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## The State of Language, Endangerment, and Policy in India: A Forking Path

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The State of Language, Endangerment, and Policy in India:

A Forking Path

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Major: English Language and Literature

Concentration: Linguistics

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May 11, 2021

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The Indian subcontinent is one of the most linguistically diverse areas in the world. The 2011 Census of India reports over 1,950 languages and 720 dialects are spoken in India. Although India itself has speakers of four distinct language families, its people have a shared culture, genetics, and history that spans thousands of years. The languages spoken in India have grown, stymied, and influenced each other before reaching their current state. The multiplicity of languages led to implementation of institutionalized language protection measures during the Independence period. Despite these efforts, many languages remain at risk for endangerment and extinction. Language endangerment is not a problem unique to India. Ethnologue estimates approximately 42% of the world's languages- about 3,018 languages- are endangered in 2021. Section I of this paper will provide background information on language endangerment. Section II will discuss the linguistic families that are spoken in India, their history, development, and current speaker range. Section III will detail the history of language policy in India in three phases: during the Pre-British Colonial Period, the British Colonial Period, and during the Independence Period. Finally, Section IV will discuss the divergent nature of language vitality in India today.

## **SECTION I: LANGUAGE ENDANGERMENT**

Despite efforts taken by several national governments towards language preservation, languages around the world are at risk. Seven thousand languages are spoken in the world today; however, many of the world's languages are in danger of disappearing. Statistical data reveals the alarming rate of language decline around the world. Ethnologue estimates 42% of the world's languages are endangered, many with fewer than 1,000 remaining speakers (Ethnologue, 2021). Furthermore, approximately 97% of the global population speak about 4% of the world's

languages, corresponding to the red sections in Figure 1.1. This means the diversity and vitality of 96% of the world's languages rests upon just 3% of the global population, corresponding to the green sections in Figure 1.1 (UNESCO Ad Hoc, 2003). Ethnologue estimates just 23 languages account for more than half of the world's speakers (Ethnologue, 2021).

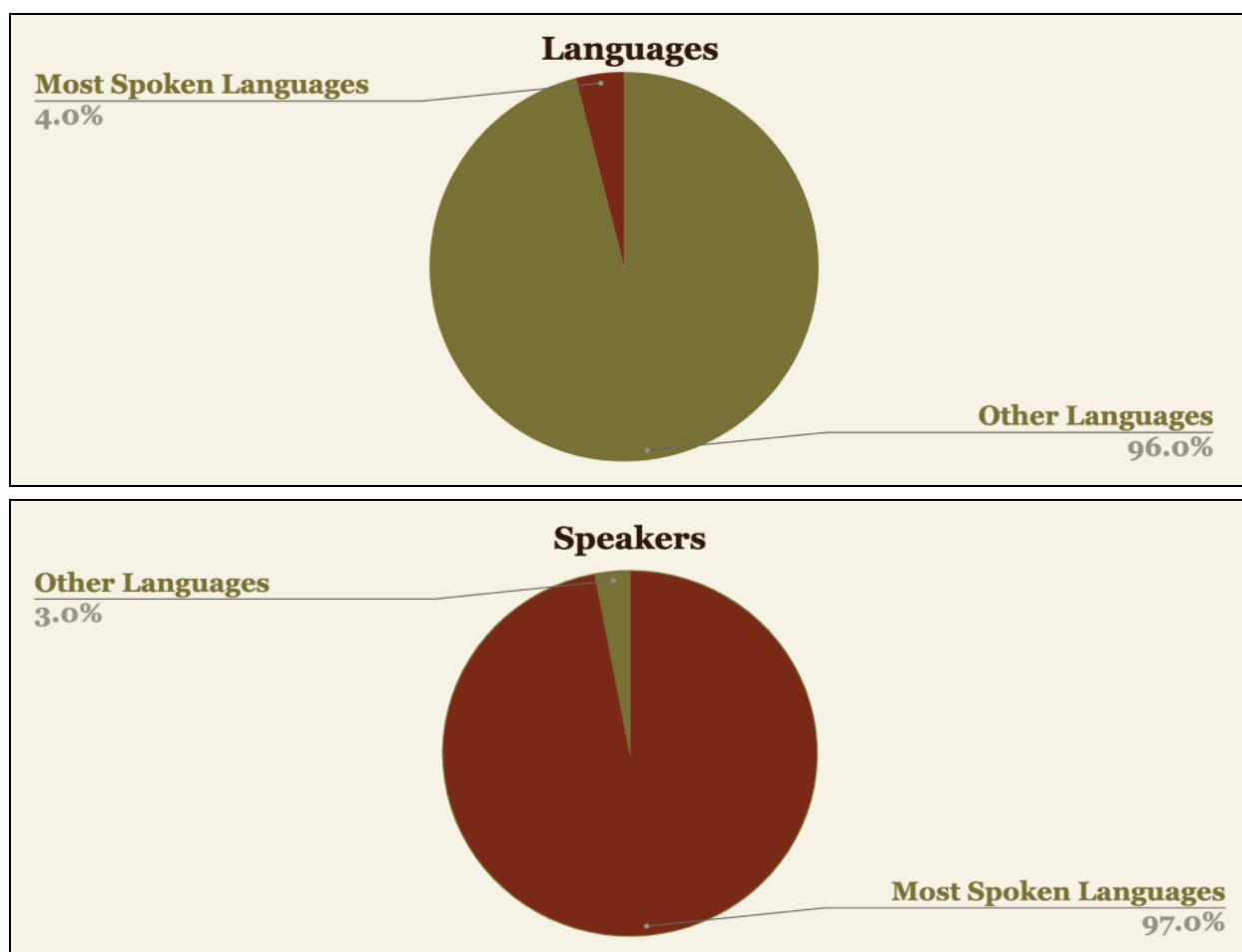


Figure 1.1 Percent of majority and minority languages (top). Percent of majority and minority speakers (bottom). [Adapted from UNESCO Ad Hoc, 2003.]

