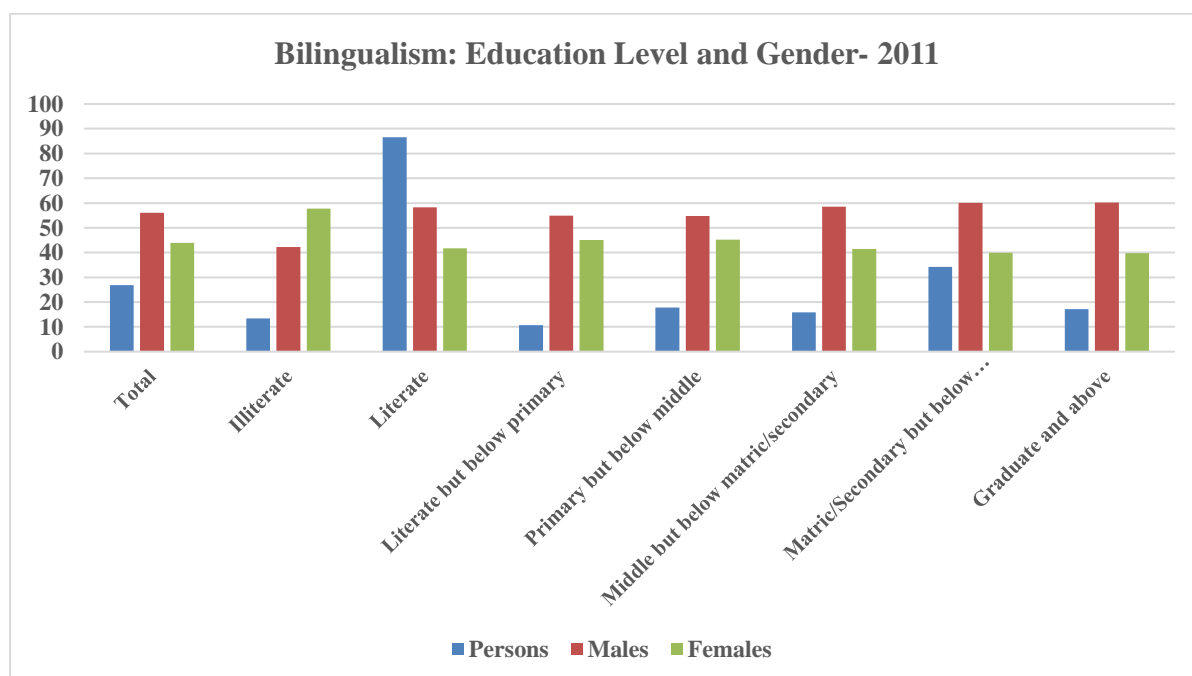
The ranking of the age groups in the rural and urban categories from maximum trilingual to minimum trilingual indicates that the age groups do not correspond to each other in all age categories. In rural it is (1) 30-49 (2) 15-19 (3) 20-24 (4)25-29 (5)10-14 (6)50-69 (7)3-9 (8) 70+ (9) Age not specified. In urban it is (1) 30-49 (2)50-69 (3) 20-24 (4) 25-29 (5) 15-19 (6) 10-14 (7) 70+ (8) 5-9 and (9) Age not stated. This may divulge that the reasons for being trilingual in rural and urban areas could be different for different age groups.

Bilingualism: Education Level and Gender

Multilingualism and literacy are not mutually dependent. Bilingualism is not the fort only of literates [86.58%]. Substantial number of illiterates [13.32%] has also reported that they know a second subsidiary language. Among illiterates more females [57.76%] are bilinguals than males [42.24%]. In all other categories less, female population are trilingual than males. Table – 16 illustrates the distribution of bilingualism and its correlation with education level and gender.

Table -16
Bilingualism: Education Level and Gender

	Persons	Males	Females
Total	26.89	56.09	43.90
Illiterate	13.42	42.24	57.76
Literate	86.58	58.24	41.76
Literate but below primary	10.76	54.95	45.04
Primary but below middle	17.81	54.74	45.26
Middle but below matric/secondary	15.81	58.48	41.52
Matric/Secondary but below graduate	34.17	60.11	39.89
Graduate and above	17.22	60.24	39.76



Among the literate persons more bilinguals are in the group of education level matric/secondary but below graduate level [34.17%]. Next is the category of primary but

