

Language Policy of Karnataka
Historical Evolution and Contemporary Challenges
(Dedicated to my teacher Prof. M.S.Thirumalai)

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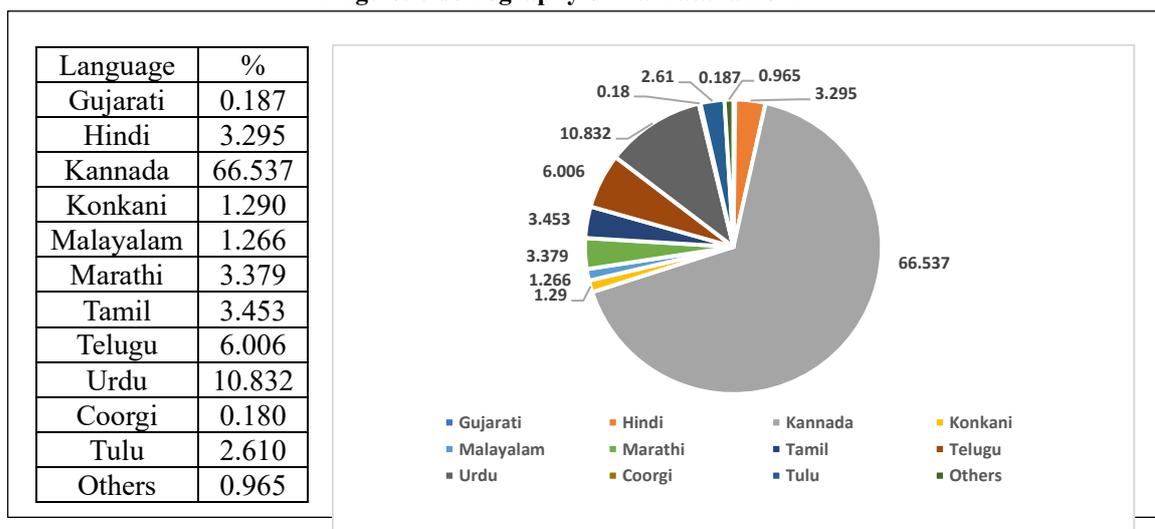
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Introduction

Linguistic landscape of Karnataka

Karnataka is one of the states positioned in the southern parts of the Union of India. It came into existence in the present form because of the reorganization of the states on the linguistic lines, by the unification of 20 Kannada speaking geographical administrative units of the British on Nov 1, 1956, based on the language used by majority of speakers and geographic contiguity. Like India, Karnataka also is a multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-lingual pluralistic state. The linguistic demography of Karnataka presents a rainbow combination of mother tongues, and it is one of the most multilingual states in the country. As far as multilingualism is concerned there is no parallel to Karnataka in India, so are the issues of language use in education, administration, judiciary, mass communication etc., in the state. This multilingualism is unique not only because of coexistence of many languages but also because more people are having competence to use more languages other than their mother tongue. The Census of India 1971 recorded 166 mother tongues in Karnataka. The Census of India 2001 provides a list of 146 mother tongues along with their population. According to 2011 Census (since no census is conducted in 2021) of the number of speakers of the 18 languages in the state are: Kannada-4,06,51,090; Urdu-66,18,324; Telugu-35,69,400; Marathi-20,64,906; Tamil-21,10,128; Tulu-15,95,038; Konkani-7,88,294; Malayalam-7,74,057; Hindi-20,13,364; Kodava / Coorgi-1,10,508; Gujarati-1,14,616; Bengali-87,963; Tibetan-27,544; English-23,227; Odia-64,119; Nepali-19274; Punjabi-25981; Sindhi- 16,954 and 4 mother tongues are Lamani/Lambadi-9,74,622; Marwari-1,00,214; Banjari-25,373; Yerava-26536. First three of them are part of Hindi language and the last one is chunk of the Malayalam language as per the census records.

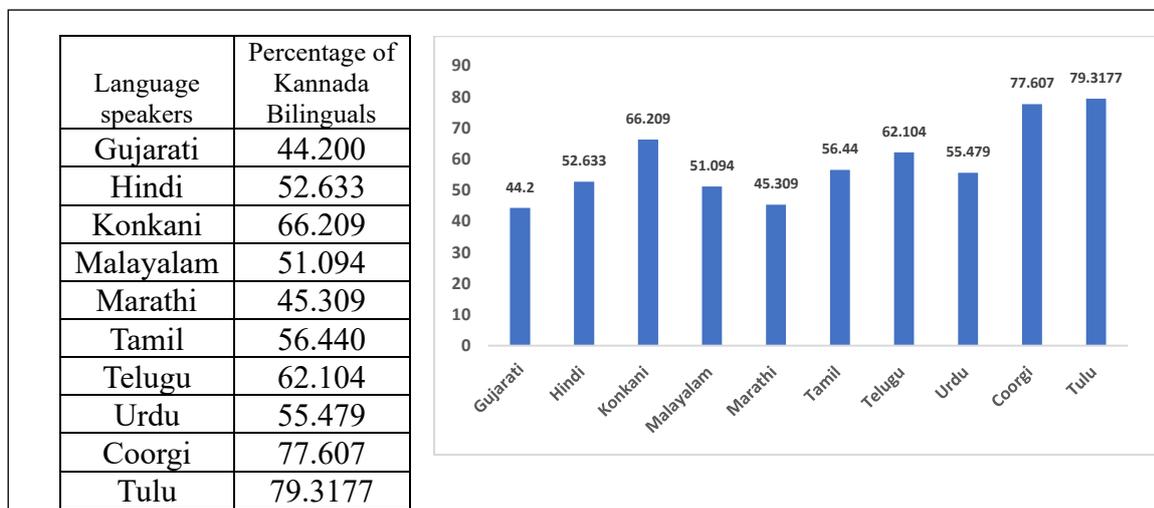
Table:1
Linguistic demography of Karnataka:2011



*Others also include: Arebhashe, Byari, Koraga, Jenu Kuruba, Soliga etc

In India 26.01% of the population are bilinguals (Mallikarjun:2019). Whereas in Karnataka bilingualism is widespread, 39.696% of the population are bilinguals much above the national average and 23.103% of Kannada speakers are bilingual. More than fifty percent of many language speakers are bilingual in Kannada. The table -2 and the chart illustrate Kannada bilingualism.

Table:2
Bilinguals in Kannada-2011



Karnataka has common borders with the states of Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Goa, Maharashtra, and Kerala where Telugu, Tamil, Konkani, Marathi, and Malayalam are the Official Languages respectively. The bordering districts of these states have many bilingual populations. The socio-economic survey of the Government of Karnataka (2015) indicates its interest and concern towards language issues in policy formulation. It elicits information from its population about the following mother tongues: Kannada, Hindi, Urdu, Telugu, Tamil, Marathi, Malayalam, English, Kodava, Konkani, Tulu, Byari, Arebhashe and

Others (not named). Interesting additions are English a non-scheduled language, Arebhashe and Byari and exclusion of Lamani / Lambadi, Yerava, Marwari, Gujarati, Bengali, Tibetan which have a greater number of speakers than English in Karnataka. The inclusion of English reminds us of the attempt of the British to know the number of people who know 'to read and write English' in 1891, 1901, 1911, 1921, 1931 and 1941 through decennial Census in India as part of colonial administration. Now inclusion of English indicates the increasing influence of English on society and the state government in socio-economic-educational and language policy formulation. [A new socio-economic survey has started in Karnataka from August 2025.)

Language policy

While discussing the language policy of a multilingual society, a distinction between official language and the language(s) used in administration must be made. Many times, the language policy discussions treat official language, language(s) used in administration as synonyms. However, they perform different functions in this kind of a society. Precisely speaking, official language is *a language used in the business of government, legislative, executive and judiciary*. Languages used in administration are *the languages in which rulers and the civilians communicate with each other on matters relating to the governance*. Both occupy the central place in the context of language use in society. The official language(s) and the school language(s) *as subject and as medium of instruction* are interconnected.

Historically, before the reorganization, language policy of Karnataka was unwritten (in today's sense of language planning and policy) and it has evolved mostly through the instructions of the rulers and participation of the people. Before entering the phase of formal formulation and declaration of language policy after independence of India and reorganization of Karnataka, the evolution of unwritten language policy is briefly decoded here through the available historical records.

Before the independence of India

The history of the geographic entity *Karnataka* and the language *Kannada* is more than two thousand years old. Concurrently it is a modern as well as a classical language. The earliest reference to the name Karnataka is in Mahabharata. The first available record of presence of Kannada language is the '*halmiDi*' inscription of 450 AD. The first literary work, a work of poetics is '*kaviraajamaarga*' of 850 AD by Srivijaya. He was in the court of the Rasthtrakuta king Nripathunga (814-877AD). The first literary work in prose is '*vaDDaaraadhane*' of the 9th Century AD. The '*kaviraajamaarga*' speaks about the geographic spread of Karnataka from ('*kaaveeriyinda goodaavarivaremirda naaDadaa kannaDadoL*') the land between the river Kaveri (in the South) to the river Godavari (in the North) is accepted as the land of Kannada. Also, it records '*adaroLagam kisuvolaLaa vidita mahaa koaNa nagaradaa puligereyaasadabhistu tamapponkundada naDuvaNa naadee kannaDada tiruL*' that Kannada spoken by the people in and around Kishuvolalu (paTTAdakallu), Puligere (lakkShmeShwara) Koppana (koppaLa) and Omkumda as the standard Kannada language. Santvarma's inscription of 450 AD specifies Banavasi as the heart of Karnataka. Kadambas of Banavasi ruled northern part for nearly 215 years (325 AD to 540 AD). They are recognized as the first Kannadiga rulers of Karnataka. This was the period of transition from Prakrit to Sanskrit. Old inscriptions are in Sanskrit but the information to be communicated to the common people is in Kannada. They used language of the people in the inscriptions. Kannada had due representation at this time.

The southern part was ruled by Gangas of Talakad for nearly 674 years (350 AD to 999 AD). They were also Kannadiga kings. All the information needed for their people was communicated by them in Kannada language and script. After Kadambas, Chalukyas of Badami ruled for nearly 257 years (500 AD to 757 AD). They also used Kannada language and

script more in the inscriptions. During their regime, for the first time all the Kannada speaking people came under one administration. In the history of Kannada language and literature Amoghavarsha Nrupathunga of Rashtrakutas of Malakhed (735AD to 973AD) is remembered for '*kaviraajamaarga*', the earliest Kannada work authored by Srivijaya during his time. During the period of descendants of Badami Chalukyas, the Chalukyas of Kalyana (973AD to 1198AD) *vacana* literature, a new literary genre blossomed. Their inscriptions are in Kannada. Sevunas of Devagiri ruled from 850 AD to 1318 AD and there are nearly 600 inscriptions of them in present Karnataka, Maharashtra, and Andhra Pradesh. Most of them are in Kannada language and script. The Vijayanagar empire: Sangama dynasty 1336-1485, Saluva 1485-1505, Tuluva 1505-1572 ruled Karnataka for more than two centuries. Out of 5350 inscriptions of the history of this dynasty 2500 are in Kannada. Some other dynasties (all not mentioned) that ruled Karnataka are Hoysalas 1000-1346, Aravidu -1669, Nayakas of Keladi 1499-1757, Wodeyars of Mysore 1399-1831 etc. At different times in the history of Karnataka *maThas*, *paaThashaalaas*, *agrahaaras* functioned and in the village schools education was imparted at elementary/primary level in Kannada. In the institutions of higher learning *ghaTikasthanas*, *brahmapuris* learning at higher level was in Sanskrit. Since beginning Kannada has remained as the language of creative writing and communication among the common folk. Thousands of Kannada inscriptions found in the state and neighboring states bear witness to the fact that the rulers communicated in Kannada with the people whom they administered.

Some parts of northern Karnataka had come under the influence of Marathi from the thirteenth to eighteenth century because of Maratha's rule. Islamic kingdoms Bahamanis 1347-1538 AD and Adilshahis 1489-1686 AD administered parts of Karnataka in the North and Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan (1761-1799 AD) in the South. Adilshahis used Kannada and Marathi for administration. The administrative and justice structure of these rulers almost replaced the system existed till then and their language Arabic/Persian occupied the prime place. Teaching Arabic, Persian was initiated. Knowledge of Arabic became essential for persons in administration. Thus, now Kannada has abundant vocabulary from these languages used in administration and judiciary. Most of the inscriptions of Bahamanis are in Arabic and Persian, some of them bi-lingual use Kannada, Marathi, and Telugu, since their subjects happened to be speaking these languages.

The Mumbai Karnataka from thirteenth century was under the influence of Maratha people and their language. This was manifest in administration and education by 1830 AD. At that time Marathi was the language of administration and had priority in the government schools. Though Kannada was the language of people, Marathi was taught in the schools instead of mother tongue. There was a dearth of schoolbooks, students, and teachers to teach Kannada. The people from the upper strata of the society had love towards Marathi but the common people had liking for Kannada. More Kannada speakers were in the rural areas and a smaller number of them in the urban areas. One Kannada school was opened in Dharwad in 1830 and another one in Hubli in 1833. Since the public opinion was in favour of Kannada, Kannada schools were opened in the taluka centres. Due to the efforts of the activists and the readiness of the government this trend continued, and more Kannada schools were opened in the region. The British East India Company (1603 AD) had started the business in the west and east coast of India. By gradually exploiting the social and political condition that existed in the country it acquired the reins of administration and started ruling since 1835. The British started to show keen interest in administering the parts of Karnataka from 1843 onwards.

Peculiar situation existed in the Hyderabad Karnataka ruled by Hyderabad Nizams. In this region during the rule of Adilshahis and Peshwas, Persian and Marathi had the prime position in administration. Persons in business were learning Marathi. Kannada remained as a

spoken language used in the villages, at home, at market etc. A *unique language policy framing activity* that took place at this time is important to be recorded here. In 1860 the British took over Surpur. The subedar got reports from the taluk officers from each district about languages used in administration and based on them reported to the higher authorities. Summary is: (1) in the Kalburgi district in two talukas Telugu is used and it is correct. In other taluks using Marathi is not proper since people are speaking Kannada, so the records of the taluka and villagers should be kept in Kannada. If the village officials are not knowing Kannada, they should be given one year time to learn Kannada. (2) in the Raichur district using Kannada in four talukas is appropriate. Using Telugu in one Taluka is also correct. In another one taluka though people are using Kannada, there is no reason for not keeping records in Kannada and since earlier times the records are kept in Marathi and village officials are familiar with Marathi cannot be the reasons. (3) in the Lingasuguru district in all talukas except in two talukas records are kept in Kannada. The officials in these two talukas may be given one year time to learn Kannada and keep the records in Kannada.