The cultural impact of language loss cannot be overstated, as language is inextricably linked with the culture of its speakers. The loss of a language is a loss of the cultural and linguistic diversity of the world. Hale contextualizes the importance of linguistic diversity as

such: “linguistic diversity is important to human intellectual life—not only in the context of scientific linguistic inquiry, but also in relation to the class of human activities belonging to the realms of culture and art” (Hale, 1992, p. 32). Language diversity can be measured by language richness, sometimes referred to as language density, which is a measure of the number of languages in a given area (Gavin et al., 2013).

The UNESCO Ad Hoc Expert Group on Endangered Language briefly summed three factors that constitute an endangered language. The first factor is when speakers of a language cease to use it. This may occur when a majority language supplants a language that is considered a minority language. The next factor is the language is used in an increasingly reduced number of communicative domains. A language can become endangered when it is used for fewer daily functions since it subsequently loses associations with social or communicative functions (Ethnologue, 2021). Furthermore, when a language is used with reduced frequency, it loses its structural form and complexity, making it at risk for loss of social value and increasing the decreasing rate of loss (Ethnologue, 2021). Finally, a language can become endangered if there are no new speakers; that is, the transmission from a grandparent to parent to child generation does not occur. Endangered languages are on a path towards extinction and, without language protection efforts or documentation, are at risk for the inability to be revived (UNESCO Ad Hoc, 2003).

Of the available data relating to language vitality, varying data, terminology, scales, and resources cause discrepancies within the field to arise. For example, there is no single measure that can be used to assess language vitality or a language’s need for documentation. However, two scales that are often used to measure language vitality include the Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (EGIDS) and UNESCO’s Language Vitality and

Endangerment (LVE) scale. The strengths and weaknesses of both models will be discussed in greater detail in the following sections.

### **Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (EGIDS)**

Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (EGDIS) developed by Lewis & Simons (2010) is one of the most frequently used scales to determine language vitality. The scale is an expansion of Fishman's 1991 Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (GDIS). GDIS primarily evaluated intergenerational transmission as a measure of language health. After all, if a language is not passed to the subsequent generation, its use and speaker population will diminish. The scale also included what social space or for what function a language is used, collectively termed "domains of use" by Fishman and subsequent researchers, within the GDIS grading metric (Lewis & Simons, 2010). The influence of "domains of use" of a language in turn influences that language's social prestige and function in society. Lewis & Simons (2010) summarize the process as: "[the] choice of language becomes sedimented over time as a social norm, so that the use of a particular language in a particular participant-location-topic context comes to be expected" (p. 5). Fishman's GDIS scale, pictured in Figure 1.2, operates on a categorization system ranging from 1-8, with lower numbers correlating to lower levels of endangerment and higher levels of vitality.

<b>GIDS</b>	<b>(adapted from Fishman 1991)</b>
<b>LEVEL</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>
1	The language is used in education, work, mass media, government at the nationwide level
2	The language is used for local and regional mass media and governmental services
3	The language is used for local and regional work by both insiders and outsiders
4	Literacy in the language is transmitted through education
5	The language is used orally by all generations and is effectively used in written form throughout the community
6	The language is used orally by all generations and is being learned by children as their first language
7	The child-bearing generation knows the language well enough to use it with their elders but is not transmitting it to their children
8	The only remaining speakers of the language are members of the grandparent generation

Figure 1.2 Fishman's 1991 GIDS Model [Retrieved from Lewis & Simons, 2010].

While the introduction of the GDIS scale in 1991 was profound, several shortcomings have been identified in the decades that followed: GDIS did not adequately differentiate between language shift and language development when measuring vitality, GDIS did not properly describe the range of possible language statuses, GDIS emphasizes intergenerational transmission- implied in the home domain- as the most important factor in determining language vitality, and GDIS provided the least elaboration on the levels which corresponded with the highest degree of language endangerment (Lewis & Simons, 2010).

After identifying the shortcomings of Fishman's GDIS model, Lewis & Simons developed an expansion, known as the EGDIS model, to address the apparent gaps. At its core,



the EGDIS model aims to serve the same function as Fishman's GDIS model; both scales measure disruptions in the use of language, which, in turn, is an indicator of a language's vitality. However, EGDIS includes several modifications that cause it to produce a more targeted indicator of language vitality than its predecessor. First, EGIDS offers a greater level of distinction- 13 categories- as opposed to Fishman's 8 categorical levels, as demonstrated in Figure 1.3. The EGDIS model ranges from 0-10, with a higher number correlating to a more severe level of language endangerment. The EGDIS model utilizes letters to distinguish in detail levels of endangerment; thus, levels such as 6a and 6b on the EGDIS model correspond to what was known as Level 6 on Fishman's GDIS and levels 8a and 8b correspond similarly to Level 8 on the GDIS. Furthermore, levels 0, 9, and 10 on EGDIS are new descriptive categories that were created to further delineate language statuses and enable the model to be applied to all languages in the world. Additionally, the expansions provide greater detail for the categorization of endangered languages. Levels 6b "Threatened" and 7 "Shifting" are the first two categorical levels for endangered languages. These languages are referred to as "In Trouble" languages; since the youngest generation of speakers are parents, it is still possible to continue intergeneration transmission through focused training with the parents (Ethnologue, 2021). It is estimated that 2,032 of the 7,139 languages, or 28% of the known languages in the world, fall within the 6b and 7 "In Trouble" designation (Ethnologue, 2021).