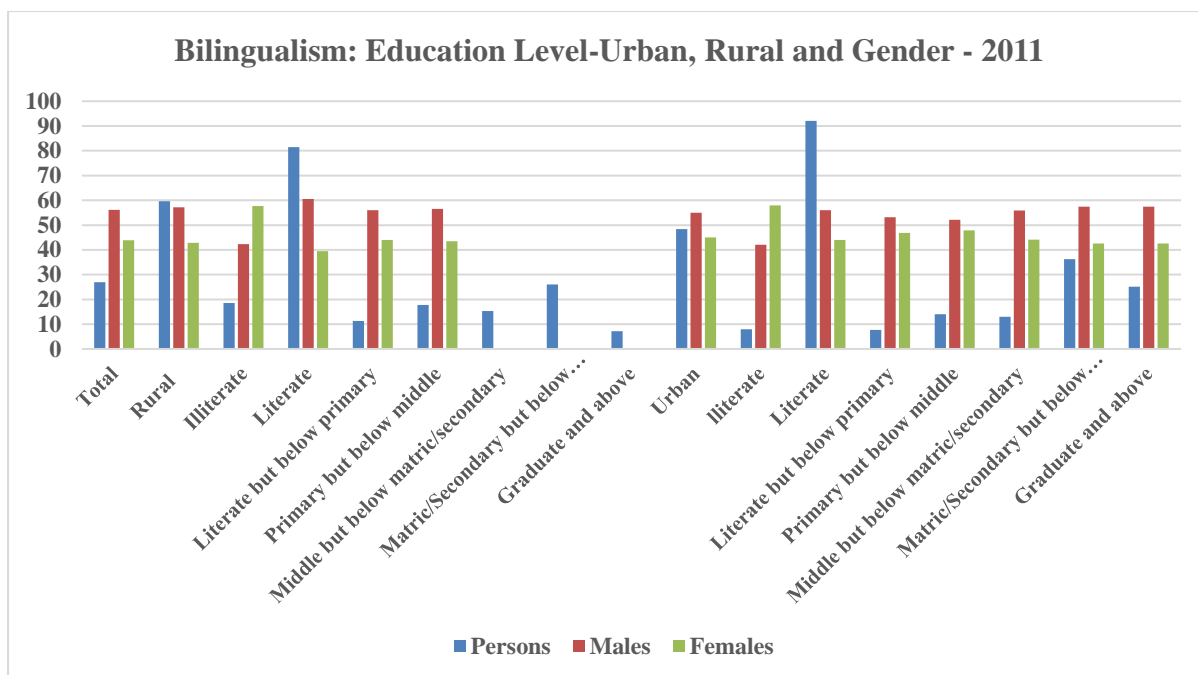
below middle level [17.81%] persons. In all, more than 50% of the bilinguals belong to the category of matric and above categories. This proves that really education is spreading multilingualism.

Bilingualism: Education Level-Urban, Rural and Gender

Sociology of knowing a second subsidiary language by males and females is reflected in the statistics of education level, rural/urban divide and gender. Table–17, illustrates the distribution of bilingualism in different education levels and its correlation with urban, rural and gender groups. It may be seen that more illiterate females are bilingual in both rural [57.91%] and urban [57.71%] areas.

Table - 17
Bilingualism: Education Level-Urban, Rural and Gender

Education level	Rural			Urban		
	Persons	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females
Total	59.63	57.17	42.83	48.36	54.95	45.05
Illiterate	18.57	42.29	57.71	7.92	42.09	57.91
Literate	81.43	60.57	39.43	92.08	56.05	43.95
Literate but below primary	11.37	56.00	44.00	7.74	53.18	46.82
Primary but below middle	17.78	56.51	43.49	14.00	52.14	47.86
Middle but below matric/secondary	15.35			12.95	55.88	44.12
Matric/Secondary but below graduate	26.01			36.29	57.41	42.59
Graduate and above	7.23			25.09	57.46	42.54



More literate bilingual males are in urban [92.08%] areas than in rural [81.43%] areas. Education in the urban areas has spread bilingualism among the educated persons beyond matric [36.29% +25.09%]. The picture is reversed in the spread of bilingualism among literate but below matric/secondary, more rural persons [11.37%+17.78%+15.35%] are bilingual.