The authorities considered the recommendations and gave three years to the officials to learn Kannada. It is worthy to note that taluk was considered as a unit to choose the language to be used in administration. Other than Mysore region, the rulers of other regions were Marathas, Urdu speakers etc. Naturally their language was the official language but to reach out to the public they used Kannada in administration. ‘Though the Nizam and Marathas tried to impose Urdu and Marathi respectively, in the territories of Karnataka under their control, they did not lose sight of the importance of Kannada (Kamath S U: 1982)’. In Hyderabad Karnataka region Kannada had remained mostly as a spoken language, teaching and learning Kannada did not find meaningful place in education. In Coorg, Kannada was a school language as well as a language of administration. After Mummadi Krishnaraja Wodeyar the Mysore region was administered by the British from 1831 to 1881 through their commissioners. The British did not impose English in administration but conducted it in the language of the people. In the Mysore region Kannada was the medium of instruction in 1842. One of the Commissioners recommended to divide the districts into hoblis and open Kannada schools and teach subjects in the Kannada medium in 1868 and teach all the subjects in the Kannada medium only. They recognized the multilingual nature of the region, administered and communicated with the people in the local languages. For this purpose, to understand these languages necessary academic set-up needed was created by them through publications, translation, and training. As an unwritten language policy, historically Kannada had remained as a language of administration in Karnataka though rulers belonged to Marathi, Urdu, English etc. In the earlier periods law was not written. In the domain of judiciary Kannada, the language of the people prevailed. The kings communicated many of their decisions through the inscriptions using Kannada and sometimes multilingually. The written Mohammedan law of Islamic rulers and Evidence Act, Penal Code of the British were translated into Kannada and used to help in the delivery of justice.

While ruling a vast multilingual country like India the British used local languages in administration but needed an official language for their convenience, it was English which consequently became the medium of instruction also. Since the official language and the language of education are interrelated, English emerged as an important school language and as the medium of instruction during the British. It became a language of prestige. Jayathirtha Rajapurohit (1985) sums up result thus ‘This led to the disappearance of Kannada from the field of administration and education, and the local people lost interest in pursuing the language;’

After the independence of India

The Constitution of India adopted by the Constituent Assembly on November 26, 1949, came into effect from January 26, 1950. It has codified provisions on languages for the union and the states. For the *official purposes* the state legislatures were constitutionally empowered to adopt any one or more languages used in the state or Hindi as the language/s used for official and other purposes in the states. Hence, most of the states have provisions for use of multiple languages in administration though they declare one language which is normally a language of majority of people as the official language in their Official Language Act. Correspondence between the union and the states and vice versa and between the states is an important factor. Article 346 makes provision for use of the official language of the union for communication between the union and states and between two states. At the same time, if there is an agreement between two states, they can use Hindi for inter-state communication. In the *legislature* representatives of the people have different mother tongues and they need not necessarily know or be conversant with the official language of the union or languages of administration. Hence, in the state legislature, though the official business is transacted in the Official language, there is a provision the Speaker will permit the member to address the house in his or her mother tongue under Article 210. It must be noted that in India all languages are mother tongues, but all mother tongues are not languages (Mallikarjun:2025). For redressing *grievances* there is an inbuilt mechanism. For this purpose, under Article 350 the citizens of India have a provision to submit their representation to the union or the state in any language used in the state or the union.

The *judiciary* has three important levels of structure: The lowest at the sub-divisional and/or at district level, the High Court at state level and the Supreme Court at the highest level. English is the language to be used for 'all proceedings in the Supreme Court, High Court, authoritative texts of all Bills to be introduced or amendments moved in either House of Parliament or in either House of the Legislature of a State Article 348(1) (i); all Acts passed by Parliament or the Legislature of a State Article 348(1) (ii); and all Ordinances promulgated by the President or the Governor of a State, and all orders, rules, regulations and bye-laws issued under the Constitution or under any law made by Parliament or the Legislature of a State' Article 348(1) (iii); In the instances where the 'State has prescribed any language other than the English language for use in Bills, Acts, Ordinances a translation of the same in the English language be published under the authority shall be deemed to be the authoritative text in English language.' Article 348(3); Whereas the 'official language shall be the language of all Courts of Sessions, Judicial Magistrates, Civil Courts subordinate to the High Court in the State'. But English shall also continue to be the language of the said courts. Any presiding officer whose mother tongue is not the official language of the state may continue to record the evidence in English. One may make use of such English words and phrases as he/she may think necessary to exactly bring out the purport and meaning of any expression. As far as the Judiciary is concerned though the official language of the state and the union have an important role, English text is used as authority since the legal system has heavily borrowed from the English system.

After more than two years of adoption of the Constitution an attempt to frame language policy before reorganization of the states, the Chief Minister of the Mysore constituted a Committee for Educational Reform in Mysore with J.B. Mallaradhya as the Member Secretary on September 10, 1952 apart from other issues '*To examine the advisability and feasibility of further extending the Kannada medium and to consider generally the language policy of the state.*' The committee recommended that the curriculum for primary schools should comprise

(a) Language, (Mother tongue) (b) An introduction to Samskrita, (c) Kannada for non-Kannada pupils from 3rd year primary class, (d) English, to be introduced from 5th Year. '

After the reorganization of the states

The integration of the geographical units that had Kannada as the dominant language was expected to help the people to work united for faster economic development and help wider participation of common people in the developmental activities initiated by the State. It was also expected to help develop Kannada as a fit vehicle of communication, administration, education, mass communication etc., to meet the modern needs. So, after the linguistic re-unification of Karnataka on Nov 1, 1956, the State Government appointed a committee in 1958 to make recommendations regarding the adoption of Kannada as the official language.

Part- I

Administration

On the recommendation of the Committee and as per the Article 345 of the Constitution of India the Karnataka Official Language Act, 1963, (Act No. 26 of 1963) which received the assent of the Governor on Oct 5, 1963, and was published in the Gazette on October 10, 1963, declared Kannada as the Official language of the State. [In the context of the contemporary history of language policy in India it is necessary to record that the Tamil Nadu enacted Madras Official Language Act in 1956 (Madras Act XXXIX of 1956) published in the Gazette in Jan 1957.] This Act allowed continuation of English to be used for all the official purposes for which it was used before the commencement of the Act. Important language policy of Karnataka that this Act and later amendments to the same could be summarized as (i). The State Government may, from time to time, by notification in the Official Gazette, direct that Kannada shall be used in respect of such official purposes and in such areas as may be specified in the notification. (ii). Kannada Language may also be used (a) in any Bill to be introduced or in amendments thereto to be moved in, or in any Act passed by, the Karnataka State Legislature; or (b) in any Ordinance promulgated by the Governor of the State of Karnataka; or (c) in any order, rule, regulation or bye-law issued by the State Government under the Constitution or under any law made by the Parliament or the Karnataka State Legislature. (iii) (a) A translation in Kannada Language published under the authority of the Governor in the Official Gazette of any Central Act or Ordinance promulgated by the President with respect to any of the matters enumerated in List III of the Seventh Schedule to the Constitution or of any State Act or of any Ordinance made by the Governor, shall be deemed to be authoritative text thereof in Kannada language. (b) A translation in Kannada Language published under the authority of the State Government in the Official Gazette of any rules, regulations, bye-laws, scheme, order etc., issued by the State Government under the Constitution or under any Central Act or any State Act or any other law in force in the State, shall be deemed to be the authoritative text thereof in Kannada language. By exercising the powers of this Act, in order to protect the rights of the linguistic minorities the government on March 12, 1968 notified that from April 1, 1968 '...if the population of any Linguistic minority in any Taluk is not less than fifteen percent :-petitions shall continue to be in the minority language concerned and replays given in that language as far as possible; handouts and publicity material shall continue to be given in such minority language; Government Notices shall continue to be published in such minority language'. Thus, in Karnataka, Kannada is the Official Language and along with that English and other minority languages are languages of administration.

Policy implementation

In fulfilment of this Act, Kannada was introduced as the official language at taluk level from April 1, 1968. This helped in the conduct of official correspondence at village and taluk level. Before the introduction of it at the sub-divisional Level from Nov 1, 1970, a committee with K. Narayana Swamy former Chief Secretary of the state as Chairman was constituted on Aug 5, 1970, to study and recommend further steps in the direction of extending the use of Kannada at sub-divisional and other higher levels of administration. The committee received the suggestions from the officials and the public from all over the state. An interim report was submitted on Oct 26, 1970, to meet the deadline of implementation at the subdivision level. The final report was submitted on March 31, 1971. This report made several recommendations. Some of them are 1 (a) Immediately Kannada should become the administrative language, along with subdivision level, at the district and state level from the administration point of view. (b) Kannada should be taught compulsorily along with other languages at all levels of education in all schools including convents and other language schools. (c) Kannada should become court language up to the district level courts with the cooperation of the high court. 2 (a) Kannada reference materials like glossaries, manuals, model correspondence, Acts, rule books, forms, registers etc., needed for administration are to be made available to the officials/offices. (b) Since all the books relating to administration are in English only, they need to be translated into Kannada, suitable human resources needed for the same must be created. 3 (a) Kannada typewriters, stenographers must be made available to all the offices. (b) Arrangements may be made to train the present English stenographers in Kannada stenography. (c) Name plates, rubber stamps in the offices should be in Kannada. 4 (a) Records relating to land reforms are in English. All related documents should be in Kannada. (b) If suitable Kannada word is not found, English word itself can be transliterated into Kannada and used. 5 (a) Orders from the secretariat, department heads should be in Kannada. (b) All communications from the offices to the public should be in Kannada. 6. (a) Kannada should be taught to the officials who do not know Kannada. (b) Training programs should be conducted in administrative Kannada for the officials. (c) Incentives may be given to the officials for using Kannada in administration. (d) Officials should sign in Kannada and speak in Kannada with the public. 7 (a) While implementing these recommendations, safeguards given to the minorities must be kept in mind. (b) Kannada language advisory committee must be constituted *for a few years* to oversee the progress of implementation and give advice regarding use of Kannada in administration.

Subsequently the government directed that Kannada should be used in all communications in all government offices at district level from Aug 15, 1972, within the district and not beyond it. Finally, from Nov 1, 1979, at the state level and orders facilitated all official correspondence at village, taluk, subdivision, district, and state level in Kannada. At the same time English was permitted to be used if the matter is too technical or scientific and if it was not possible to leave English it can be used in correspondence above the district level offices. Also, in a taluka if linguistic minorities population is not less than fifteen percent and if they submit any memorandum in their language those may be responded as far as possible in that language. Publication of the publicity materials, government notices etc., must be continued in those languages.

The powers of the Criminal Procedure Code were invoked and judiciary also was brought under the purview of Kannada as official language; from Nov 1, 1974 all courts of the Judicial Magistrates; from Sep 14, 1978 all Civil Courts subordinate to the High Court and from May 21/23, 1979 in all Courts of Sessions in Karnataka Kannada was declared as the language. However, English was allowed to be the language of the courts, if Kannada is not

the mother tongue of the Presiding Officer, he was permitted to record evidence in English also the Presiding Officer was allowed to use English words and phrases if necessary.

The officials were directed to respond to the Kannada petitions and letters in Kannada only (August 24, 1970). The government offices were asked to display Bilingual ((Kannada and English) name plates of the offices and the officers of the government (Dec 8. 1971). Use of Bilingual seals, rubber stamps and letter heads in the government offices was made compulsory (June 29, 1972). Even after four years of introduction of Kannada in administration at the taluk and subdivisional offices use of English continued unabated. So, with effect from Jan 1, 1977, use of English was wished to be kept at minimum. The district level offices were asked prepare notes and to correspond with the subordinate offices and the public in Kannada. A direction to compulsory use Kannada in administration throughout the state at all levels of administration including all corporations, government aided autonomous institutions etc., from Feb 15, 1983, was issued. It was decided to supply only Kannada typewriters to the taluk level offices and the existing English typewriters are to be withdrawn and given to the district level offices wherever necessary (Aug 27, 1979). Efforts were made as part of celebration of *raJabhasha varsha* (year of official language) for one year from Nov 1, 1979, to compulsorily use Kannada at all levels of administration. All the heads of the departments were ordered to make reviews regarding the use of Kannada in administration as per the directions of the government, whenever they visit their subordinate offices and include it in their report and inform the same to the director of the Kannada and Culture.

In implementing the official language policy Kannada- English bilingualism was at the core. The government noticed that earlier documents were normally prepared in English and then rendered into Kannada. But the reverse of the same translation from Kannada to English was advised. The secretaries of all the departments were asked to prepare all bills, annual reports, statements of the government, answers to the questions etc., to be placed in the legislature must be prepared and presented/supplied in Kannada. Thus, prepared documents must be translated into English and both versions presented (Sep 9, 1980). The Karnataka Local Authorities (Official Language) Act 1981 was published in the Gazette on April 1, 1981, which declared Kannada as the Official language of all the local authorities. Here the local authority includes statutory corporation established by the government, registered cooperative society (April 1, 1981).

Overseeing the implementation

kannaDa aaDaLita bhaaShaa kaavalu samiti

The government desired compulsory implementation of comprehensive use of Kannada in administration at all levels from Feb 15, 1983. It must be used in file noting, correspondences, proceedings of the meetings, accounts, register etc., if necessary, English could also be used without parting Kannada. Even after nearly twenty years of efforts to implement the official language policy in the domain of administration there was not a visible success. The success or otherwise of a policy could be measured only after its effective implementation. Narayana Swamy Committee in its report on March 31, 1971, itself had recommended constitution of an advisory committee *for a few years* to oversee the progress of implementation and to give advice regarding use of Kannada in administration. So, the first effort, to oversee the implementation of official language policy, a committee *kannaDa aaDaLita bhaaShaa kaavalu samiti* (Administrative Kannada Watchdog Committee) was constituted on June 23, 1983. It was mandated to see whether all the departments are trying to implement the state governments policy of official language compulsorily; whether any deficiencies are found in this effort; who or what are the reasons for these deficiencies;

suggestions to overcome these deficiencies and are there any other proposals to implement the policy of the government quickly and satisfactorily?

On the recommendation of this committee the government ordered the return of the English typewriters from the taluka and subdivisional offices before Dec 31, 1983; district and division level offices to retain one and two of them respectively and return the rest before March 31, 1984. Also, from July 16, 1984 in all the government offices excluding the departments dealing with technical matters, the day today affairs should be conducted in Kannada; already supplied English forms, registers etc., must be filled in Kannada, inter office correspondence must be written in Kannada, when the office staff write notes on file in Kannada, officers above them should not make notes on them in English.

The heads of the department and officers were advised to specify the ability of the government employees to use Kannada in administration and their commitment to the same while writing their confidential reports (April 7, 1984). Knowledge of Kannada was made compulsory for the government appointments. The persons selected on or after Aug 8, 1986, were to be appointed only after they pass in the Kannada language examination conducted by the appointing authority (July 16, 1985). Knowledge of Kannada was a prerequisite for them. Whereas passing in the Kannada departmental examination or an examination declared as equal to this by the government, by the officials of the All-India Services in the state cadre was also made compulsory. The officials who had studied Kannada as a main subject or medium of instruction were exempted (Nov 19, 1994).

It had come to the notice of the government that the offices at the division and the districts are lagging behind in the implementation of the official language policy of the government and it took serious note of it and ordered strict implementation of its orders and instructions of the government in this regard; the violation of the same was considered as negligence and disobedience to the orders of the government and disciplinary action be taken for the same; the local bodies, local institutions getting grants from the government, boards, municipalities, administrative institutions, government factories/industries, universities etc., were asked to strictly follow the instructions of the government regarding Kannada as the official language (July 27, 1990).

kannaDa abhivruddhi manDaLi

The second effort in the implementation of the language policy began with the creation of *kannaDa abhivruddhi manDaLi* instead of the earlier *kannaDa aaDaLiita bhaaShaa kaavalu samiti* (and *gaDi salahaa samiti*) by the government on Sep 14, 1990. Ineffective implementation of the official language policy had come to the notice of the chief minister so, the heads of the offices were ordered to return the files if the correspondence and file noting are not in Kannada and seek explanation from the concerned officials and the employees (Nov 20, 1991).