<b>Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (adapted from Fishman 1991)*</b>			
<b>LEVEL</b>	<b>LABEL</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>UNESCO</b>
0	International	The language is used internationally for a broad range of functions.	Safe
1	National	The language is used in education, work, mass media, government at the nationwide level.	Safe
2	Regional	The language is used for local and regional mass media and governmental services.	Safe
3	Trade	The language is used for local and regional work by both insiders and outsiders.	Safe
4	Educational	Literacy in the language is being transmitted through a system of public education.	Safe
5	Written	The language is used orally by all generations and is effectively used in written form in parts of the community.	Safe
6a	Vigorous	The language is used orally by all generations and is being learned by children as their first language.	Safe
6b	Threatened	The language is used orally by all generations but only some of the child-bearing generation are transmitting it to their children.	Vulnerable
7	Shifting	The child-bearing generation knows the language well enough to use it among themselves but none are transmitting it to their children	Definitely Endangered
8a	Moribund	The only remaining active speakers of the language are members of the grandparent generation.	Severely Endangered
8b	Nearly Extinct	The only remaining speakers of the language are members of the grandparent generation or older who have little opportunity to use the language.	Critically Endangered
9	Dormant	The language serves as a reminder of heritage identity for an ethnic community. No one has more than symbolic proficiency.	Extinct
10	Extinct	No one retains a sense of ethnic identity associated with the language, even for symbolic purposes.	Extinct

Figure 1.3 Expanded GDIS Model, [Retrieved from Lewis & Simons, 2010]. The table includes corresponding UNESCO categories, which will be discussed in forthcoming sections.

## **UNESCO's Language Vitality and Endangerment (LVE) Scale**

The Language Vitality and Endangerment (LVE) scale was developed and surmised in UNESCO's 2003 Ad Hoc Expert Group on Endangered Languages. The LVE scale uses measurements from nine factors to identify the vitality of a particular language. Each factor is graded on a scale of 0-5, with a higher categorical number corresponding with a higher degree of language safety. The nine factors must be evaluated in tandem to one another; a language can score highly under one factor and still be at overall risk for language loss. The scales used to grade each of the LVE factors are contained in Appendix A. UNESCO commissioned several experts and expert groups to consolidate a review of application and feedback of the LVE model in 2011. Discussion of each of the nine factors will follow in the subsequent paragraphs.

### ***1. Intergenerational Language Transmission***

Intergenerational language transmission, whether language is being passed on from one generation to the next, is the most common factor to evaluate language vitality (Fishman 1991; UNESCO Ad Hoc 2003). Both the GDIS and EGDIS models primarily center around intergenerational transmission in its evaluation of language vitality. The LVE scale ranks intergenerational language transmission from 0 "extinct" to 5 "safe". However, an LVE rating of "safe" does not necessarily guarantee the preservation of a particular language since at any point the language may not be adopted by a subsequent generation (UNESCO Ad Hoc, 2003). For example, a language might be given the designation stable yet threatened (5-) when the language is spoken by all generations but is losing function in certain contexts, such as being relegated to the home domain, or loses prestige to one or more dominant languages in the region (UNESCO Ad Hoc, 2003). The LVE scale explicitly notes that multilingualism *alone* is not a threat to

intergenerational transmission of a language. UNESCO's 2011 LVE review suggested the following clarifications should be implemented to Factor 1: the indication of the influence of second language immersion in school (Legère, 2003) and the rearrangement of the general term "generation" into more specific age groups (AIATSIS, 2005).

## **2. *Absolute Number of Speakers***

It is impossible to verify an exact number of speakers of any language. Estimates of the absolute number of speakers are made from available data, such as census data, but the accuracy of such reports is left up to the countries or organizations which compile such figures. Regardless, the absolute number of speakers is commonly used to indicate the vitality of a language and its future stability. It is well known that languages spoken by smaller speech communities are typically at higher risk for loss. Smaller speech communities are more vulnerable to devastation to external forces such as disease, warfare, and natural disasters than larger speech communities are (UNESCO Ad Hoc, 2003). Furthermore, smaller speech communities are at risk for merging with larger or neighboring language groups, often at the expense of their own language and culture (UNESCO Ad Hoc, 2003). The only suggestion noted in the 2011 LVE review is to develop a grading scale, as the other eight factors have, to shed more light on the meaning of speech community size (Lewis, 2005).