Trilingualism: Education Level and Gender

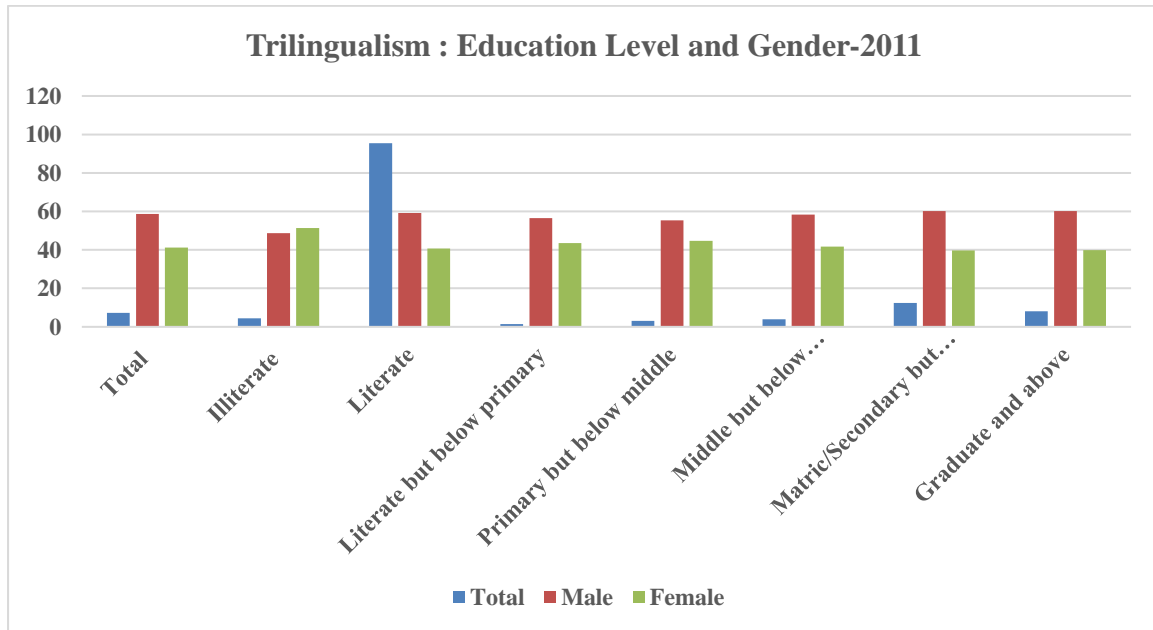
Education has a real impact on people knowing the first and second subsidiary language. Among illiterates 13.42% of persons are bilingual but among illiterates only 4.51% are trilingual. In case of bilingualism and education-literate only 86.58% of persons were bilingual however in case of trilingualism and education – literate 95.4% of persons are trilingual.

Table - 18
Education Level, Gender and Trilingualism: 2011

	Total	Male	Female
Total	7.34	58.75	41.24
Illiterate	4.51	48.72	51.28
Literate	95.4	59.23	40.77
Literate but below primary	1.37	56.46	43.54
Primary but below middle	3.17	55.37	44.63
Middle but below matric/secondary	3.94	58.33	41.67
Matric/Secondary	12.43	60.21	39.79

but below graduate			
Graduate and above	8.12	60.13	39.87

It is important for the scholars studying multilingualism that in the table-18 that in all categories less females are trilingual than males except in case of the category of illiterates [51.28%]. We saw the same trend among this group in bilingualism [57.76%] too. Like in bilingualism majority of trilingual population belong to the category of educated from matric and above [12.43%+8.12%].



Though among educated up to matric and above category more males [60.21% and 60.13%] are trilingual, compared to all the categories very less females [39.79% and 39.87%] are trilingual

Trilingualism: Education Level-Urban, Rural and Gender

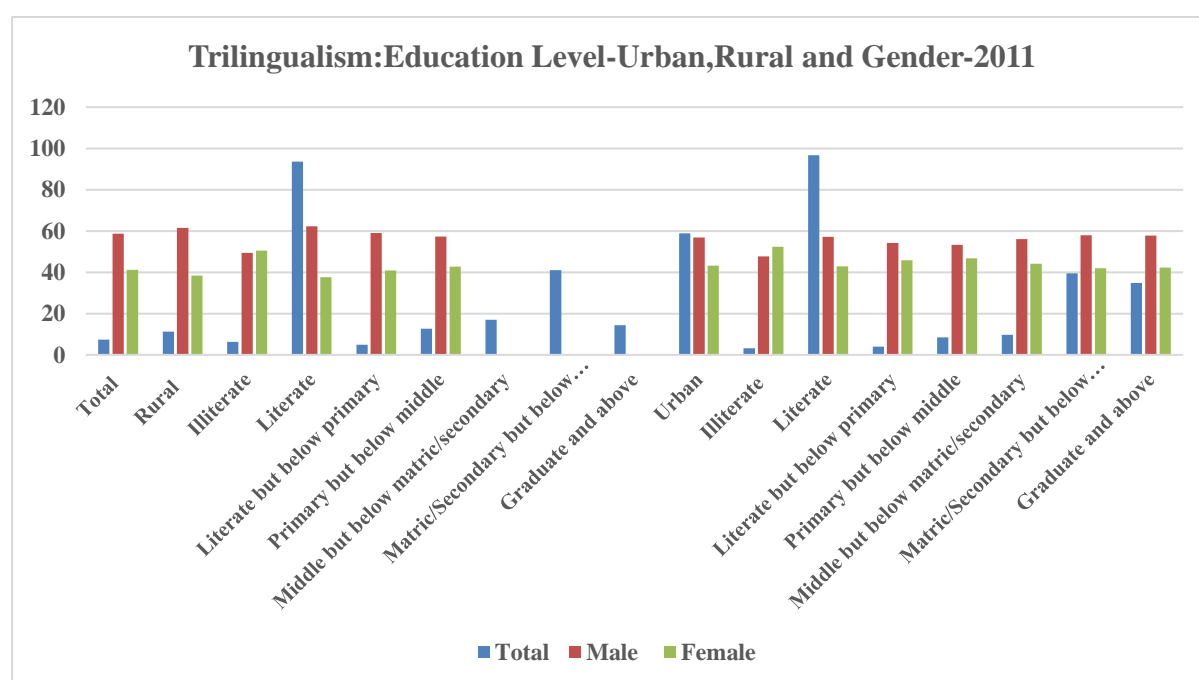
If bilingualism is rural phenomenon trilingualism is an urban phenomenon is reflected in the parameter of education level too. Similarly, more illiterate females are trilingual in both rural [50.51%] and urban [52.32%] areas. Table -19 illustrates the same.