The jurisdiction and the responsibilities to oversee the implementation of the language policy of the government were expanded. It got the jurisdiction in addition to the government departments, now public sector undertakings, local institutions created by the government and government aided institutions to correspond directly and obtain information, clarification. It was empowered to ‘...inspect the action taken by the departments, to implement the official language policy of the government; identify the obstacles in the total implementation of Kannada as the official language and make suggestions to the government to overcome them; to give suggestions to the government regarding the need of additional administrative language literature, training, service examinations (language examination); make review of any violation in the implementation of the orders regarding Kannada in the presence of the officer and report to the government to take action on such persons; any other matters that the government may

assign from time to time and prepare an action plan to implement the Sarojini Mahishi committee recommendations through the concerned departments (The details of are discussed in the section on employment).’

Kannada Development Authority

The third effort of the government was to give the statutory status to the Authority, through the Karnataka Act No.28 of 1994 to the Kannada Development Authority (KDA) to supervise the effective implementation of the annual project, programmes prepared by the Authority for the development of Kannada in various departments, to monitor and evaluate the implementation of as Kannada official language. The defined functions in the Act included:

‘(a) review the actions taken by the different departments; public undertakings, all institutions and local bodies and institutions and receiving grants by the State Government in the implementation of official language policy of the State Government; (b) suggest measures to the State Government for the effective implementation of the recommendations of Dr. Sarojini Mahishi Report as approved by the State Government; (c) identify the hurdles in the implementation of Kannada as the administrative language and to take suitable measures to solve them; (d) review from time to time the system of Kannada Examinations (Service Examination), Examinations conducted for testing the knowledge of Kannada along with the relevant syllabus existing or that may be prepared and if necessary suggest the Government to revise, modify or renew the same, to conduct study and consultations regarding the manufacture, purchase and distribution of Kannada typewriters, the use of Kannada in modern equipment like computers, teleprinters, telex, which are used in the modernisation of offices and in this connection to take decisions that would promote extensive use of Kannada and to take necessary actions to get it implemented; (e) arrange training programmes, workshops, exhibitions and seminars which would facilitate the use of Kannada for officers and officials and Kannada teaching courses for non-kannadigas and to prepare the necessary syllabus and literature; (f) publish, purchase and distribute useful publications relating to the development of Kannada; (g) ensure all the forms used in the offices are printed in Kannada and to examine and grant permission for the printing of forms, publications and registers which are required to be in languages other than Kannada; (h) examine whether the regional language as being used in the forms, notices and name plates that are in day to day use in accordance with the language policy of the Central Government in the offices of the Central Government, banks, post offices and in other offices and undertakings which have more public contacts in the State and to conduct correspondence with those offices in this connections; (i) take decisions on the matters of preparation, revision, printing and distribution of reference books on administration and to implement the same and to monitor the progress in this field and suggest necessary measures; (j) examine the standards of Kannada text books and give instructions to rectify the mistakes, if any, in these books.

The domain of the KDA got further expanded with effect from Sep 30, 1997, by the inclusion of the clause to ‘...take action to secure priority for, and promotion of Kannada in the field of education and cultural activities.’ Further, the KDA was authorised to ‘...seek and obtain information relating to the implementation of Dr. Sarojini Mahishi Report and the Kannada Development from any officer of the State Government and such officer shall be bound to furnish the information...’ and KDA was anticipated to ‘...advise the State Government regarding implementation of its projects and programmes.’ Thus, KDA got very wide space to function.

The government constituted awareness committees at the taluka, district, and city corporation level to involve people in the effective implementation of the language policy of the government and the Kannada development programmes (Oct 21,1997). Further Kannada

implementation wings were advised / formed at all the levels of administration like secretariat, division, district, sub-division, and taluk. Punitive measures like reprimanding, withholding of annual increment, withholding of promotion, demotion were also recommended to the employees who do not use Kannada in administration (June 13,2002).

PART-II Education

As we already in the beginning, before unification of Karnataka, the different geographical units that came under the umbrella of Karnataka had different patterns of school education. As a result of unification, they were supposed to come under one system. A perusal of the documents from these regions that comprise the present-day Karnataka indicates the existence of three different kinds of schools: Vernacular schools, English schools, and Anglo-Vernacular schools. The vernacular schools taught the regional language and other subjects in the same language. Similarly, the English schools taught English and other subjects in English. Both these types of schools existed in almost all the regions. Although several common elements in the curriculum adopted in the different regions could be identified, there were differences in the curriculum from one region to another. Only languages having their own script had found a place in formal education at the time of unification. The aim of this education system was to spread ‘...European knowledge throughout all class of people and this was to be imparted to the upper classes through the medium of English and to the masses through their own spoken languages.’

But precisely, after the unification (now also), the role of Sanskrit in school education was the major crux before the *shikshaNa eekataasamiti*, at state level, chaired by the minister for education that went into the issues of common curriculum for the reorganized state. This committee included Sanskrit in the list of first languages in the school education. Though Karnataka was formed with Kannada as a major language of the state, it could not escape from including Sanskrit in the school curriculum at the secondary stage, though in reality it is not a natural mother tongue of any person. According to this decision even the students with Kannada, Telugu, Marathi, Hindi, and Tamil could study Sanskrit as a first language. etc., in schooling. The terms first, second, third language etc., are pedagogical terms referring to their chronological introduction in the schools; thus, first language must be the language first introduced to the student in the school. First language and medium of instruction are normally expected to be correlated. Now in multilingual context these pedagogical terms are aberrated and such correlation has almost vanished.

Stage-I

Primacy of mother tongue in primary schools from 1st to 4th standards :1956

Karnataka adopted a uniform curriculum and syllabus for all its regions/districts in the state from 1959-60, and by the end of 1962-63 all the schools had totally switched over to the new uniform curriculum. Karnataka established the following pattern of language policy for education in schools since the linguistic reorganization of states in 1956.

1. **I to IV Standards:** The students would study only one language, that is, the mother tongue. Maximum 100 marks with a minimum of 40% for pass.
2. **V to VII Standards:** One more language out of the following ten languages -- Kannada, Urdu, English, Marathi, Hindi, Telugu, Tamil, Malayalam, Gujarati, or Sindhi. Maximum 100 marks with a minimum of 40% for pass, and this minimum was reduced to 35% for students from the VII Standard. The students from the III Standard

to VII Standard could also study Hindi, or composite Kannada, but this was not obligatory. A composite course may be defined roughly as the higher standard of its counterpart at the ordinary level. A composite course carried more marks than the ordinary level and the students may have more than one paper for the final examination in the subject concerned.

3. VIII, IX, and X Standards:

- i. **First language:** Any one of the following languages: Kannada, Telugu, Tamil, Hindi, Urdu, Marathi, English or Sanskrit, or a composite course of one of the following languages consisting of three periods per week: Hindi, Urdu, Tamil, Telugu, and Marathi and two periods of one of the following languages: Sanskrit, Arabic, Persian, or Hindi. The First language consisted of Papers I and II carrying 100 marks and 50 marks each respectively, together with the total of 150 marks.
- ii. **Second language:** Those who had taken English as the first language would study Kannada, Hindi, Urdu, Tamil, Telugu or Marathi as the Second language. Those who had not taken English language as the First language would study it as the Second language. It consisted of two papers with 50 marks each.
- iii. **Third language:** Those who learned Kannada as the First language would study Sanskrit or Hindi as the Third language. Those who learned Kannada as the Second language would study Hindi as the Third language. Those who studied Kannada either as the First or Second language would study Kannada as the Third language. The Third language consisted of only one paper carrying 50 marks. *This was compulsorily taught, but it would not count for a pass. It was left to the students either to appear or not to appear for the examination in that paper. (italics mine)*

It was primacy of mother tongues in the primary schools from 1st to 4th standards in the beginning of 1956. When this was accepted, adopted, and practiced, there was very less awareness as to the implications of such a formula both among the parents, language policy thinkers. What was important was Kannada should find the place in schooling from the point of Kannadigas and from others point of view it should be possible to study their mother tongue in the school. At that time, English was not much in demand as a medium of instruction. All were satisfied with English as a subject.

This pattern of language choice in school education was practiced for more than two decades in Karnataka. The late sixties and the early seventies witnessed strong opposition to Hindi since it was perceived as a threat to the existence, use, and development of Kannada. This had guided the Kannada mother tongue speakers to lean towards English. However, many among them also felt that Kannada faced a threat to its continuation as the dominant school language from Sanskrit. It was found that the students from the Kannada majority or other minority mother tongue groups also opted for Sanskrit as a subject of study in the schools. Students availing Sanskrit as first language scored more marks in the final examinations than their Kannada counterparts. It was perceived by many that the easy instructional materials used in the Sanskrit classes, and a liberal evaluation system adopted by the examiners helped students to obtain higher marks in the final examinations contributed to its popularity among the parents as well as the students. The report of the Secondary Education Board constituted to examine the issues confirmed by these assessments about Sanskrit (1979). It was also possible to pass the State Board examination at 10th standard without passing the Kannada course in the scheme outlined above (*see italics above*). Thus, it was realized that the Official Language of

he state had no appropriate place and role in the language education system of Karnataka in the primary and secondary schools.

It was but inevitable, then, that this pattern of language choice created and widened the incompatibility between the policy of language choice for administration and the languages chosen for the purposes of education in the state. The State government employees lacked adequate knowledge of Kannada to use it as an effective medium of administration. This was found to be an impediment in using Kannada in the administration of the state at all levels. At the political level, there was a growing desire to use Kannada in as many departments of the government as possible. This pressured the State Government to create extra avenues to enable its employees to acquire a working knowledge of the State Official language through other formal or non-formal avenues.

At this point of time language movement initiated by various political parties, groups of Kannada teachers, students, college and university professors, literary critics, playwrights, and creative writers created an awakening among the Kannada speaking majority to seek a place of pride or pre-eminent place for Kannada in the affairs of the state. Their dream was to restore the primacy and lost glory of their language as the only medium of governance in the linguistically re-organized Karnataka state. This awakening in favor of using Kannada as the language of administration was a consequence of many factors including linguistic movements, political agitations, and the general political awakening among the backward classes. This description of the linguistic situation in Karnataka can be easily applied to many other linguistically re-organized Indian states also. Spread of literacy mainly in Kannada, and the spread of general education among the people, also led to a new awakening. The large-scale migration of people, mainly from adjacent states, for employment opportunities that opened through fast industrialization of the state was perceived to be curtailing the employment opportunities for the Kannada majority. All these needed an avenue for the expression of anger and disgust among the people. The language choice in education provided an avenue to meet the challenge thrown up by industrialization and consequent migration of people from other linguistic groups. The 49th *akhila bhaarata kannada saahitya sammeeLana* (49th All India Kannada Conference) held at Shivamogga in 1976 asked the government to (i) remove Sanskrit from the list of first languages and (ii) to create facilities in the schools to teach Kannada compulsorily from first to tenth standards. The 51th *akhila bhaarata kannada saahitya sammeeLana* (51th All India Kannada Conference) held at Dharmasthala in 1979 queried the government to make Kannada compulsory first language in all the high schools of the state. The 53rd *akhila bhaarata kannada saahitya sammeeLana* (53rd All India Kannada Conference) held at Chickmagalore in 1980 requested the government to remove Sanskrit from the list of first languages in the secondary schools and shift it to the list of non-first languages.

In post-independence India, after the reorganisation of the state on linguistic lines, Kannada in Karnataka failed to develop to the extent to which it was anticipated, failed to become a language of economic opportunities for Kannadigas, as medium of instruction worked against Kannada medium students. The results of the 10th standard and 12th standard for decades together say a pathetic story of pass percentage of Kannada medium students. More students were opting of Kannada medium, and more students were failing in it as compared to English medium students, year after year. Growth in economy, job openings allowed entry for English educated youngsters and others. Hindi has a pan Indian employment market and English has worldwide job opportunities. Kannada has employment market only in Karnataka which is consumed by English educated from Karnataka and migrants from other states. Thus, creating an imbalance in employment markets for Kannadigas. Kannada and Kannadiga's losing ground in the state of Karnataka found expression in the formation of Gokak Committee

in 1980 on school languages and Sarojini Mahishi Committee in 1983 on linking land, language, and employment (discussed in the later part of this essay).

Stage-II

Deletion of Sanskrit from the list of first languages :1979

The government decided to delete Sanskrit from the list of first languages in 1979 and included it in the second/third language list. But the government that took this decision did not remain in power to implement its decision. The subsequent government reconsidered the stand of the previous government and decided to maintain the status quo. Pro-Kannada groups protested this decision. This agitation against retaining Sanskrit in the first language list made the government to think afresh about the policy of language choice in school education. For this purpose, the Government of Karnataka constituted a committee (July 5, 1980) with Prof. V.K. Gokak as the Chairman and placed the following questions before it for appropriate recommendations.

1. Should Sanskrit remain as the subject for study in the school syllabus?
2. If so, how to retain it without it being offered as alternative to Kannada?
3. Would it be proper to have Kannada as a compulsory subject as per the Three Language Formula, and should the option of selecting the remaining two languages be left to students themselves?

Fairly well conceived questions that reflect the role that languages (role allocation in language planning terminology) must play as subjects in the schools in a multilingual situation. This was aimed at repairing the damage that the decision of the *shikshaNa eekataa samiti* in language education policy (1959-60 curriculum) had done for decades to the official language of the state.

The Committee after eliciting opinion from the public and due deliberations recommended (January 27, 1981) to the government that:

1. Kannada should be introduced as a compulsory subject for all children from 3rd Standard.
2. Kannada should be the sole first language for the Secondary Schools (i.e., 8th, 9th, and 10th Standards) carrying 150 Marks.

The Committee further recommended that this should be implemented for the education of Kannada speaking pupils from 1981-82 itself, and, in respect of others, from 1986-87, after taking necessary steps to teach Kannada to them from the 3rd standard beginning with the academic year 1981-82 itself.

The Prof.Gokak Committee was set up to suggest whether Sanskrit should be retained in the school curriculum, if retained how it can be retained as a subject of study without being an alternative to Kannada, and whether Kannada should be a compulsory subject and other two languages are left to the choice of students. The committee did not say anything about Sanskrit but focussed on providing primacy or so to say supremacy for Kannada. The report by the Gokak committee was devoid of understanding of multilingual nature of the state of Karnataka and played into the Kannada gallery. It messed up the issues that it was supposed to deliberate upon and make recommendations. The avoidable errors in the design of language policy by looking into grouse of one linguistic group and forgetting multilingual nature of the state also is one of the causes of failure to implement its recommendations. In the recommendations, we can see a total shift of focus from Sanskrit to Kannada.

The order (April 30, 1982) issued by the Government of Karnataka based on this report prescribed the following pattern for language study:

- At the secondary school level First Language Kannada or Mother tongue: Urdu, Tamil, Telugu, Marathi, English, or Hindi to carry 150 Marks.
- Two other languages Kannada, Hindi, English, Sanskrit, Arabic, Persian, Urdu, Tamil, Telugu, or Marathi, to carry 100 Marks each.

NOTE:

1. Students offering a language other than Kannada as First language will study Kannada as a compulsory language and any one of the remaining languages (from Group-B) both of which will be examination subjects for the S.S.L.C.
2. Students offering Kannada as First Language will take any two of the above languages (from B Group) except Kannada.
3. Students coming from outside the State and joining VIII, IX or X Standard and who have not studied any of the languages listed as First language may be allowed to take Additional English or Hindi as First language.
4. The Teaching of Kannada from III Standard in non-Kannada schools will commence from the academic year 1982-83 itself and the language pattern for the High Schools prescribed in Para (1) above will come into effect from the academic year 1987-88.