## **3. *Proportion of Speakers within the Total Population***

The size of a speech community in relation to the total population of the group is a significant factor in determining language vitality. The LVE scale defines a group as the "ethnic, religious, regional, or national group with which the speaker community identifies" (UNESCO

Ad Hoc, 2003, p. 9). Factor 3 is similar to Factor 2, where a smaller proportion of speakers within a total population is more likely to be at risk for language loss. Feedback on Factor 3 revealed ambiguities regarding the terms “total population” and “speaker”. First, suggestions indicated the title of Factor 3 “Proportions of Speakers within the Total Population” should be amended to clarify total population with a particular ethno-linguistic group, as opposed to within a country (UNESCO’s Language Vitality, 2011). Additionally, LVE fails to define the term “speaker” in accompanying criteria for each scale. The Australian National Language Survey Report (NILS 2005) proposed the introduction of a measuring scale from 0-5 to distinguish between active use, speaking, understanding and identifying with the language (UNESCO’s Language Vitality, 2011).

#### **4. *Shifts in Domains of Language Use***

The context and purpose a particular language is used for has a direct impact on its vitality. The elevation of a language to institutional expands its use into many other sectors, such as business and education, and thus maintains its stability. The existence of multiple languages in a community decreases stability of languages as it causes the community’s speakers to choose between languages depending on function and context, in a process known as diglossia (UNESCO Ad Hoc, 2003). Typically, non-dominant languages are reserved for home and informal contexts and dominant languages are used in public, professional, and educational settings (UNESCO Ad Hoc, 2003). Speakers may be encouraged to adopt a majority language for greater economic or educational opportunities. In contexts where a language becomes more endangered, parents may speak the dominant language at home and their children will likely become semi-speakers or receptive bilinguals of their non-dominant language.

## **5. *Response to New Domains and Media***

The scope of which a particular language is used is a measure of its power. Only a few languages are able to successfully maneuver into new domains including education, media, and technological developments such as television and internet. If a language does not transition to modern technologies, like the internet, it becomes increasingly irrelevant and stigmatized (UNESCO Ad Hoc, 2003). Feedback regarding Factor 5 has been pointed. Critics charge Factor 5 as being too broad in scope; encompassing the disjointed domains of school, new work environments, and new media within one factor (UNESCO's Language Vitality, 2011). Considering the array of developing technologies (mobile devices, internet, etc.) and inclusion of fields beyond linguistics (education, technology, media, etc.) within Factor 5, suggestions that call for the refinement of the graded scale at the direction of specialists beyond linguistics have been made within the 2011 LVE review (UNESCO's Language Vitality, 2011).

## **6. *Availability of Materials for Language Education and Literacy***

In order for a new generation of speakers to be able to use a language, they must be educated in the language, either formally or informally. However, there are speech communities who maintain oral traditions and some languages that do not have a script. Lack of written materials can promulgate deteriorating social value of a particular language (Sridhar, 1996). On the other hand, there are languages that have centuries of documented literary tradition. Generally, literacy is directly linked with social and economic development (UNESCO, 2003).

## **7. *Governmental and Institutional Language Attitudes and Policies, Including Official Status and Use***

The governmental policy or lack of policy towards language has a profound impact on the cultural and social status of language. Governments may promote a certain language and thereby increase its cultural and social value. Language promotion can also be used as a tool to create unity within a group. Furthermore, governmental elevation of particular languages can cause those languages to become dominant, if they were not previously so. Institutional elevation of a language is often the most effective language policy since governments are able to enforce the use of the language through business, government, and education. On the other hand, absence of governmental policy regarding language or equal promotion of multiple languages can result in several languages being used within a society. Equal promotion of multiple languages alone does not guarantee the maintenance of those languages, however (UNESCO Ad Hoc, 2003).

## **8. *Community Members' Attitudes towards Their Own Language***

Respect is often a less obvious force that influences language maintenance. However, if a speech community is dedicated to preserving the cultural value of a language, that language is at lower risk for loss and is less influenced by economic or institutional pressure. If a particular community feels a particular language is shameful, a nuisance, nonessential to cultural identity, or is economically unfavorable they may abandon use of the language. However, minority languages can survive and thrive, even in economically unfavorable conditions, if its speakers respect the language (Sridhar, 1994). Feedback contained in UNESCO's 2011 LVE review notes attitudes towards languages can quickly change and suggests a framework to track government

and community attitudes, correlating to Factor 7 and Factor 8 (UNESCO's Language Vitality, 2011).

### **9. *Type and Quality of Documentation***

Existing documentation including literary works, translations, transcriptions, audio recordings, and examples of natural speech impact the ability to maintain and revive languages. Documentation is essential to planning language revival efforts or projects for further study. One of the biggest challenges that faces linguists and revitalization efforts is whether written documentation is actively used within a speech community (UNESCO's Language Vitality, 2011). Similar to the challenges posed within Factor 6, several languages have no script or written history.

## **SECTION II: LINGUISTIC OVERVIEW OF INDIA**

The region referred to the Indian subcontinent, or South Asia, consists of several countries which have a history of shared culture, language, genetics, and history (Cardona & Jain, 2003). The Indian subcontinent includes India and several neighboring countries such as Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, and Sri Lanka. While the precise number of languages spoken in the Indian subcontinent is unknown, the 2011 Census reported there are over 1,950 languages spoken in India in addition to several dialects and languages which remain undocumented or without official status. The SIL Ethnologue estimates there are 415 living languages in India (Ethnologue, 2021).

