

# English language assessment: social integration or new disintegration

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# Key issues

- Multilingualism
- Language and identity
- English in India
- Teaching and assessment of English
- Marginalised groups
- Some samples: test paper and student writing



# India: a multilingual country

- 22 constitutionally recognised official languages
- more than 1635 mother tongues
- and a total of 122 languages.

(Census 2011)

- 29 States and 9 Union Territories- No national language
- English- Associate Official language

# English in India: a unique story

- Mixed feelings: frowned upon as legacy of the British  
link language- within and without (Hindi)
- aspirational value  
threat to Indian way of thinking
- Throughout India, there is an extraordinary belief, among almost all castes and classes, in both rural and urban areas, in the transformative power of English.

(Graddol, 2010, p.120)

# The 3 language formula

- 1. Mother tongue/regional language
- 2. Hindi or English
- 3. Modern Indian or modern European language

OR

- 1. Mother tongue/regional language
- 2. English or modern European language
- 3. Hindi or another modern Indian

- CABE (1957) recommended that English should be taught as a compulsory language at secondary and university levels
- To be introduced only after primary level
- English as medium of instruction in Indian schools

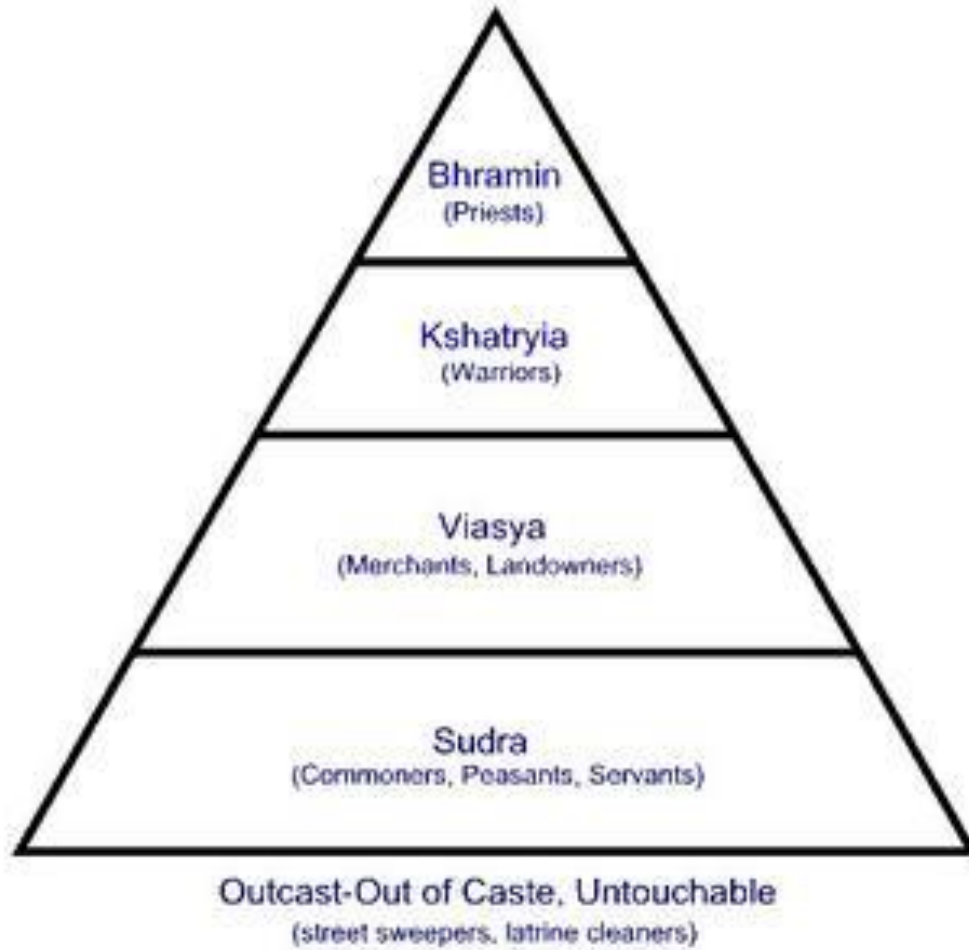
Primary	Primary	Upper Primary	Upper Primary	Secondary	Secondary
1993	2002	1993	2002	1993	2002
4.99	12.98	15.91	18.25	18.37	25.84

(Meganathan, 2011)

# Teaching of English

- Demand increases but quality of English language education is abysmal
- Divide between urban and rural increases with rise in English as a medium of instruction
- Poor teacher quality and language proficiency
- Lack of contextualized materials
- First Gen learners with no exposure to English outside school
- English as a medium vs. English as a language