It may be noted that the above order issued by the government really addressed the basic issue of Sanskrit which the Gokak Committee did not address and deleted it from the list of first languages though it did not make any statement on Sanskrit. It was included in the list of other two languages. The Kannada-speaking majority did not find this solution adequate to meet their demand according a pre-eminent place to Kannada.

Stage-III

Kannada a 'Sole' first language in the secondary schools:1982

The Government after reconsidering its order issued the notification (July 20, 1982) detailing the language choice for school structure and modus operandi for its implementation through the circular (August 11, 1982) where in Kannada was declared as a 'Sole' First Language in the Secondary Schools (1982). According to this order:

1. At the secondary school level, the language pattern to be adopted shall be as follows (from the academic year 1987-88) A. First language: Kannada shall be the sole first language (to carry 125 marks) B. Two other languages from the following: Urdu, Tamil, Telugu, Marathi, English, Hindi, Sanskrit, Arabic, Persian, Malayalam, or Kannada. (To carry 100 marks each). Note: 15 grace marks shall be given for a period of ten years in the first language examination, to students, whose mother tongue is not Kannada, and (b) in Hindi examination to students who study Hindi and whose mother tongue is not Hindi.
2. Students coming from outside the State and joining VIII or IX Standard in the State of Karnataka and who did not study Kannada earlier may be permitted to take English or Hindi as first language.
3. The teaching of Kannada from the 1st standard in non-Kannada schools will commence from the academic year 1983 itself and the language pattern for High School prescribed in Para (1) above will come into force from the academic year 1987-88.

The students who are joining to 8th standard from the year 1982-83 cannot take Sanskrit as first language or as a composite language. Pursuing this order, the Director of Public

Instruction issued a Circular (August 11, 1982) indicating the strategy to be followed in the implementation of the order. Accordingly:

"All the non-teaching Kannada schools in the State should begin to teach Kannada language from the 1st standard in the year 1982-83 as per instructions contained in para 3 of the Government order. For that purpose, the following periods of subjects and text books and lessons for study are prescribed as under:

1. Periods: Five periods a week i.e., two periods from work experience, two periods for physical training, and one of singing education.
2. Textbooks: Kannada Bharathi.
3. Lessons for study: 1 to 16, 18 and 36 lessons.
4. Marks: This being a subject for examination, 100 marks are fixed.
5. Marks giving: Marks giving and examination rules as prescribed for the 1st standard are made applicable to this."

An analysis of this language formula reveals an inadequate understanding of the concepts like 'mother tongue', 'first language' and strategy adopted for choosing languages for education. Also, this formula stands out as an exceptional case where a regional (majority) language/official language of the state is ascribed a special status of '*sole first language*' in the secondary school, and this language is made a compulsory language for all students irrespective of their mother tongue with the same syllabus. This formula does not grade languages as first language, second language, etc., either in terms of pedagogical concepts, or in terms of chronology of their introduction in the school system. In this formula, the Kannada mother tongue student had an advantage over the students of other mother tongues. A mother tongue Kannada student has Kannada as first language. The Urdu or other mother tongue student must take Kannada as the first language. He might select Urdu or another language as one of the other two languages. The third language may be English. Thus Hindi, one of the languages of the three-language formula, will not become a part of his education. If he desires to take Hindi, his mother tongue will not become a part of his education.

Stage-IV

Judiciary and adjudication on language policy for education

Up to this point, in the debate or agitation over the choice of languages for school education, only Kannadigas were in the forefront. The linguistic or religious minorities or others did not participate in the language policy debate actively. However, the Linguistic Minorities Protection Committee (*General Secretary, Linguistic Minorities Protection Committee vs State of Karnataka and others*), challenged the July 20, 1982 order and the circular of Aug 11, 1982, by the Director of Public Instruction in the High Court of Karnataka. The petition moved from the Single judge Bench to the Division Bench and then to the Full Bench. The following three questions came up before the Full Bench.

1. Whether the Government Order dated July 20, 1982, or any part of it is void being violative of the fundamental rights guaranteed to the petitioners under Articles 29(1) and 30(1) of the Constitution
2. Whether the Government Order dated July 20, 1982, or any part of it is violative of the pledge of equality guaranteed under Article 14 of the Constitution.

3. Whether, on the facts and in the circumstances of the case, the Circular dated August 11, 1982, issued by the Director of Public Instruction of the State Government is violative of Article 14, 29(1) and 30(1) of the Constitution?

This became a classic case in multilingual India and formed a basis for wide debate on the role of the regional language/state official language in the school curriculum and on the question of student's mother tongue as medium of instruction. And who will decide the medium of instruction, state, or parents? This has no analogy to the cases decided by the courts till day in the country. After hearing all the concerned parties, the two Judges in the three-judge bench ruled in one direction and another judge ruled in another direction. However, the majority opinion, by law and practice, was to be accepted as the judgment to guide the language policy of the State. So, it is captivating to find how different judges of the same bench looked at the language issues and the legal provisions that sought to address the issue.

The litigants (Linguistic Minorities Protection Committee and others) argued that - there is no rational basis for making Kannada as the sole first language; it is unreasonable for the state to compel the students to study the official or regional language if they do not have aptitude and if they intend to reside in the state only temporarily; providing opportunity to study their language is as much in the national interest as is the study of the regional language; to achieve primacy for Kannada, minorities need not be compelled to study it from the first standard in the schools; the parents and students should choose whatever they want to study and the state cannot 'indulge in regimentation' in the matter relating to the study of languages; children must have the benefit of having education in their mother tongue; children whose mother tongue is not Kannada get a discriminatory treatment and they cannot study Kannada and compete with Kannada mother tongue students; the right to equality under Article 14 is affected; the linguistic minorities have the right under Article 29 to take steps to conserve their language and also a right under Article 30 to establish institutions of their choice, which right includes a right to take a decision as to what language should be studied as first language; it is for them to decide in what manner their language should be conserved, preserved, produced and it is not for the government to decide and the government under the guise of public interest cannot impose conditions.

The state while arguing in favor of its policy said that - it has power and right to take steps for the development of Kannada, including making the study of Kannada compulsory to all the children from the primary school stage and as the sole first language in the secondary school since Kannada is the declared official language of the state and hence it is rational to make it compulsory; this is necessary to give primacy to Kannada in the affairs of the state; also 'the State has power to make regulations in the interest of excellence in education and any regulations so made by the Government cannot be regarded as infringing on the rights of the minority groups; the usefulness of a language is measured in terms of its use in administration, trade, industry, defense, managerial decision-making and such other wide variety of a range of domains and in social and family affairs. Such domains can be covered by more than one language used complimentary to each other. Language development is central to educational advancement on a mass scale; is central to economic, cultural, and political developments; is corollary to national development. India is a country with a population of sizable numbers, speaking and using different languages and therefore the problem becomes difficult and complex' and 'A child belonging to a minority section of the community in any State speaking a language other than the regional or the local language will thus develop its personality with two languages; one spoken at home, the other spoken beyond the threshold of his home, for in the absence of knowledge of the local language an individual would be at a severe disadvantage

in participating in the daily life of the State. When a child or person learns two languages, one as his mother tongue and the other as the language spoken by the people around, both become his language. Therefore, it cannot be said that a child speaking a language other than the regional language at home is totally alien to the regional language'.

The Judges examined the submissions made before them. The majority opinion of the Bench on the teaching of Kannada compulsorily in the primary stage, and as the sole first language in the secondary schools and its insistence led to the violation or otherwise of various Constitutional provisions. Their opinions can be summarized as follows:

1. The Government order compelling all children to learn Kannada in the primary schools in the State including those established by minorities is arbitrary and violative of Article 14, because this Article 'incorporate an injunction both to the Legislature and Executive not to deny equality before law and equal protection of the laws'. The children with Kannada mother tongue and others are dissimilarly placed because the children with Kannada mother tongue will not study any additional language, whereas the children with other mother tongues are forced to study the regional or the Official Language causing additional burden. This burden may cause dropouts. Curtailing the periods allotted to other subjects to accommodate Kannada is irrational and arbitrary.
2. The order prescribing Kannada as the sole first language at the secondary school level is also discriminatory because it prevents the students from having a language of his choice as first language. This will place him in a disadvantageous position from the student who comes with Kannada as first language from the first standard. The grace marks to be awarded to bridge the gap itself accepts this discrimination. Since grace marks are awarded only to the students who fail to secure minimum marks for pass and not to others, the order places everyone in unequal position. Since Kannada mother tongue students can study Kannada both as first language and as other language gives them an advantage over others who must study three different languages in high school. This is against the three-language formula. Also, from the point of view of Kannada, even the Kannada mother tongue children are denied an opportunity to take any other language as first language and enhance their knowledge (*Hidden meaning is Sanskrit*). The students coming from other States for VIII to X standards cannot opt for their mother tongue and have to opt for Hindi or English. This is a clear case of discrimination and is against all other regional languages. It is the opinion of various committees and commissions that children should not be burdened with an additional language in the primary school itself.
3. The issue of medium of instruction and first language are intimately connected. In most of the cases, the language chosen by the student as first language happens to be his medium of instruction also. So 'it would be incongruous to say that a linguistic minority's choice for medium of instruction is absolute, but the choice of first language is not'.
4. From the point of view of the Karnataka Civil Services Rules, it is enough if an employee has obtained knowledge of Kannada from 'Having Kannada as medium of instruction or by studying Kannada as main or first language, or by studying Kannada as an optional subject, or as second language, or by passing an equivalent examination'. So, it is possible for a person even without studying Kannada as the first language but by studying as one of the languages can carry on the function of the Government in its Official Language. Hence it is not necessary to study Kannada as first language alone to gain the knowledge of the Official Language. So, 'the study of the same can be

insisted as one of the languages for study in the high schools, but not necessarily as the first language'. Hence, prescribing the study of the Official Language of the State as one of the three languages in the high schools under the three-language formula will not violate Article 14.

5. The language and script can be conserved through educational institutions. The rights guaranteed under Articles 29 and 30 are not subject to restrictions. The State cannot either directly or indirectly take away or abridge, infringe, or impart the right guaranteed by these articles. This language rule is not in the interests of the minority. Here the choice is of the minority groups themselves. The Government has only the right to prescribe the general standards to secure excellence in education in each of the subjects.
6. People in this country have one citizenship and under Article 16 have right to employment in service anywhere in the country. Since no other State has such a language policy this policy will be inconsistent with personal liberty and equality guaranteed under the Constitution.
7. In Karnataka minorities are not opposed to the use of Kannada fully in administration. Even then Kannada has failed to replace English. It is fancy for English that has retarded the progress of Kannada and its replacement in different walks of life.
8. The judges felt that this 'does not mean that Kannada, the Official Language, cannot be made compulsory subject for study for the students in this State'. They made it clear 'that the State which has, subject to the provisions of the Constitution, the power to prescribe the syllabus to regulate education, can prescribe Kannada as one of the compulsory subjects. It is also the duty of every citizen who is a permanent resident of this State to study Kannada. But the regulations made in this behalf must be of general pattern and should apply uniformly to all'.
9. They agreed that 'there are no two opinions on the primacy for Kannada in the affairs of the State and its occupation of pride of place in the affairs of the State' and 'that position must be accorded to regional/Official Language of each and every State of our country'.

However, in the process of arguments, the possibility that the minority language speaking students who have already accepted Kannada as mother tongue may try to misuse the provision of grace marks by reverting to their minority mother tongue, and that the allocation of grace marks is likely to condone under-achievement in Kannada, and thus frustrate the very purpose were ignored. Thus, in language-related litigation academic issues take a back seat and the legal issues come to forefront.

Justice Sri Balakrishna gave the note of dissent. According to him:

1. Kannada to be an intra-state vehicle of thought; undisputed spoken language of the masses; knowledge of the language of the state as imperative to one and all.
2. The element of compulsion for acquiring the Official Language of the State cannot be called reprehensible; here compulsion leads to enlightenment and enrichment; primacy to the official language is mark of distinction and not discrimination.
3. Language is a part of the syllabus, and State is entitled to formulate its domestic policy; access to mother tongue is not denied when offered as a second language.
4. No detriment is caused to the minorities in the matter of conservation of language, script and culture.

5. 'Extra efforts for extra knowledge cannot be regarded as undue burden compared with the benefits that flow to them; compulsion to teach Kannada does not affect the right to establish and administer educational institutions of the choice of the minorities.
6. And since possible disadvantages are overcome by the reasonable and adequate provisions in the notification; the government order in question has not violated any Constitutional provisions.

Based on the majority opinion, the court directed that the Government of Karnataka will be at liberty:

1. to introduce Kannada as one of the two languages from that primary school class from which the study of another language in addition to mother-tongue is made obligatory as part of the general pattern of primary education.
2. to make the study of Kannada compulsory as one of the three languages for study in secondary schools, by making appropriate order or Rules, and make it applicable to all those whose mother tongue is Kannada and also to linguistic minorities who are and who become permanent residents of this State, in all primary and secondary schools respectively, whether they are Government or Government recognized, including those established by any of the linguistic minorities.

Regarding medium of instruction, the High Court (*General Secretary, Linguistic Minorities Protection Committee vs State of Karnataka*) had said that the state government:

1. to provide and ensure that primary education up to first four years including pre-primary education up to first four years including pre-primary education is imparted in mother tongue of the children concerned, in Government schools as also schools established by any private agency including linguistic minorities which are recognised, whether receiving financial aid or not, subject to the existence of prescribed minimum number of children having a common mother tongue who have got themselves admitted to the school concerned; and
2. to leave the choice of selecting the first language for study in the High Schools to the students.

Founded on the direction of the High Court, the Government of Karnataka elucidated the language policy for school education in its order (June 19, 1989) pending the decision of the Supreme Court. This now combines the issue of language as a subject and language as medium of instruction in the schools. This is the first time that the government used the word '*language policy for education*' in its official document. Karnataka seems to be the first state in India to use the wordings *language policy for education* in the official documents. Accordingly:

1. From 1st standard to 4th standard, mother tongue will be the medium of instruction, where it is expected that normally only one language from the group of languages, namely, Kannada, Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Marathi, Hindi, Urdu, or English will be the compulsory subject of study. From 3rd standard Kannada will be an optional subject for non-Kannada speaking students. This will be taught on a purely voluntary basis and it will not be at the cost of any other instruction imparted in the school or any other school activity in which all school children participate. There will be no examination at the end of the year in Kannada language.

2. From the 5th standard onwards, where, in the normal course a second language is introduced, the child has to study a second language selected from the group of languages, namely, Kannada, Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Marathi, Hindi, Urdu, English, Persian, Sanskrit, or Arabic, which will be other than the First language, subject to the condition that the child who has not taken Kannada as the First language will have to take Kannada as the Second language.
3. From 5th standard, provision will be made for the study of the third language which will be other than the languages studied by the student as First and Second language. This must be chosen from the group of languages, namely, Kannada, Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Marathi, Hindi, Urdu, English, Sanskrit, Arabic, or Persian.
4. Attendance in the third language class will be compulsory, writing of the examination in the third language will also be compulsory, but from 5th to 8th standards it will not be obligatory to pass the third language examination. No extra credit will be given in rank, division, class, etc., on account of the marks obtained in the third language examination from 5th to 7th standard.
5. At the secondary stage, i.e., from 8th to 10th standards, three languages will be compulsory. First language carrying - 125 marks, second language - 100 marks and the Third language carrying - 100 marks. It will be obligatory to pass the examinations conducted in all these three languages, and one of them shall be Kannada.
6. The standard expected in second and third languages at the end of 10th standard will be what would have been achieved at the end of 6 years of study, if the language subject had been chosen as First language.
7. As contemplated in Government Order No. ED 113 SOH 79, July 20, 1982, Kannada-speaking students will not be given any grace marks in Kannada. Non-Kannada speaking students will be awarded up to a maximum of 15 grace marks to enable the students to pass the Kannada language examination.
8. Exemption from studying Kannada as a compulsory language can be given to the students whose parents have come to the state on temporary transfer.