The variation in estimates is partly due to a well-established debate in the field of linguistics: what differentiates a language from dialect. Linguist Einar Haugen noted that both language and dialect are ambiguous terms. Generally, language refers to a single linguistic norm,



or a group of related norms (Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2015). Languages typically are standardized, or officially recognized by a government, and are given power by their elevation. Spanish, French, and English are examples of languages that have been promoted by national governments and have subsequently gained prestige. Dialects, on the other hand, refers to a singular linguistic norm (Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2015). Dialects often exhibit certain phonological differences from standardized languages, some of which are geographically linked. Dialects are typically given less social and cultural prestige, as they are oftentimes not standardized. A dialect continuum is the use of the term dialect to differentiate among regional varieties of speaking across a region (Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2015). Examples of dialects are Andalusian Spanish, Quebec French, and Southern American English. In this context, travelling over large distances may prove the dialects at either extreme of the continuum to be mutually unintelligible, while speakers in neighboring areas may only need to make slight changes in their speech.

Scholars do agree, however, that most of the languages spoken in India fall under four language branches: Dravidian, Indo-European, Austro-Asiatic, and Tibeto-Burmese. More recently, two other language branches have been reported: Tai-Kadai and Great Andamanese (Kulkarni-Joshi, 2016). Furthermore, South Asia is home to many language isolates or languages with no known genealogical connections and several are spoken in India: Nihali is spoken in central India, Burushaski is spoken in Gilgit-Baltistan, Kusunda in Nepal, and Vedda in Sri Lanka. Speakers of these languages were in contact throughout the course of India's history; often united under vast empires and fragmented into local kingdoms. The periods of unification and division resulted in certain common language features across Indian languages.

### Dravidian Branch

It is widely accepted Dravidian is both India's oldest and most widely spoken language family. Scholarly and archeological evidence suggests individuals of the Indus Valley civilization spoke some form of Proto-Dravidian nearly 4,000 years ago (Krishnamurti, 2020). Around the second millennium, Aryan settlers were thought to enter the Indian subcontinent, resulting in language contact between Dravidian and Indo-European language families (Krishnamurti, 2020). The contact can be traced through the Rigveda, an ancient Sanskrit text written in 1500 B.C. The Rigveda has been found to contain nearly a dozen loanwords from Dravidian including *ulūkhala-* for mortar, *kuṇḍa* for pit, *khāla-* for threshing floor, *kāṇá-* for one-eyed, and *mayūra* for peacock (Krishnamurti, 2020).

Currently, the Dravidian language branch is considered a superfamily, with nearly 24 subfamilies and 70 daughter languages (Krishnamurti, 2020). Figure 2.1 depicts a simplified language tree of the Dravidian language family.

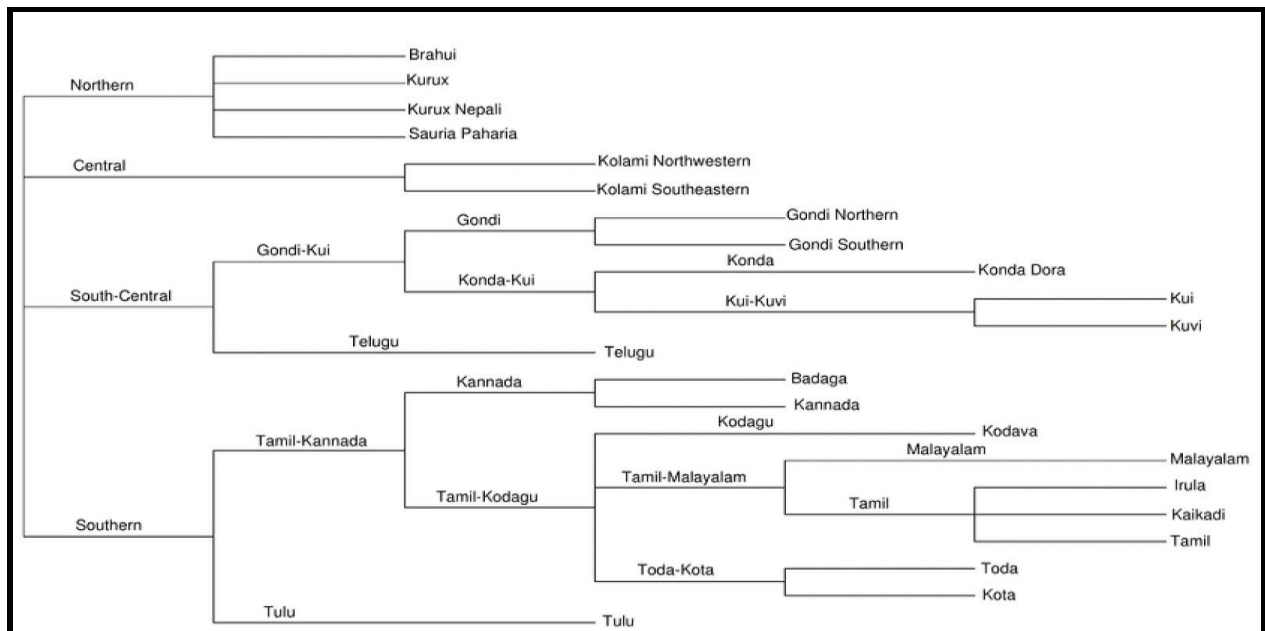


Figure 2.1 Modern Dravidian language tree by subgroups. [Retrieved from Rama, 2015.]

The world's 215 million Dravidian speakers are located across India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka (Krishnamurti, 2020). However, the majority of modern-day Dravidian language speakers are located in southern India, as demonstrated Figure 2.2.