Table -19
Trilingualism: Education Level-Urban, Rural and Gender

Education Level	Rural			Urban		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
Rural	11.23	61.53	38.47	58.86	56.82	43.18
Illiterate	6.31	49.49	50.51	3.25	47.68	52.32
Literate	93.69	62.34	37.66	96.74	57.13	42.87
Literate but below	4.95	59.05	40.95	4.05	54.17	45.83

primary						
Primary but below middle	12.72	57.31	42.69	8.44	53.27	46.73
Middle but below matric/secondary	16.99			9.66	56.16	44.12
Matric/ Secondary but below graduate	41.12			39.51	58.01	41.99
Graduate and above	14.39			34.82	57.73	42.27

In this it is to be noted that in all categories though trilingualism is an urban phenomenon, in the category of matric /secondary but below graduate educated persons in the rural areas 41.12% are trilingual but in the same category in urban areas 39.31% of persons are trilingual, less than urban population. This breaks the tradition.



In the graduate and above educated category urban [34.82%] persons outnumber the rural [14.39%] persons. Knowing of the second subsidiary language seems to be more in the persons of rural [12.72%, 16.99%] areas than in the people of urban [8.44%,9.66%] areas among the primary and secondary education category.

‘Others’ and Multilingualism

The neglected category of languages in the discussion on Indian languages is of *others*. They are part and parcel of the language tables of the Census of India. In 2001 they were 0.17% of the population and in 2011, they are 0.16%. The speakers of these languages in 2011 are reporting as 69.82% and 38.33% of them know the first and second subsidiary languages. This is much more than the bilingual and trilingual percentage of speakers of scheduled and non-scheduled languages and also of thenational average.

This analysis of 2011 Census data on multilingualism in 21st century India shows that it is growing from decade to decade. Here I have discussed the penetration of mother tongues into the communication territory of speakers of different languages. Bilingualism has almost got stabilized and developing in most of the languages. Trilingualism is fluctuating and it is yet to get stabilized. Multilingualism is not evenly distributed in the country. Hindi, the most powerful and statistically dominant language is yet to pick up threads of bilingualism and trilingualism in other languages. Bilingualism is rurally dominated and trilingualism is dominant in urban areas. People of the age group of 30-49 years dominate in both bilingual and trilingual scenario. Education is playing significant role in spreading multilingualism. It is noteworthy to note that illiterate females outnumber males in both being bilingual and trilingual. Multilingualism of the society is responsible for it.

The speakers of the non-scheduled languages though comparatively less in numbers are far ahead of the speakers of the scheduled languages in becoming multilingual. The speakers of Indian languages 'others', the nameless for researchers are fast becoming multilingual. Since they are numerically less, in due course of time may shift from their mother tongue to the neighbourhood and/or numerically strong languages. They are most endangered than any other languages in India. The Census of India has to release their names, statistical information of speakers and places where they are spoken so that appropriate steps to save them and preserve the intangible heritage they embody could be initiated.

Linguistic pluralism is not merely coexistence of multiple languages in a nation, but also it is sharing more languages by the people for communications. Here who shares which language in which geographic territory is also important. Hence, linguistic pluralism has to be viewed from a different angle from other kinds of pluralisms of ethnicity, religion, culture etc.

To conclude we may cite Peter Auer and Li Wei that '...most of the human language users in the world speak more than one language, i.e., they are at least bilingual. In quantitative terms, then, monolingualism may be the exception and multilingualism the norm.' India too may not be an exception,

The second part of this paper will discuss the '*Multilingualism in 21st Century Indian States and Union Territories*'.

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