The main differences between 1959 and 1989 formulae are:

1. In 1959, from 1st to 4th standards only one language was taught that is mother tongue. In 1989 mother tongue was declared as medium of instruction. List of mother tongues got restricted to 8 languages: Kannada, Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Marathi, Hindi, Urdu, or English.
2. In 1959, from 5th to 7th standards one more language was to be chosen from the list of 10 languages: Kannada, Urdu, English, Marathi, Hindi, Telugu, Tamil, Malayalam, Gujarati, or Sindhi. In 1989 from 5th to 7th standards second language was to be chosen from the list of 11 languages: Kannada, Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Marathi, Hindi, Urdu, English, Persian, Sanskrit, or Arabic, which will be other than the first language. It may be noted that Gujarati and Sindhi are deleted and Arabic, Persian and Sanskrit are added. This indicates the sociolinguistic changes that have taken place in the span of 30 years in Karnataka. The students who have not opted for Kannada as first language have to opt for it as a second language compulsorily. Thus, Kannada becomes a compulsory subject from the 5th standard for all the students fulfilling the desire that the official language of the state must be a part of the school education.
3. In 1959, from 8th to 10th standards, three languages were:

First language: one of the following 8 - Kannada, Telugu, Tamil, Hindi, Urdu, Marathi, English or Sanskrit, or a composite course.

Second language: Those who had taken English as the first language would study Kannada, Hindi, Urdu, Tamil, Telugu, or Marathi as the Second language. Those who had not taken English language as the First language would study it as the Second language

Third language: Those who learned Kannada as the First language would study Sanskrit or Hindi as the Third language. Those who learned Kannada as the Second language would study Hindi as the Third language. Those who studied Kannada either as the First or Second language would study Kannada as the Third language. This was optional for studying.

In 1989, from 8th to 10th standards three languages:

Three languages will be compulsory taught. It is compulsory to pass the examinations conducted in all the three languages, and one of them shall be Kannada.

First language: Kannada, Telugu, Tamil, Hindi, Urdu, Marathi, English or Sanskrit.

Second language: Hindi, English, or Kannada

Third language: Hindi, English, Kannada, Sanskrit, Persian or Arabic

It must be noted that Sanskrit re-enters into the list of first languages. Meanwhile, the government, to implement the Education Policy 1986, issued curriculum guidelines (April 24, 1992) to be adopted from 1992-93. According to them, the students could opt for mother tongue Kannada, English, Telugu, Tamil, Hindi, Marathi or Urdu in the 5th, 6th, and 7th standards. The second language will be English for Kannada mother tongue students and Kannada for all others. The third language can be one of the following: Hindi, Sanskrit, Persian, Arabic or English. Here each language carries 100 marks. Learning Kannada is made compulsory. *The students opting for Sanskrit should answer in Sanskrit only.* In the secondary school, the first language consists of Kannada, Sanskrit, Telugu, Tamil, Urdu, Marathi, English, or Hindi. The second language list has Hindi, English, or Kannada. The third language list has Hindi, English, Sanskrit, Persian, Kannada, or Arabic. One of the three languages should be Kannada. Here the first language is for 125 marks, and other two 100 marks each.

Stage-V

Medium of instruction in schools: 1989

The validity of the judgment of the High Court was questioned in the Supreme Court on the ground that the linguistic minorities are discriminated and they cannot be forced to study Kannada (violation of Article 14); linguistic minorities cannot be prevented from an opportunity to choose languages (violation of Article 350-A). The order of June 19, 1989 was litigated (*English Medium Students Parents Association vs State of Karnataka and Others*) in the Supreme Court of India. The court not only discussed the legal issues but also cognitive issues of the students and emotional issues of the people seeking a place for their mother tongue in the schooling. On Dec 8, 1993, it said that:

1. the element of compulsion at the primary stage is no longer there because the GO is unequivocal when it says from 1st to 4th standards mother tongue will be the medium of instruction...

2. from 3rd standard onwards Kannada will be an optional subject for non-Kannada speaking students ... the GO is in consonance with Article 350 A.
3. it cannot be contended that a student studying in a school from Karnataka need not know the regional language. It should be the endeavor of every State to promote the regional language of the state.
4. The state knows how best to implement the language policy. It's not for the court to interfere.

The choice of medium of instruction in Karnataka was also based on the statements in the Constitution and the Grant-in-Aid Code of the State government since Oct 19, 1969. According to this arrangement, 'In all primary schools, the medium of instruction shall ordinarily be the Regional Language or mother tongue of the child'. The English medium schools or English medium sections in the primary schools were permitted by the Director of Public Instruction to cater to the needs of migratory groups and 'Students whose mother tongue is a minority language for which there is no provision in the schools of the locality. 'The anti-Hindi stand of earlier decades, instead of supporting the regional language, gave rise to fast growth of education in English medium. This gave an added advantage to the linguistic minorities who could opt for English due to their perceived threat from Kannada. Thus, the microscopic minority of English mother tongue succeeded in providing a universal umbrella for all the elites in all categories, the minorities as well as the majority, by creating a common avenue for education through English medium.

So, the primary and secondary education in English medium, like engineering and medical education, became donation/capitation (commercialized) -oriented, and ultimately a tradable commodity. The legal provisions that were framed to protect minority rights became an effective means for every section of the Karnataka society to make capital out of the very same legal provisions. There were institutions of the linguistic minorities imparting higher education and primary education in English medium but not through their mother tongue. The government took a policy decision not to sanction English medium schools, except in rare cases, where a considerable number of non-Kannadiga residents and minority institutions were involved. This led to litigation by those who failed to get permission or recognition for their English medium schools.

This policy was challenged by the Sahyadri Education Trust (*Sahyadri Education Trust vs State of Karnataka*) on the ground that the medium of instruction is one aspect of freedom of speech and expression. The student cannot be compelled to express in one (specific) regional language and not in English. The parents have every right to give education to their children in English and if there is a language policy it should be applicable to all the primary schools uniformly and according to permission to some and not doing the same for others is a clear case of discrimination. The High Court saw a valid argument only on the ground 'that many other institutions have been given permission to impart primary education in English medium but the petitioners have been singled out by denying them the right to impart education in English medium.' It directed the government to accord 'permission to the petitioners to start English medium primary schools'. However, this Judgment was viewed by many as support to the cause of English medium schools.

The rules of the government apply to the government and the institutions aided by it. But they do not apply to other private institutions. The law of demand and supply operated in Karnataka. Gradually, demand for English medium schools in the government and aided sector was there but the government had its own reason not to meet this demand from its resources. Hence, the private and un-aided schools mushroomed in the state to meet this demand and at

the same time, the aided schools were in no mood to cater to the demand by levying reasonable fee. Thus, schools imparting education through English medium created by this demand and supply chain wanted that they too should be recognized. There were two socioeconomic forces in medium of instruction jugglery. Staunch Kannada medium interests and staunch English medium interests taking refuge under linguistic minority umbrella or under legal umbrella.

To guide the government in taking a policy decision regarding medium of instruction, the government constituted a committee with Prof. H. Narasimhaiah as Chairperson. The objective of the committee was to '*...suggest remedy for the problems arising from the unrecognized English Primary Schools and also examine the question of Medium of primary schools....*' This is one of the best reports on medium of instruction for any multilingual context to decide about the medium of education for school education. The recommendations of this committee are linguistically professional, cognitively sound, socially, and economically development oriented. But, politically may not be digestive, since many politicians in the state run the private educational institutions either directly or indirectly, mainly teaching in English medium. On June 3, 1991, the committee recommended that:

- a. Permission should not be given indiscriminately to the existing unauthorised schools. After holding inspection of the schools if minimum facilities are available and if the rules and regulations of grant-in-aid Code are fulfilled, permission can be given to such unrecognised schools. No permission be given to other schools. Admission to the 1st standard should be given to study only in Mother-tongue in such recognised schools from June 1991. In case this condition is not fulfilled, the recognition of such schools should be withdrawn.
- b. In schools recognized as indicated above, opportunity should be given to complete the study in 4th standard in the medium in which the student is studying at present in 2nd, 3rd, and 4th standards.
- c. In case required number of students is not available to study in mother tongue medium or if facilities could not be provided to study in mother tongue medium, such schools should opt for the regional language as their medium.
- d. In the primary stage, no permission should be given to CBSE, ICSE schools in the state. Such existing schools should satisfy only the needs of the students who have the right to study in English Medium as per the Constitution, court decisions and as per provisions of Grant-in-Aid Code.
- e. In the existing recognised English Medium schools also, it is proper that medium of study should be the mother tongue of the student from the academic year 1991-92. In case required number of students is not available to study in the medium of mother tongue or for any other reason it is not possible to provide facilities to study in mother tongue, it is necessary to opt for the regional language as their medium of study. The Government shall take steps to provide facilities such required for this.
- f. To improve the position of Kannada Medium Schools and to raise their standards, the Government should take necessary steps on priority basis.
- g. Conditions should be inserted in the Rules of appointment, that those who seek appointment in Government and Aided Institutions should have studied Kannada language as their first language in SSLC.

Stage-VI

English medium only for English mother tongue students:1994

English Medium Only for English Mother Tongue Students (1994) became a policy. In fulfillment of the Supreme Court Judgment of Dec 8, 1983, in the background of the

recommendations of the H. Narasimhaiah Committee the Government issued the order of April 29, 1994, wherein it made a comprehensive policy relating to *language as a subject in the school education and medium of instruction* in Karnataka. Accordingly:

1. From 1st to 4th standards, the child's mother tongue will be the medium of instruction. It will be one of among-Kannada, Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Marathi, Hindi, Urdu, or English.
2. From 3rd standard Kannada should be optional subject to non-Kannadigas. There is no examination in it at the end of 3rd or 4th standard.
3. From the 5th standard, the student must choose second and third languages. They can be one of the following: Kannada, Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Marathi, Hindi, Urdu, English, Sanskrit, Arabic, or Persian. The student who is not studying Kannada as first language must study it as second language. Attendance for classes and appearing for examination for third language is compulsory and it is not an examination subject.
4. From the 8th standard to 10th standard in the secondary schools three languages will be taught compulsorily. The first language for 125 marks will be any one of the following: Kannada, Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Marathi, Hindi, Urdu, or English. The second and third languages for 100 marks each can be any two of the following: Kannada, Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Marathi, Hindi, Urdu, English, Sanskrit, Arabic, or Persian. One of these should be Kannada. The students whose mother tongue is not Kannada and the students whose mother tongue is not Hindi will get grace marks up to 15. This will be in vogue for 10 years.
5. This order also had certain other clauses relating to medium of instruction. They are:(i) in all the government recognised schools from 1st standard to 4th standard medium of instruction should be mother tongue or Kannada from 1994-1995. (ii) students admitted from 1994-95 should be taught in mother tongue or Kannada. (iii) change over to English or any other language medium is permitted from 5th standard. (iv) only the students whose mother tongue is English will be permitted to study in the existing recognised English medium schools from 1st to 4th standards. (v) the unrecognised schools will be considered for regularisation if they fulfil the necessary conditions...the unrecognised schools which do not comply will be closed etc.

This was challenged in the High Court of Karnataka by the linguistic/religious minorities, parents associations, children/parents through their educational institutions run by majority etc., (*Associated Managements of Primary and Secondary Schools in Karnataka vs The State of Karnataka and Others*). This was referred to and adjudicated by the Full bench of the High Court. The questions that the bench answered after examination are:

- a. Is right to choose a medium of instruction a fundamental right?
- b. Whether parents and children have the right to choose the medium of instruction?
- c. Whether every citizen, a religious denomination and a linguistic or religious minority has a right to establish an educational institution of his/its choice?

The full bench ruled that:

- a. Right to education is a fundamental right. It flows from Article 21, right to life. Free and compulsory primary education is guaranteed to all the children in the age group of 6 to 14 years under Article 21 A as a fundamental right.
- b. Right to education includes right to choose a medium of instruction. This is the fundamental right of the parent and the child.

- c. Right to freedom of speech and expression includes the right to choose a medium of instruction. Right under Article 19(1)(g) to establish and administer an educational institution of one's choice; one's choice includes choice of medium of instruction.
- d. Also, under the Articles every citizen, every linguistic and religious minority have right to establish and administer educational institution under 19(1)(a)(g), 21, 26, 29(1) and 30(1) and it also includes right to choose the medium of instruction which is the fundamental right of the management concerned.
- e. The policy that mother tongue or regional language shall be the medium of instruction in primary schools is valid and legal for the schools run or aided by the State.
- f. This policy is not valid in case of other recognized primary schools since it will be violative of Articles 19(1)(g), 26 and 30(1).

The government in 1992 had decided to give permission to (i) un-authorised English medium schools if they fulfil the conditions of the code of primary education (ii) English medium schools if they are not eligible for imparting education in English medium can impart education in Kannada or other language medium if they fulfil the rules of the grant in aid code. The students of these schools were at liberty to switch over to any other language medium from 5th standard. The *Daffodils English School (Daffodils English School vs State of Karnataka and others)* had questioned the validity of some of the clauses of this order of 2002 in the High Court of Karnataka. The petition was sent to the single Bench for decision in the context of the judgment of the Full Bench. The single judge bench of the High Court struck down the following clauses of the government order:

- (i) The medium of instruction should be mother tongue or Kannada in all the state government recognised schools from 1st to 4th standards with effect from the academic year 1994-95 and from the year 2002-03 from 1st to 5th standards the medium of instruction will be only mother tongue or Kannada.
- (ii) Permission can be granted to only students whose mother tongue is English, to study in English medium in classes 1st to 5th in existing recognized English medium schools.
- (iii) All unauthorised schools which do not comply with the above conditions have to be closed.

The Government of Karnataka did not accept the judgment and filed a special leave petition in the Supreme Court requesting for stay of the High Court order of 2008. The Council appearing for the state argued that '...the children will imbibe better if the medium of instruction was in their mother tongue. We must take care of the interest of the children. Learning through mother tongue is the universal law for all.' The Chief Justice Balakrishnan who was hearing in the three-judge bench remarked that 'It is easy to say things. They are unable to get even a clerical post. How do we survive in this world? Parents are ready to pay Rs.20,000 to 50,000 for admission in English medium schools. This is the real situation. They do not want to send their children to mother tongue medium schools. The choice should be left to the parents.' The Supreme Court refused to grant the stay. [The Hindu, July 5, 2009]

Stage-VII

Right to choose the medium of instruction:2014

In this context, it is necessary to cite Right to Education (Aug 27, 2009). In 21st century this is in search of a new paradigm for language education. In this document the language issue comes up directly at 3 points. They are extracted below:

(i) ‘...child belonging to disadvantaged group’ means a child belonging to the scheduled caste, the scheduled tribe, the socially and educationally backward class or such other group having disadvantage owing to social, cultural, economic, geographical, linguistic, gender or such other factor, as may be specified by the appropriate Government, by notification; (ii) medium of instructions shall, as far as practicable, be in child’s mother tongue(iii) For sixth class to eighth class at least one teacher per class so that there shall be at least one teacher each for – (i) Science and Mathematics; (ii) Social Studies; (iii) Languages.’