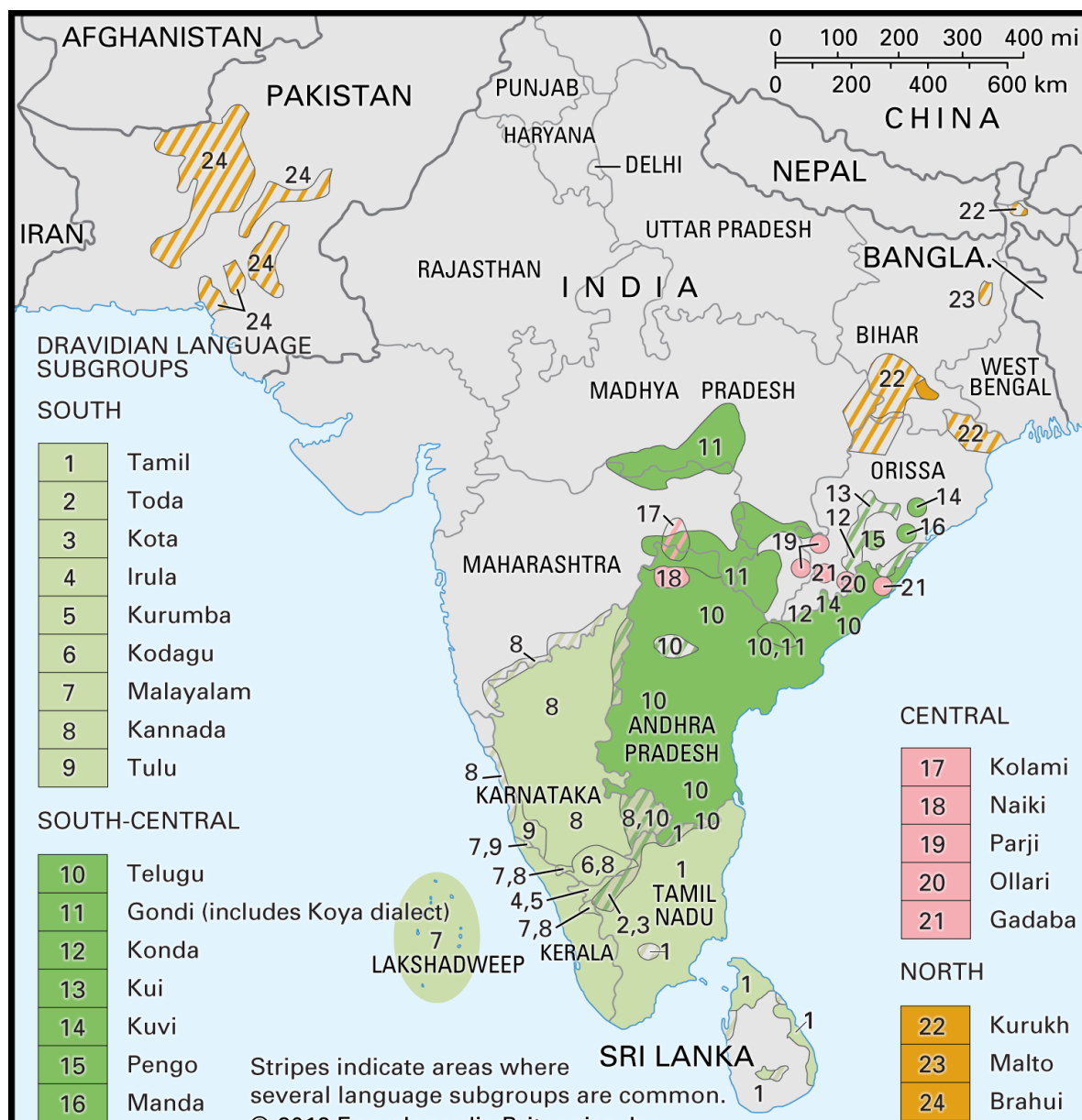


Figure 2.2 Map of Dravidian languages spoken in the Indian Subcontinent. [Retrieved from Encyclopedia Britannica, 2020.].

Presently, Dravidian languages are categorized into four groups- South, South-Central, Central, and North- from which 24 subgroups stem. The four literary languages (languages that have been given status in the constitution of India) of the Dravidian branch are Telugu, Tamil, Kanarese, and Malayalam which are the state official languages of Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, and Kerala, respectively.

Tamil is the oldest of the four literary Dravidian languages and currently has approximately 66 million speakers. It is the official language of the state of Tamil Nadu. The earliest known record of Tamil is contained in *Tolkāppiyam*, a grammar and rhetoric book, which dates between the first and fourth century C.E. Inscriptions of Tamil in Brahmi script (of which the official Indian script, Devangari, is derived from) are found from the second century C.E. onwards. Additionally, Tamil has diglossia, meaning two forms of its language exist in the speech community, which eventually gave rise to regional dialects (Krishnamurti, 2020).

Malayalam originated as a west coast dialect of Tamil until the 9th century C.E. Geographically separated from the rest of the Tamil speech community by the Ghats mountain range, the dialect developed into a distinct language. Unlike the other Dravidian literary languages, Malayalam liberally borrowed Sanskrit words and inflections (Krishnamurti, 2020). The first known written example of Malayalam is *Ramacaritam*, which dates between the twelfth and thirteenth century C.E.