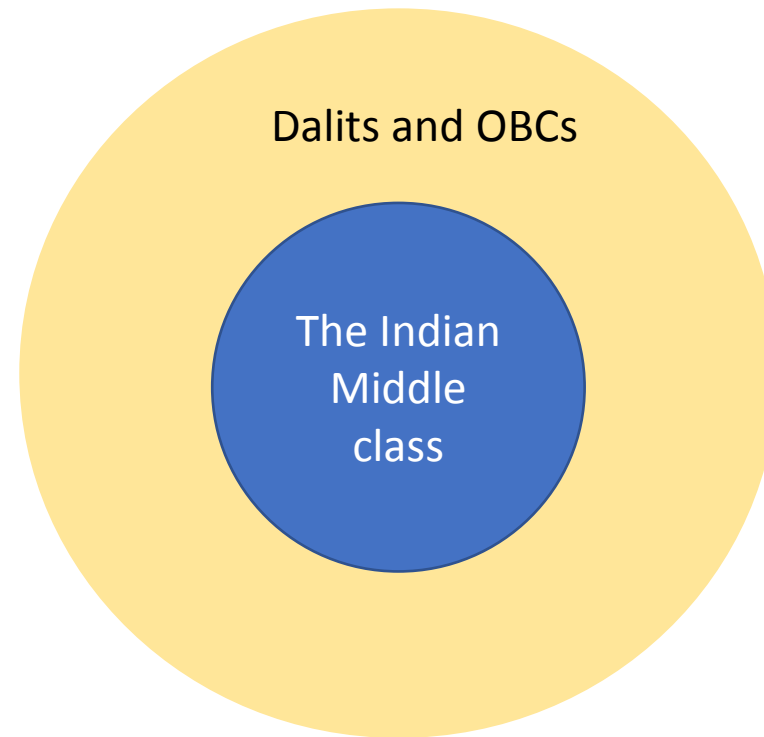
# Caste system in India

# Reservation policy

- In jobs and educational institutes- Article 15(4)
- Reserved seats:
  - 15% Schedule Castes (SC)
  - 7.5% Schedule Tribes (ST)
  - 27% Other Backward classes (OBC)
- Special drives for admissions; key positions lying vacant

- Right to education (2010)- free and compulsory education to all children under the age of 14 years
- No detention policy- students to be promoted to the next class irrespective of performance or learning
- Policy discussions on teaching of English are generic
- No discussion on assessment of English
- English language assessment is primarily achievement tests-reading and writing only

# Inner and outer circles of power



(Ramanathan, 1999, p. 212)

# English goddess





Learn English,  
move forward

- Standard languages are brahmanised so Dalits and marginalized look at them with contempt
- "Textbooks must be in standard Hindi or else our children will remain backward" (Dalit teachers)

(Saxena & Mahendroo, 1993, p.2445)

- English helps them to overcome their perceived inadequacies as it is the language the upper caste students use
- Poor English proficiency=poor economic/ low caste background
- English is the colonisers' language so romanticize the inability to use it= pure/unpolluted

# Student protest against English medium education





- “AUD uses only English as the medium of instruction and mandates students to write all exams and submit their thesis in English”
- “Two or three words in every sentence require me to refer to the dictionary. Thus the flow of words is broken and I can only comprehend parts of the reading. To make matters worse, the discussion only happens in English.”

(Youth ki Awaaz, 18 April 2017)

# Assessment samples

- For to him, each sufferer was something more than just a case that was to be cured. He looked upon the fight against hydrophobia as a battle, and he was absorbed in his determination to win. The sight of injured children, particularly, moved him to an indescribable extent.

Excerpt from a short text on Louis Pasteur

Class 12. Reading Comprehension Text (487 words)

# Sample questions

Unseen passage (Louis Pasteur)

1. Even accolades and honours did not change the simple man that Pasteur was. Why? **2 marks**
2. How did Pasteur view those who suffered from diseases? **1 mark**
3. How did Pasteur engage himself in the estate? **2 marks**
4. What advice did he always give to his pupils? **2 marks**
5. How did France, the country of his birth, honour this great scientist? **2 marks**

# Advanced writing task (10 marks)

- You are Shekhar/Tripta a student of A.P Public School. Principals of two schools from Pakistan visited your school as part of a cultural exchange programme. Students of the school put up a cultural show in their honour. Write a report about it for your school magazine. (100-125 words)

# Assessment pattern

- Moderation of scores
- Relaxation in minimum scores required to enter a particular discipline or level

Different categories:

- Single girl child/ Disabled
- SC
- ST
- OBC

# Student writing sample

- i want learn english becuse i am not able to understand english and writing and speaking also i have a problem.so pls mam when ever english cls will star so pls infome me ... it is very important for me mam.

MA Gender Studies student

- When will started english class?
- i want to study english language class by you

MA History students

# The way ahead

- Assessment reforms
- Teaching of English as a language rather than as subject
- Emphasis away from rote learning to using the language
- Teacher quality
- Teacher education reforms
- Proper allocation of resources
- Rethink reservation policy

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Thank you

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