The debate educational or legal hardly considers these language issues in the Right to Education Act. But many other points of this are debated and attempts to implement are made. The important, dangerous, and intelligent word (here in italics) provides an escape route to open English medium schools/classes: ‘medium of instructions shall, *as far as practicable*, be in child’s mother tongue.’

The Supreme Court took up the petitions on the 2008 judgement of the High Court of Karnataka (*State of Karnataka and Anrvs the Associated Management of (Government Recognised Unaided English Medium) Primary and Secondary Schools and Others*). On July 5, 2013, decided to refer the same to the Constitutional Bench with the following questions to be addressed by it:

1. What does Mother tongue mean? If it referred to as the language in which the child is comfortable with, then who will decide the same?
2. Whether a student or a parent or a citizen has a right to choose a medium of instruction at primary stage?
3. Does the imposition of mother tongue in any way affects the fundamental rights under Article 14, 19, 29 and 30 of the constitution?
4. Whether the Government recognized schools are inclusive of both government-aided schools and private and unaided schools?
5. Whether the state can by virtue of Article 350-A of the Constitution compel the linguistic minorities to choose their mother tongue only as medium of instruction in primary schools? Apart from the above said issues, the Constitution Bench would also take into consideration any other ancillary or incidental questions which may arise during hearing of the case.

The Constitution bench after due deliberations and listening to both sides on May 6, 2014, decided that:

1. Mother tongue...means the language of the linguistic minority in a State and it is the parent or the guardian of the child who will decide what the mother tongue of child is.
2. ... a child or on his behalf his parent or guardian, has a right to freedom of choice about the medium of instruction in which he would like to be educated at the primary stage in school.
3. ...imposition of mother tongue affects the fundamental rights under Articles 19,29 and 30 of the Constitution.
4. ...government recognized schools will not only include government aided schools but also unaided schools with have been granted recognition.
5. ...State has no power under Article 350 A of the Constitution to compel the linguistic minorities to choose their mother tongue only as a medium of instruction in primary schools.

The arguments from the government side as reported in the copy of the judgment fail to convince even people who are not that conversant with law. But the arguments from other side, succeeded in drawing the attention to their side. Two valuable reports one on *shikshaNa tagnara salahaasamitiya varadi* (Prof. Chandrashekhara Patil -1999) submitted to Sri. H. Govinde Gowda the then Minister for Primary and Secondary of the Government of Karnataka and *shikshaNa mattu boodhanaa maadhyama niitiruuupaNaa varadi* (Prof. Baraguru Ramachandrappa -2001) though are of high value as academic inputs to the government, people, and judiciary - do not find worth implementing or emulating. It is the tragedy of language education policy in Karnataka.

What is mother tongue? The Supreme Court was not clearly apprised of the concept and the precedence of the use of this concept in the official documents of the country. Even today, the same is not clear for the judiciary. It cannot be defined in clear cut way due to multilingualism being practiced in the country where it is not an exception, but a norm. However, the decennial Census of India uses a definition for the concept which has evolved since the British period. In the Census year 1971- ‘The language spoken in the individuals’ home during his childhood or a near equivalent such as the language which individuals’ parents spoke or which he first learnt to speak’ ; in 1991, 2001, 2011 – ‘The language spoken in childhood by the person’s mother to the person. If the mother died in infancy, the language mainly spoken in the person’s home in childhood will be the mother tongue. In case of infants and deaf mutes the language usually spoken by the mother should be recorded. In case of doubt, the language mainly spoken in the household...’. The UNESCO in 1951, in its typology of language concepts had defined mother tongue as ‘the language one acquires as a child’.

In the last few decades, India achieved rapid industrialization in several sectors and states. This has resulted in the relocation of people in the social hierarchy and mobility in some manner. This has also led to planned and unplanned growth of major Indian languages with the help of Constitutional, institutional, and individual support. Some languages achieved better status because of the support they received from the Union and the State governments. However, the last decades of the century are the decades of globalization and Information Technology. These two developments have jointly begun to make a great impact on the education scenario of the new millennium. Globalization and information technology have created a greater demand for English education, and education through English.

Stage VIII

English from the 1st standard:2007

Introduction of English in the schools of Karnataka from the first standard as a subject is an important turning point in language policy. On Oct 29, 2006, it was decided to teach English as one of the languages (as a subject) from the first standard itself in all the Kannada medium schools and the schools of the linguistic minorities. In the year 2007, Accordingly, it was introduced as a subject of study in all the government and aided schools from the 1st standard. It must be noted that hardly anybody opposed this move of the government, including the persons who were opposed to the introduction of Kannada on the ground that it creates a burden on children. Karnataka, at this juncture, is facing two challenges, one from the point of view of the preservation and development of Kannada language and culture, as the official language of the state, and another from the point of view of coping up with the challenges thrown in by the market forces.

Languages in education, policy, and statistics

Along with this legal scenario of language education in Karnataka, language education scenario also started to change fast. English from the 1st standard was not enough. The statistics

(Source: U-DISE Karnataka Reports) available in public domain speak for themselves. The demand for learning in the English medium was increasing, and the students were not enrolling in the government schools, there was a crisis in the student enrolment, due to non-availability of such facility adequately in the government schools the parents were opting for the same in the private schools. Table below illustrates the same.

Table:3
Sample of students' enrolment in different medium of instruction
2010-11, 2015-16 And 2018-19

Medium	Class	2012-13	2015-16	Difference 2012-13 2015-16	2018-19	Difference 2012-13 & 2018-19
Kannada	L P	41,01,132	39,36,732	-1,64,400	31,41,884	-9,59,248
	U P	14,42,032	19,05,406	+4,63,374	16,96,302	+2,54,270
	Sec	18,33,245	6,59,404	-11,73,841	10,01,423	-8,31,822
	Total	73,76,409	65,01,542	-8,74,867	58,39,609	-15,36,800
English	LP	8,70,548	11,11,550	+2,41,002	20,73,518	+12,02,970
	U P	4,62,713	8,50,968	+3,88,255	12,29,850	+7,67,137
	Sec	6,69,815	5,43,836	-1,25,979	7,21,332	+51,517
	Total	20,03,076	25,06,354	+5,03,278	40,24,700	+20,21,624
Urdu	L P	3,14,438	2,79,328	-35,110	2,25,867	-88,571
	U P	1,05,625	1,29,206	+23,581	1,07,487	+1,862
	Sec	81,086	53,190	-27,896	52,128	-28,958
	Total	5,01,149	4,61,724	-39,425	3,85,482	-1,15,667
Marathi	LP	73,986	63,013	-10,973	54,749	-19,237
	U P	32,214	41,485	+9,271	35,384	+3,170
	Sec	45,892	28,806	-17,086	24,368	-21,524
	Total	1,52,092	1,33,304	-18,788	1,14,501	-37,591

Table:4
Enrolment of students from 1st to 10th in four mediums of instruction

	2013-14	2015-16	2018-19
Kannada	73.210	60.210	56.288
English	20.179	24.789	38.794
Urdu	4.877	4.566	3.715
Marathi	1.454	1.318	1.103

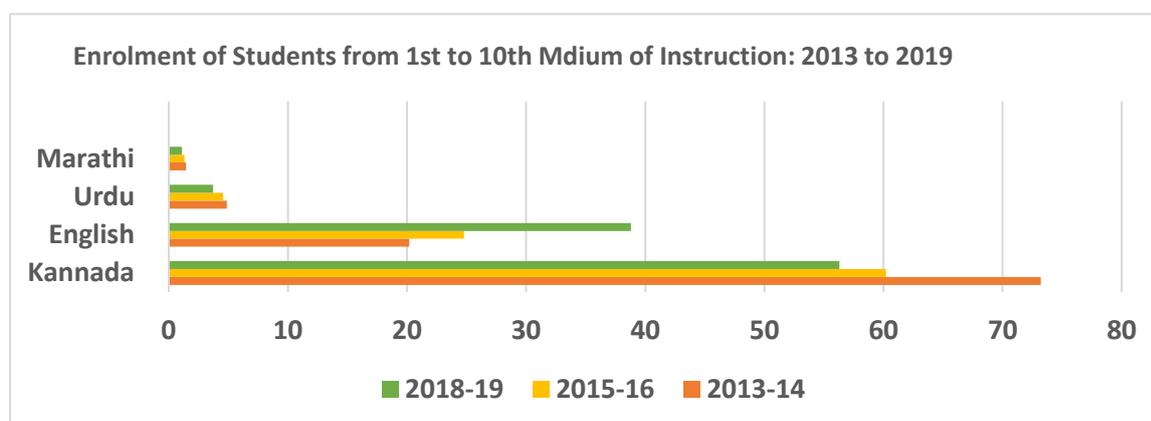
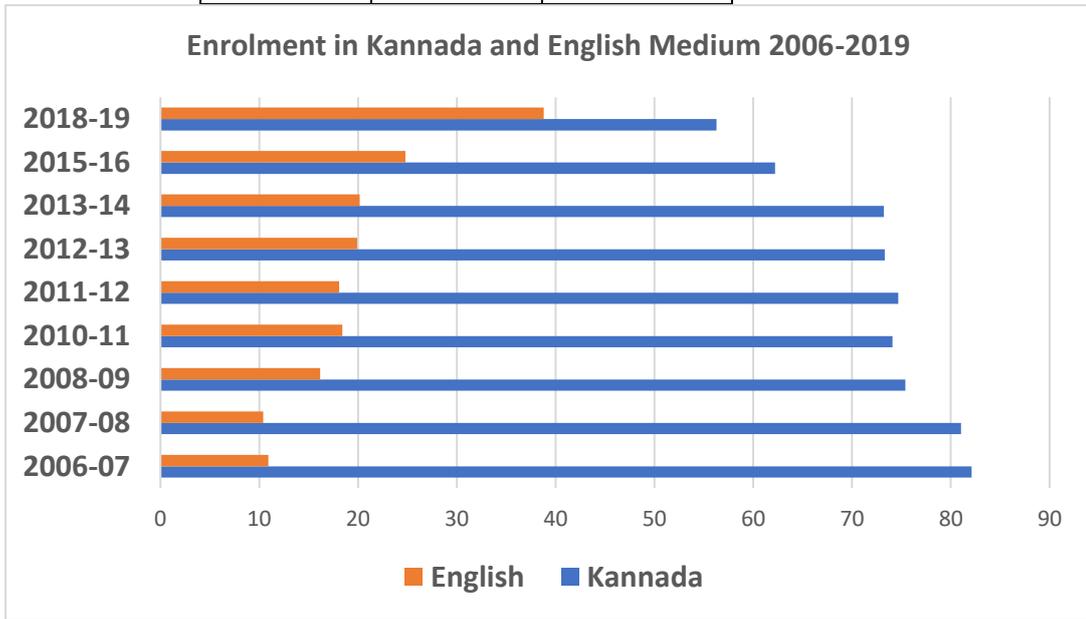


Table:5
Percentage of enrolment of student's 1st To 10th standards in
Kannada and English medium

Year	Kannada	English
2006-07	82.10	10.93
2007-08	81.02	10.40
2008-09	75.39	16.17
2010-11	74.10	18.40
2011-12	74.67	18.08
2012-13	73.31	19.91
2013-14	73.21	20.17
2015-16	62.21	24.78
2018-19	56.288	38.794

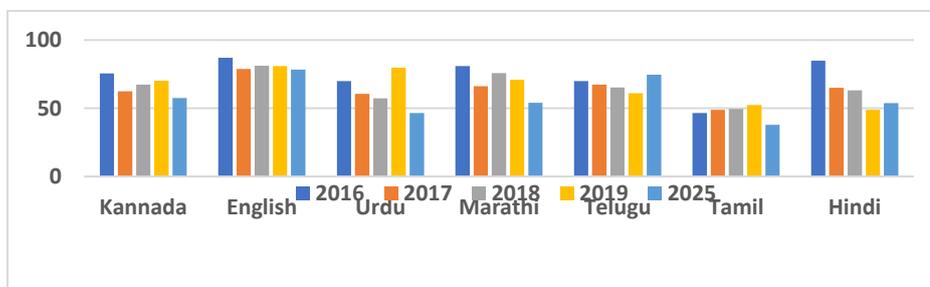


The above Table-3, 4, 4 and their respective charts and table-4 indicate that in case of Kannada, Urdu, and Marathi medium of instruction the enrolment of students was rapidly decreasing from year to year. But it was progressively increasing in case of English medium of instruction. This clearly indicated that Indian languages were no longer sought out as medium of instruction by the students in Karnataka. English is most sought out medium of instruction. English as medium of instruction in the primary education was affecting every Indian language as medium of education. The Table-5 and the chart present pass percentage of students in different medium of instruction in 10th standard examination in five years in a decade from 2016 to 2025. Medium divide in the 10th standard pass is very significant. Every year percentage of pass in English medium is higher than the pass percentage of students in all other medium of instruction. The pass percentage is considerably low in other mediums.

Table-6
Percentage of success of students in different
medium of instruction in 10th standard examination in a decade:2016-2025

Medium	2016	2017	2018	2019	2025
Kannada	75.61	62.47	67.33	70.19	57.61
English	87.00	78.94	81.23	80.88	78.38

Urdu	70.06	60.48	57.29	79.87	46.46
Marathi	80.86	66.15	75.86	70.87	53.97
Telugu	69.91	67.37	65.31	61.06	74.56
Tamil	46.51	48.96	49.71	52.46	37.88
Hindi	84.85	65.09	63.24	48.81	53.72



Much before the verdict of the Supreme Court on May 6, 2014, more students had started to opt for English medium in large numbers and the enrolment in the Indian language medium was depleting at an alarming level. Only in case of Tamil there was a little demand from students, it can be attributed to the language loyalty of the concerned speech community irrespective of the place where they are staying. Now, armed with the Supreme Court judgment, parents and owners of the private educational institutions accelerated the mushrooming of English medium schools in Karnataka.

The social and educational system, as already illustrated through various statistics, has covertly designated English medium for the elite and other language medium for others. The changing equations in the society are clear for everyone to see. English education bestows an advantage on those who adopt it. Naturally, the poor people also desired to somehow improve their lot by opting for the English medium education for their children. Their preference for the English medium may not really solve their problems. They continue to be disadvantaged because, often, their children happen to be first generation school-goers, with no help from the family members to improve their study skills. When the elite social groups do not care for their language and culture, why should others bother about their mother tongue, and education through that language? The fear is that if the present trend continues, the market forces will convert the regional and other Indian languages only as subjects of study and eliminate them as medium of instruction. This is an unfortunate and retrograde step for any society. Since independence, Indian languages have come a long way in their development through organized activities. One of the ways these can retain their status they gained after Indian independence is through absorbing technology and regaining the confidence of their speakers by obtaining market value for them.

In 1956 since India wanted to come out of clutches of English and go to its roots in Indian languages wanted to impart education through the mother tongue of the child. The Supreme Court judgement in 2014 seems to be in tune with the present thinking of the elite and changed global and economic scenario. Impact of this judgement on mother tongue as medium of instruction is disastrous. In Karnataka here is a sample of number of applications received to start classes in 2015-16 in two educational districts as reported in The Hindu on Jan 2, 2015.