Kannada is the official language of the state of Karnataka. Inscriptions in Kannada date to the early 5th century C.E. and the first literary work, *Kavirajamarga*, dates to the 9th century C.E. Modern standard Kannada is based on the speech of southern Karnataka (associated with the cities of Mysore and Bangalore). Considerable differences are noted between standard

Kannada, northern varieties (Dharwar), coastal varieties, and within caste groups (Krishnamurti, 2020).

Telugu is spoken by the most people among Dravidian languages and is the third most spoken language in India, following Hindi and Bengali. Telugu placenames are first recorded in Prakrit inscriptions, which date to the 2nd century C.E. (Krishnamurti, 2020). Modern standard Telugu is based on the speech of the central coastal dialect, although four regional dialects exist. While the language is genetically closer to the Northern and Central groups, Telugu and Kannada have had a great degree of shared history. Both languages shared a common stage of language development in their script, the Telugu-Kannada script, between the 7th and 13th century (Krishnamurti, 2020). The Vijayanagar king, Krishnadevaraya, sponsored both Kannada and Telugu poetry, and consequently many poets wrote in both languages. As a result of historical language contact, Telugu and Kannada share a number of lexical forms (Krishnamurti, 2020).

### **Indo-European Branch**

The languages spoken in India that fall under the Indo-European branch have received the most scholarly attention since efforts to study Indian languages have taken place. The Indo-European languages spoken on the Indian subcontinent are a derivative of the Indo-Iranian branch of and are referred to as Indo-Aryan languages. Geographic boundaries defined the speaking area of Indo-Aryan languages to roughly the northern two-thirds of the Indian subcontinent, inhabiting the region between the Himalayan mountain range and the Indian Ocean (Cardona & Jain, 2003). Speakers of Indo-Aryan languages numbered roughly 800 million in the early 21st century (Cardona, 2017).

Indo-Aryan is divided into three groups- Old, Middle, and New (also Modern) Indo Aryan- based on the chronological development of the language. Old Indo-Aryan languages are collectively referred to as Sanskrit today (Cardona, 2017). The earliest example of Old Indo-Aryan is contained within sacred Hindu texts known as the Vedas, which were written in 1500 B.C. Old Indo-Aryan experienced a shift in grammatical structure, which was documented by the grammarian Pāṇini (5th–6th century B.C.E). These grammatical changes eventually led to the development of Middle Indo-Aryan between the third and fourth century B.C.E. Modern Indo-Aryan is the most spoken language family in the Indian subcontinent today and over 75% of the Indian population spoke an Indo-Aryan language according to the 2001 Indian Census (Cardona, 2017). Modern Indo-Aryan languages recognized by the Indian Constitution include Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Kashmiri, Konkani, Marathi, Nepali, Oriya, Punjabi, Sindhi, Urdu, and Hindi, with Hindi recognized as the national language alongside English (Cardona, 2017). Figure 2.3 depicts the Indo-Aryan language tree with languages recognized by the Constitution highlighted.

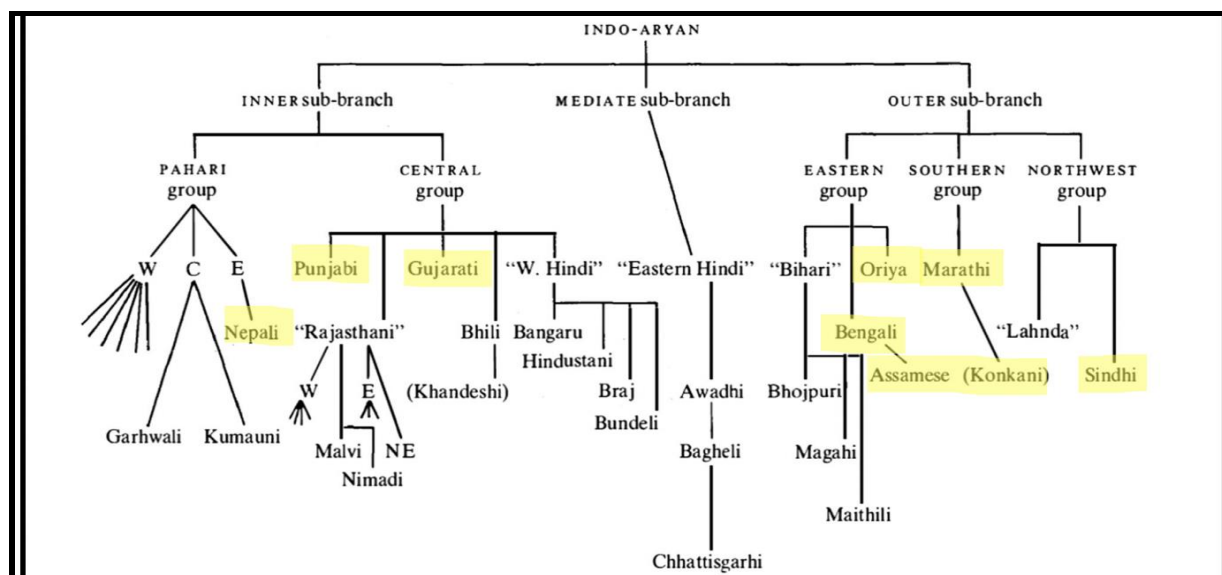


Figure 2.3 Indo-Aryan language tree. Note: W, C, E indicate West, Central, and Eastern varieties. [Retrieved from Kulkarni-Joshi, 2019.]