Table-7
Demand for medium of instruction

		Bangalore North	Bangalore South	Total
Pre-Primary	Kannada	189	288	477
	English	168	311	479
Classes 1 to 5	Kannada	59	109	168
	English	442	654	1096
Classes 6 to 8	Kannada	10	0	10
	English	170	295	465
Classes 9 & 10	Kannada	1	0	1
	English	52	74	126

The number of classes in English medium (2166), if permitted could outnumber Kannada medium (656) classes. But certainly, this indicates the market demand for English medium. The Hindu on June 24, 2015, reported that “*The High Court on Tuesday cautioned officials of Education Department that it would not hesitate to send them to prison for not adhering to the court’s directions for granting English-medium status to eligible schools in terms of the law declared by it in the Supreme Court.*” (Italics mine). During September 2015 the government of Karnataka is reported to have issued notification ‘...that schools registered in Kannada medium but imparting English medium education should be given retrospective recognition for English medium. Other schools that applied for conversion would get permission for English medium from the current academic year.’ (The Hindu, Sep 15, 2015)

Here is another kind of story of Kannada medium school reported in Prajavani on Aug 20, 2015. Al Kabir Kannada medium High School is an aided government school in Bannimantap area of Mysore. This school has Kannada, English, and Urdu medium. There are less than 25 students in the 8th to 10th standards in the Kannada medium. So, the Education Department has ordered to close the same and asked to transfer the students to other schools.

The Table-6 illustrates the enrolment of students medium and school management wise during 2018-19 from 1st to 10th standards. It shows that the private un-aided schools are housing 87.69 % of English medium students and only 13.72 % of Kannada medium students. Whereas the Government schools are housing 66.93% of Kannada medium students and only 3.44 % of English medium students.

Table-8
Medium and management wise enrolment 2018-19 from 1st to 10th standards

	Kannada	English	Urdu	Tamil & Telugu	Marathi
Education Department	39,08,516	1,38,617	2,55,253	4,475	72,131
Social Welfare	19,823	1,58,187	628	0	0
Local Bodies	5,643	3,780	216	0	162

Private Aided	11,02,849	1,26,032	67,929	5,423	32,646
Private Un-Aided	8,01,378	35,29,312	60,956	236	9,209
Others	1,316	7,222	3	0	0
Central government	35	61,329	497	0	353
Un-recognised	49	221	0	0	0
Total	58,39,609	40,24,700	3,85,482	10,134	1,14,501

There are two major things that are always ignored in the discourse on language policy implications. First thing is that the common man who gets affected by the policy cannot distinguish between learning a language as a subject in the school and learning a subject through a language, that is medium of instruction. They look alike and understood in the same manner. He perceives both as one and the same and clamours for English medium. Second important thing is language teaching pedagogy whether it is teaching Kannada or English, sans ground realities of the socio-economic factors and actual needs of the students. These languages are taught in the schools not for communication purpose, but for literature and literary sensibilities. They took over the space of communication skills rendering the students poorly educated in both English and Kannada language skills.

Because of the landmark Judgement of the Supreme Court of India on May 6, 2014 where in it was said that ‘...a child or on his behalf his parent or guardian, has a right to freedom of choice with regard to medium of instruction in which he would like to be educated at primary stage in school’, we can say that the issue of medium of instruction in the primary schools not only in Karnataka but also in the country has come to stabilise for next few decades until and unless some drastic political, constitutional changes take place in the country

At present Kannada is not endangered since it is having official patronage and is learnt as mother tongue by sizable group of people. Kannada must survive through learning as a mother tongue by its people. If due to some reason or the other like the one that we are discussing now, if the group switches over to English or some other language, in due course of 3 to 4 generations, the number of speakers may dwindle. Bilingualism in a dominant language like English and Hindi is more dangerous for the existence of Kannada.

Stage-IX

Bilingual medium of instruction: 2019

The demand for learning in the English medium was increasing, and the students were not enrolling in the government schools, there was a crisis in the student enrolment, due to non-availability of such facility adequately in the government schools the parents were opting for the same in the private schools. In this context, the government from the academic year 2019-20 sanctioned 1000 additional English medium section along with Kannada medium in government primary schools. Subsequently, to meet the demand for such facility extra bilingual section was allowed in the years 2019/20 -1001, 2020/21-1003 2024-25-1792. The facility of additional bilingual section with English medium was extended to Urdu primary schools also from 2020/21 in the 400 Urdu medium schools. The bilingual method of teaching through bilingual textbooks (English-Urdu etc.) was expected to help the students to understand the content easily in English through their mother tongue. Totally 4196 schools have bilingual sections with Kannada and Urdu medium in 2025. The number of bilingual

schools is increasing from year to year. The government has approved opening of bilingual classes in 1103 Bangalore North and South and districts, and 2897 government schools in other thirty-three educational districts. In addition, the permission has also been given to open new bilingual classes in the government high schools in Tirthahalli, Bilalukoppa, Hosur-Guddakeri, and Heddu of Shivamogga district (July 4, 2025: The Hindu)

It is reported that 'The aim of the Bilingual Medium Section is to provide the boys and girls the in competitive advantage of Kannada/English bilingualism, irrespective of the family environment they come from' (School Education:2025). Now, bilingual model of teaching through mother tongue and English medium is becoming popular among the people as well as policy makers. A gradual decline is noticed in the enrolment of the students in the government primary and secondary schools from year-to-year 2022-23:45.46 lakhs, 2023-24: 42.94 lakhs and in 2024-25:40.74 lakhs. In three years, a drop of 10.38% as per the statistics provided in the Legislative council by the Department of School Education and Literacy. One of the reasons cited by the education minister in the Council was 'Lack of bilingual school...'. Enrolment could increase along with other measures by 'Bilingual schools...' (The Hindu, Aug 18, 2025).

This trend is going to change the language education scenario in the state and may also change the scenario in the country also in due course. After a decade or so, Kannada will be learnt certainly as a subject since it is supposed to be a compulsory subject in the schools and there may not be any student left in the school interested to study through his mother tongue or Kannada medium. It will have a great impact on society and create rootless people. People may economically prosper but culturally they will be poor and second-class citizens of their own country. At present Kannada is not endangered since it is having official patronage and is learnt as mother tongue by sizable group of people. Kannada must survive through learning as a mother tongue by its people. If due to some reason or the other like the one that we are discussing now, and change in the language policy, if the group switches over to English or some other language, in due course of 3 to 4 generations, the number of speakers may dwindle. In a century or two, it may become a museum language. I think bilingualism in a dominant language like English or Hindi is more dangerous for the existence of Kannada.

Stage-X

Current scenario: National and the Karnataka language policies

It is essential to recollect the role of national language policy recommendations for education to guide the states in their policy formulation. Three-language formula was considered as a strategy for the problems of multilingual schooling in India. The *National Policy on Education of 1968* spoke about the regional languages and the Three Language Formula. The 1986 Policy reiterated the earlier stand. The *States Reorganization Commission* had asked the Union Government to elucidate a policy outline for education in mother tongue at the Secondary stage. The *All-India Council for Education* recommended the adoption of the three-language Formula (TLF) in September 1956. The endorsement for this formula came from various directions. It was adopted by the Chief Ministers' conference. The National Policy on Education 1968 recommended the inclusion of the TLF 'which includes the study of a modern Indian language, preferably one of the Southern languages, apart from Hindi and English in the Hindi speaking states, and of Hindi along with the regional language and English in the non-Hindi speaking states' in at the Secondary stage. This was reiterated in the *Education Policy 1986* and was adopted as the Programme of Action by the Parliament in 1992. These are major attempts to arrive at a language policy for education in India. Since education is in the concurrent list of the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution, the language policy formulation

for education and its implementation is left to the State governments under the Constitutional safeguards and broad guidelines cited above.

The National Education Policy-2020 had proposed that: ‘The three-language formula will continue to be implemented while keeping in mind the Constitutional provisions, aspirations of the people, regions, and the Union, and the need to promote multilingualism as well as promote national unity. However, there will be a greater flexibility in the three-language formula, and no language will be imposed on any State. The three languages learned by children will be the choices of States, regions, and of course the students themselves, so long as at least two of the three languages are native to India.’ And ‘Wherever possible, the medium of instruction until at least Grade 5, but preferably till Grade 8 and beyond, will be the home language/mother tongue/local language/regional language. Thereafter, the home/local language shall continue to be taught as a language wherever possible. This will be followed by both public and private schools. ...’ However, the Karnataka government did not accept the NEP:2020 and appointed a commission to study and make recommendations.

Kannada compulsory for graduation

As part of the language education policy an attempt was made by the government of Karnataka to introduce compulsorily Kannada at the undergraduate level in the state. The government vide its order of August 7, 2021, by citing NEP-2020 prescribed Kannada as one of the two languages to be compulsorily studied from the academic year 2021-22 in the undergraduate courses irrespective of the language/s students studied up to Class XII, the state from which they are, their mother tongue or the regional language. This study of compulsory ‘Functional Kannada’ was of six months duration and not a full-scale subject. This was of two levels – one for those who have studied Kannada before joining undergraduate courses and another one for those who come from outside Karnataka who did not know Kannada. Legality of this order was challenged through a PIL by the Samskrita Bharati (Karnataka) Trust and others in the High Court of Karnataka. The Ministry of Higher Education Government of India informed the court that under NEP-2020, ‘...higher education institution will use mother tongue/local language as medium of instruction and/or offer bilingually.’ The litigated order was stayed in April 2022 by the High Court and subsequently the state government revoked the same.

Karnataka State Education Policy Commission:2025

The Karnataka State Education Policy Commission, in its report submitted to the government on August 8, 2025, has made recommendations relating to language use in education. Since the report till date is not available in the public domain for public scrutiny/research, citation, dependence on the media reports cannot be avoided. Language policy recommendations relating to education are: (a) language policy is applicable to all the government, aided and private Kannada and English medium schools, (i) Kannada/mother tongue and (ii) English and abandoning the three-language policy currently in vogue. (b) Kannada / mother tongue as medium of instruction up to the 5th standard, if possible, up to the 12th standard (Prajavani: Nov 22, 2025).

According to a report in The Hindu (Aug 12, 2025) the recommended In the English medium schools English is taught as the first language and Kannada as the second language. In the Kannada medium schools, Kannada is the first language and English is the second language. (c) However, in the six Urdu, Telugu, Tamil, Marathi, Hindi, and Malayalam linguistic minority schools - Kannada is compulsory as first or second language; medium of instruction is the mother tongue of the student. In these schools if students opt for their mother tongue as first language, Kannada will be the second language. English will be optional third

language. In case the student opts for English, they must opt for Kannada as the first language and English as the second language. In case English is opted as the first language, Kannada will be the second language. Here, students can learn their mother tongue as the third language. One of the members of SEP Task Force (School Education) V.P. Niranjanaradhya has said that (d) 'If Tulu, Konkani, Kodava and other regional language students want to learn in their mother tongue, that is also allowed.' (The Hindu; Aug 12, 2025). While adjudicating a PIL about the State to have its own Education Policy by ignoring the National Education Policy 2020 the High Court of Karnataka ruled not to interfere in the policy decisions of the governments unless they are violative of the Constitutional or statutory rights. The Court did not entertain the petition. (The Hindu: Aug 13,2025). The recommendations of the commission about language education in Karnataka in toto are, all mother tongues inclusive and implement worthy. After due process of approval in toto or with modifications by the government the policy shall be implemented from the academic year 2026-27.

The question of language through which education must be imparted always got entangled with the issue of language(s) to be taught in the schools. The same thing happened in case of Karnataka too. So, we saw in the case of Karnataka the way the issue started with 'which language to be taught and when' but ended up in getting a judgment about teaching through a language too from the courts of law. The anti-Hindi stand of earlier decades, instead of supporting the regional languages, gave rise to the fast growth of education in the English medium. This gave an added advantage to the linguistic minorities who could opt for English due to their perceived threat from the regional language in this case Kannada. Thus, the microscopic minority of English mother tongue succeeded in providing a universal umbrella for all the elites in all categories, the minorities as well as the majority, by creating a common avenue for education through the English medium.

Stage: XI

Impacts

From the point of history of language policy formulation for education in multilingual Karnataka, intervention by individuals, groups of individuals in the form of support/pressure groups with or without common cause/interest, role of institutions like judiciary is an interesting and important issue to note and study. So also social, political, legal, linguistic, and economic aspects linked with language played an important role in deciding position of language(s) in education, media, administration, and other domains. Here is an academic exercise of who did what during the language debate in the legal domains. The parties involved were: on one side - Linguistic Minorities Protection Committee, English Medium Students Parents Association, Associated Management of (Government Recognised, Unaided, English Medium) Primary and Secondary Schools, Daffodils English School etc. They did not argue for the cause of Kannada. All of them argued for protection of their Constitutional rights, not for studying through their mother tongue but have the right to choose the medium of instruction. They succeeded. On other side, the State of Karnataka and some other organisations like the Kannada Development Authority argued in terms of pedagogy, cognition, culture etc. and could not persuade the judiciary from their legal thinking.

After going through the decades of debates on language education in Karnataka, it is essential to see where we stand today. The judgments of the High Court and the Supreme Court on the choice of languages in education and medium of instruction have many implications for language education in multilingual India also. Attempts to remove Sanskrit have miserably failed. Success is in making Kannada a compulsory subject as one of the three languages. Welcome addition is Tulu an indigenous language of Karnataka as third language. As of now:

1. The three-language formula, which was so far designated as a strategy, and which had no direct Constitutional status and was totally dependent on the governmental and institutional support, has now been given a legal sanction and status from the court of the country for its implementation.
2. Teaching a regional language, the Official Language of the state as a compulsory language in the schools, more specifically at the secondary stage, is recognized as legally acceptable. It is even considered as a must.
3. Earlier research had claimed that learning more languages is not a load. The same is reinforced by the judgment that teaching more languages as subjects from primary schools is not a burden imposed on the students.
4. A government need not wait up to 5th standard to introduce a second language. It can be introduced from the 3rd standard itself. Introduction of English as a subject from the 1st standard itself is silently accepted by majority and minority. All the states might have done the same. If not done, may do now.
5. The judgement ‘... child or on his behalf his parent or guardian, has a right to freedom of choice with regard to medium of instruction in which he would like to be educated at primary stage in school,’ will result in linguistic re-colonisation of the country and create rootless citizens from the 21st century onwards. This will gradually affect the linguistic-eco system of Karnataka and will also affect the linguistic-eco system of India.
6. One of the good policy initiatives of the Government of India regarding the medium of instruction is that, according to the CBSE circular, the students learning under its scheme must compulsorily register the name of their mother tongue. Also, they must make their choice of third language known. (Prajavani, September 16, 2015) This may possibly force Karnataka also to do the same.
7. We saw earlier (June 19, 1989) that (i) the Government of Karnataka’s language policy for school education failed to make Kannada a compulsory subject of instruction in the schools and (ii) the Supreme Court (May 6, 2014) ruled that parents have the right to choose the medium of instruction for their children. In its latest effort to make the Official Language of Karnataka-Kannada a compulsory language in the schools of Karnataka the Government has taken a policy decision and come up with *The Kannada Language Learning Act, 2015* (Act No.22 of 2015). This Act aims to make teaching of Kannada compulsory from 1st to 10th standards either as a first language or as a second language in a phased manner from the academic year 2015-16 in all the schools of the state irrespective of their funding, status, and establishment. According to this policy ‘...student who has not opted his mother tongue (other than Kannada) as First or Second Language may study his mother tongue as Third Language.’ This Act has not come into force with which it was intended to be implemented.

Part-III Landscape

The linguistic landscape is ‘The language of public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs, and public signs on government buildings combine to form the linguistic landscape of a given territory, region or urban agglomeration.’ Multilingual Karnataka is a visual banquet in this respect. In some area’s it is monolingual, generally bilingual or multilingual, depending on the linguistic composition of the geographical place. The government to bring prominence to the official language of the state and uniformity in the display of names had notified under the Karnataka Shops and Commercial

Establishments Rules, 1963 that 'The name board of every establishment shall be in Kannada and wherever other languages are also used, the versions in other languages shall be below the Kannada version' (Dec 31, 1963). Further to give eminence to Kannada in the public space the clause 'The name board in Kannada version shall be written predominantly by providing more space than for other languages, if any' was notified' (Jan 25, 2008). Though there is an awareness about the display of names in Kannada among the establishments many of them accepted and some others are not adhering. Since the government vehicles were displaying the registration number plates only in English all the concerned were asked to compulsorily display Kannada letters and numerals also along with English letters and numbers (Aug 18, 2000). Though the government had given instruction on Feb 10, 1983, itself to give the government advertisements in Kannada in the Kannada dailies, it was not strictly followed. Hence again strict advice to adhere to the instructions was given to all including allied organisations (Nov 19, 1998). The Bangalore Kempe Gowda International Airport was asked to get the name plates of the shops and commercial establishments written in Kannada; airport and all airlines to provide Kannada newspapers to the travellers and provide services of the Kannada knowing persons in reception, public service etc (May 12, 2009).

Directions were given to display the banners in Kannada in the functions of the government and associated organisations. In case of interstate, national or international functions along with Kannada, English or Hindi were allowed to be used (March 15, 2002). As part of Kannadisation of the towns the government recommended all the concerned to name the unnamed streets, new extensions in the towns, cities, circles, parks with the names of Kannada poets, thinkers, and locally important personalities (Feb 14, 2002).

Part-IV

Employment

Gradually, from the late 1970 onwards awareness grew in the public and government that the employment opportunities in the existing sectors have started to shrink for the locals of the state and the new sectors were welcoming outsiders, but locals are not receiving adequate chances. Under these circumstances the government appointed a committee (Aug 4, 1983) with Dr. Sarojini Mahishi as chairperson to '...study the present factual position relating to employment of persons belonging to Karnataka in Central Public Sector Undertakings and Banks and other institutions under the control of the Government of India.' And '...ascertain the problems and grievances of the employees who belong to Karnataka in such undertakings.' The committee was authorised to make recommendations concerning remedial measures. As desired by the Committee the purview of it was expanded by the government to include the government owned industries and the big private industries also.

The committee made fifty-eight recommendations on Dec 30, 1986, out of them thirteen recommendations were not accepted by the government. Since Karnataka is a multilingual state important issue was to determine who should be considered as Kannadiga for employment? The government on Feb 2, 1985, decided that Kannadiga is the one who knows Kannada to speak, read and write, should have been living in Karnataka for a period of fifteen years and as evidence for the same should submit school certificate, ration card and voter list. The responsibility of implementation of the recommendations of the report was entrusted to various government departments. Dr. Mahishi herself had her expressed unhappiness about non implementation of the report. The report was revised and results of implementation were not visible. The employment opportunities in the government sector are further shrinking and fast opening in the private sector and outsiders are becoming beneficiaries of this expansion. Notwithstanding the efforts of the government the results of implementation

of the recommendations even after nearly forty years are not seen. Effort to link language policy to employment opportunities has not yielded desired results.

Part-V

Comprehensive development of Kannada-2022

In its fourth effort, the Karnataka Government, after nearly sixty-six years of the reorganisation of the state and fifty-six years of declaring Kannada as the official language of the state, with its decades of efforts and experience in realizing the policy brought out an all-sector inclusive comprehensive language policy declaration 'The Kannada Language Comprehensive Development Act, 2022 (Karnataka Act No. 13 of 2023)' for promoting the policy execution. This aims at comprehensive development of Kannada language and providing better opportunities for Kannadigas in education, employment and visibility for Kannada etc. Nevertheless, this is a compilation of earlier policy decisions, with some additions reminds the language policy observers and implementers of it about the constant efforts of the government. The salient and some (not all) relevant features of this Act are summarised here.

Administration: The Kannada Language shall be the Official Language of the State and Local Authorities. It shall be used in all Bills, Acts, Orders, Rules, Regulations, Byelaws issued by the Government, Local Bodies, Boards, Corporations, Statutory and Non-Statutory Bodies or undertakings and registered Co-Operative Societies. Translations of existing Legislations in English shall be published in Kannada; important Central Acts with Karnataka Amendments shall also be translated into Kannada. English will continue to be used for correspondence with the Government of India, Foreign Countries, Other States, High Courts, Supreme Court, and where English must be used as per law and where it cannot be avoided due to administrative reasons or communications are purely technical and scientific in nature, it can be used. Linguistic minorities as far as possible can use Kannada or English for communication with the state government, and its offices. The responses may be in Kannada or in English. To implement the official language policy an enforcement mechanism at the levels of state, district, and taluka are formed. The enforcement officer is expected to do periodical inspection of the offices to confirm compliance and report to the committee. These committees will hold meetings once in three months about steps taken for implementation and report.

Employment: Knowledge of Kannada is precondition for employment in the state government and allied organisations. The selected person must pass the Kannada language examination equivalent to the first or second language of 10th Standard conducted by the approved authority. The person who has already passed such examination is exempted.

Education: The Kannada Language Learning Act, 2015 (Karnataka Act 22 of 2015) shall continue to apply. In higher Education, Technical Education and Professional Education: According to the New Education Policy, in Higher, Technical, and Professional Education course, practical and functional knowledge of Kannada relating to the professional course shall be taught as per the decision of the concerned universities. The students who have not studied Kannada as one of the languages at the secondary school shall also be taught basic Kannada as a subject prescribed in the university syllabus. As per the notification of the government specific percentage of reservation in higher, technical, and professional education will be provided to the students who have studied in the Kannada medium from 1st standard to 10th standard in Karnataka or in Kannada medium schools in any other states.

Judiciary: The District or Trial court or Tribunals shall conduct proceedings in Kannada and give the orders and judgments in Kannada; the concerned officer while recording evidence in Kannada, can use English words and phrases if necessary; High Court may by

order permit the concerned officer to record evidence in English; the Orders of quasi-judicial functionaries of the State Government shall be in Kannada.

Information Technology: Websites of the government and allied shall be in Kannada in Unicode or available technology from time to time; e-tenders, electronic application forms, messages, letters, etc., shall also be in Kannada. Open-source software and accessories for the effective use of Kannada language will be developed.

Landscape: The nameboards, advertisements, forms, pamphlets, banners, flex, electronic display boards, notices, bills, receipts, should primarily be in Kannada; the name board should display 60% in Kannada and it should be displayed in the upper half of the name board; product name and direction for use produced and sold in the state will be in Kannada in addition to other language.

The state and central government, private establishments in the state with more than one hundred employees should establish 'Kannada cell' and 'basic Kannada teaching unit;' every person will use Kannada also in all communication and correspondence with the public.

Part-VI

Present status of Kannada

Kannada is a language with multiple status, it is (i) a *Scheduled Language* (adopted on November 26, 1949 by the Constituent Assembly) due to its listing in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution of India; (ii) the *Official Language* (1963) of the Karnataka State and (iii) a *Classical Language* (2008) declared by the Government of India since it has - high antiquity of early texts/recorded history over a period of 1500–2000 years; body of ancient literature/texts, which is considered a valuable heritage by generations of speakers; the literary tradition be original and not borrowed from another speech community and the classical language and literature being distinct from modern, there may also be a discontinuity between the classical language and its later forms or its offshoots. Thus, Kannada is simultaneously a modern as well as a classical language.

Part-VII

Epilogue

In the domain of Kannada as official language, policy is static and its implementation is dynamic. Though language policy was declared decades ago, despite committees and authorities with only advisory role giving very valuable inputs for use of Kannada in administration and the government machinery working for its active implementation, has not found complete success. Even in 2025 after the Comprehensive Kannada Development Act 2022 the implementation mechanism in the state has not worked up to the expectations of the government in more than sixty-two years of declaration of Kannada as the official language. This is evident from the communication by the Chief Secretary wherein she has '...instructed officials to use Kannada extensively for administrative purposes in all State departments and district administrations, warning that disciplinary action will be taken against those who fail to comply' (June 26, 2025: The Hindu)). There is a need of systematic formal evaluation of the policy of use of Kannada in administration rather than opinion-based assessment and decision making. There was a big-time gap of seven years between the reorganization of the state (Nov 1, 1956) on linguistic lines and enacting of the Official Language Act (Oct 5, 1963). There was also a time gap of five years in taking serious steps to implement the stated policy (April 1, 1968; taluk level ...). It was not immediately and rigorously implemented since formation of the unified state.

It is true that prior to the reorganisation of Karnataka, use of Kannada in administration in different geographic parts was uneven, making it even after unification was not an easy task.

Medium of instruction from which the government officials originated were also different. Many of them were new to use Kannada in official domains. This was true for one generation of administrators but not for next generations of officials. Lack of strong will power to implement the policy, creation/formation of various toothless committees, authorities etc., without real administrative power for extraneous reasons to oversee the implementation also seem to be some of the causes for ineffective implementation. The implementors see them as scare crows and many of their recommendations are accepted and some others are lingering on paper for posterity. Step by step incremental implementation of the language policy in administration and judiciary is logically sound but due to long time gaps in steps and unknown apathy of implementors, even today Kannada as an official language is not fully implemented. Here, strong political will and not toothless multiple organisations for overseeing is the implementation is the need of the hour.

Language policy in the domain of education in the multilingual state of Karnataka is not static but dynamic, as it stands today, was not framed and implemented in a single stroke, but it has evolved from 1956 through the process of conflict, understanding, adjudication and adjustment of roles for various mother tongues (home languages) as school languages and medium of instruction. It has evolved in several stages with the decisions taken by the recommendations of the committees, legislature, bureaucracy, and the judicial intervention. These decisions were guided at times by the prevalent dominant public opinion and often were adjudicated by the judiciary by looking into the claims and counterclaims of various mother tongue/language groups. Often social, economic, political, legal, and other issues not related to education have influenced the language choice for education. Still the language policy in the domain of education like many other policies is in a fluid state and may take some more time to get stabilised, but it is certain that it has come around one circle with the Supreme Court judgement in 2014 about the medium of instruction. Right to education in once own declared mother tongue has become right to choose a language as medium of instruction for primary education.

In the context of the New Education Policy (2020), it was reported that the Department of Primary and Secondary Education of the Government of Karnataka has recommended to the Ministry of Human Resources Development, Government of India that at the primary level the parents have final word in the selection of medium of instruction of their children. Also, it has recommended that in the higher primary level medium of instruction be bilingual-English as well as mother tongue and at the secondary level schools will have an option to choose the medium of instruction. Regarding number of languages to be taught, it had recommended that at the lower primary level be-2, at the higher primary level 3, at the high school level 2 and at the higher secondary level 1. In the multilingual Union of India, language policy of one state cannot be compared with the policy of another state since each state is multilingually unique, and they are permitted to have their own policy within in the Constitutional framework. And policy is not fixed or stagnant. It gets modified according to the felt needs of the society.

Language policy for education ‘language as a subject and as a medium of instruction’ from 1st to 10th standards in Karnataka has gone through several stages for : primacy of mother tongue in the primary schools from 1st to 4th standards (1956); status of Kannada as a ‘sole’ first language in the secondary schools (1982); only students whose mother tongue is English can study in English medium from 1st to 4th standards (1994); the student or on his behalf parents or guardian has right to choose the medium of instruction (2014) ultimately proved beyond doubt that legal issues are important for judiciary and not the academic or cognitive issues. The poor response of the students to study through their mother tongue, extraordinary love of English medium and support of the government for the same through setting up of new

English medium sections. Attempt of the government to compulsorily teach Kannada either as first or second language in schools with 'The Kannada Language Learning Act, 2015' not taking off the ground in letter and spirit are important policy initiatives. In the domain of education, mother tongue as a school language has got restricted to linguistic minority schools. All attempts to eliminate Sanskrit as a first language have failed.

After all the discussion on school languages and medium of instruction in the state, today (2025) Karnataka has provisions in the primary and secondary schools to teach Kannada, Telugu, Tamil, Urdu, Malayalam, English, and Sanskrit (7-languages) as first languages; English and Kannada (2-languages) as second languages; Hindi, Kannada, English, Urdu, Sanskrit, Konkani, and Tulu (7-languages) as third languages at the secondary school stage. At the Pre-University stage facility is there to study Kannada, Arabic, English, Optional Kannada, Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Marathi, Urdu, Sanskrit and French (11-languages). The students in the state from the primary to secondary stage are allowed to opt for Kannada, English, Urdu, Tamil, Telugu, Marathi, Hindi, and Malayalam (8 languages) as their medium of instruction. Now, the state has moved from the policy of monolingual medium to bilingual model of teaching through mother tongue and English medium in the government schools. It may spread if it becomes popular and slowly erode all other mediums and hold on only to English medium education. In this scenario it will be a great challenge for the language policy makers/implementers to protect mother tongues as school languages and mother tongue as medium of instruction at least at the primary stage.

The illustration and discussion till now show that the language policy of Karnataka is unique. It has a liberal and accommodative, recognizes its multilingualism, and respects the same. Apart from the domain of administration, education, employment, landscape, etc., it recognises existence of major minor languages within its territory. It is reflected in its decision to develop and promote all the numerically minor minority mother tongues/languages, their literature and culture. Thus, Academies like Kodava Sahitya Academy, Konkani Sahitya Academy, Tulu Sahitya Akademy, Arebhashe sanskriti and Sahitya Academy, Beary Sahitya Academy and Lambani bhasha Academy are established on the lines of Kannada sahitya Academy. The government provides funds for the promotion of language, literature, and culture by these academies. The contribution for the purpose for which they have been set up needs to be evaluated from time to time.

The language policy of the state in the domain of education and development has almost ignored some of the indigenous mother tongues including tribal once, in its necessary emphasis on Kannada, major minority languages, Sanskrit and English. Supremacy for Kannada is important in Karnataka, but statistically smaller mother tongues spoken in the state are also important. Kannada has pressure groups, and Kodava or Tulu are awakening. But Yerava or Lamani or Soliga or Koraga etc., have no pressure group to fight for the cause of their language in schools. Attempts to make minor languages like Tulu, Konkani as first languages; making Kodava, Lambadi etc., as school languages; creating a space in the schooling for the children of endangered mother tongues like Yerava (total population: 30,359 & mother tongue speakers: 24,574), Jenu Kuruba (total population:36,076 & mother tongue speakers: 11,577), obtaining actual count of Koraga, Soliga, etc., mother tongue speakers to protect their mother tongues from extinction are challenging tasks. If language planners agree that our endangered languages/mother tongues are our intangible heritage, it is essential that the policies are directed towards preserving such heritage mother tongues through schooling rather than trying only to document them for posterity. Karnataka is an abode of several endangered tribal mother tongues, and these have not been detected even by the language policy makers for their protection and revitalisation. The tribal development plans should have mother tongue

revitalisation through education as one of the important components since they can be saved from extinction only through schooling.

The contemporary challenge to the language policy of Karnataka: is in the implementation of Kannada in administration, employment of Kannadigas in all sectors; stabilising language choice for education in schools; creation of an inclusive policy of smaller mother tongues by bringing them into the ambit of education at least at the primary level; and conducting an objective evaluation of its innovative model of bilingual medium of instruction in terms of its pedagogic impact on students. Now, it must be seen how the language policy implementation in all the domains of its use will get an impetus under the bandwagon of use of Artificial Intelligence for human development.

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