### **Austro-Asiatic (Munda) Branch**

The group of Austro-Asiatic languages spoken in India primarily stem from the Munda branch and are mostly spoken in central and eastern India. Two other groups of Austro-Asiatic speakers are also found in India: the Khasi in Meghalaya and Nicobarese-speaking groups in the Nicobar Islands (Anderson, 2014). Munda language speakers can number to nearly 10 million in India (Anderson, 2014). Munda languages are among the least known and least documented language groups in India. Little is known about ancient Munda speakers, but scholars theorize Munda languages originated east of India and the speakers migrated westward into present day India (Anderson, 2014).

Today, the majority of Munda speakers reside in Orissa, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, and Maharashtra (Anderson, 2014). Figure 2.4 is a map of the distribution of Munda speakers in India.

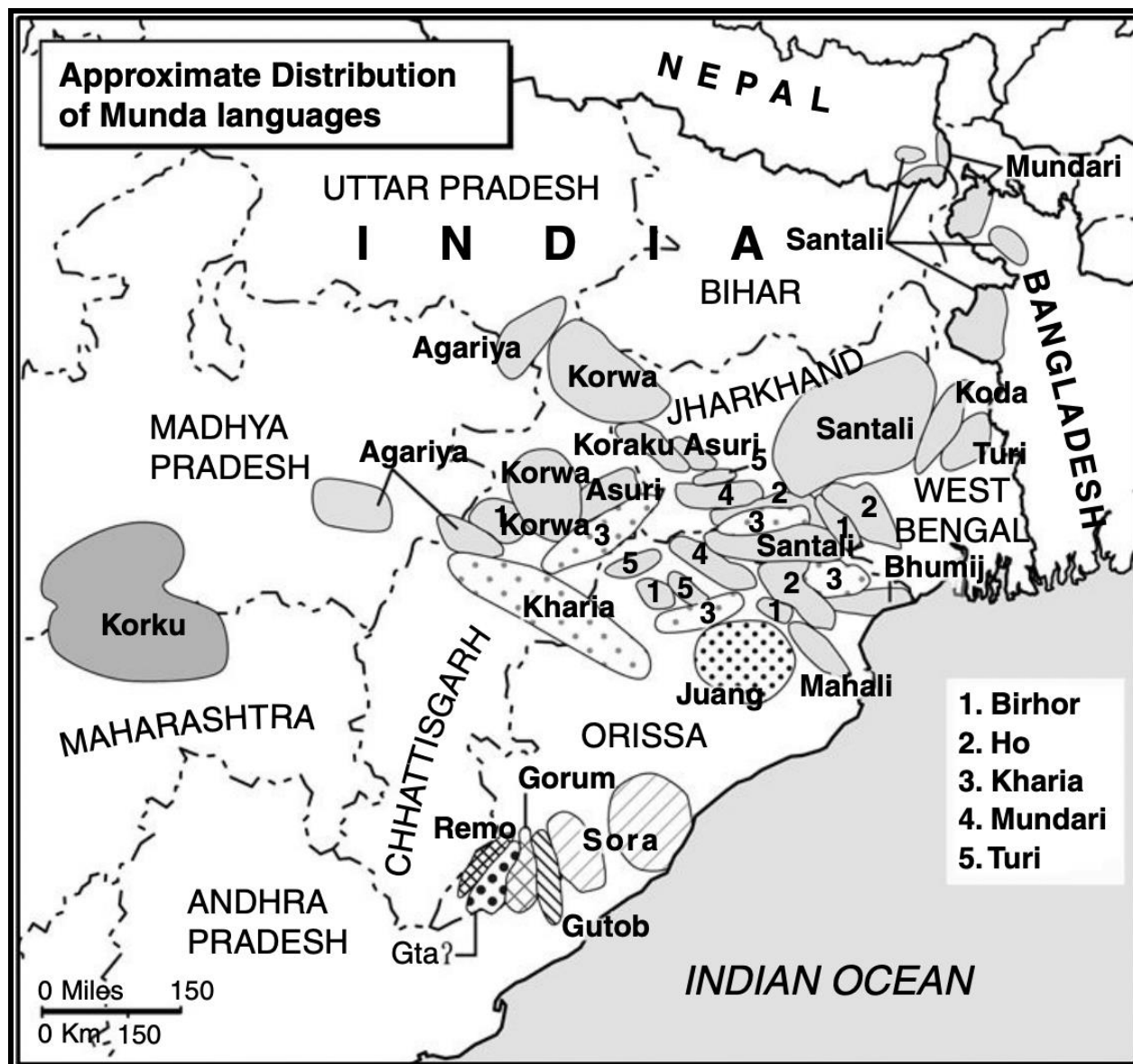


Figure 2.4 Approximate distribution of Munda languages. [Retrieved from Anderson, 2014.]

Two primary groups of Munda languages exist, although each group has closely related sister languages. The Northern, Eastern, and Western varieties of Munda fall under these two primary groupings. The first group is the western language group, Korku, whose sister language is Kherwarian (Anderson, 2014). The second group is collectively termed Santali and its sister languages are Mundari and Ho (Anderson, 2014). Figure 2.5 depicts the traditional classification



of Munda languages.

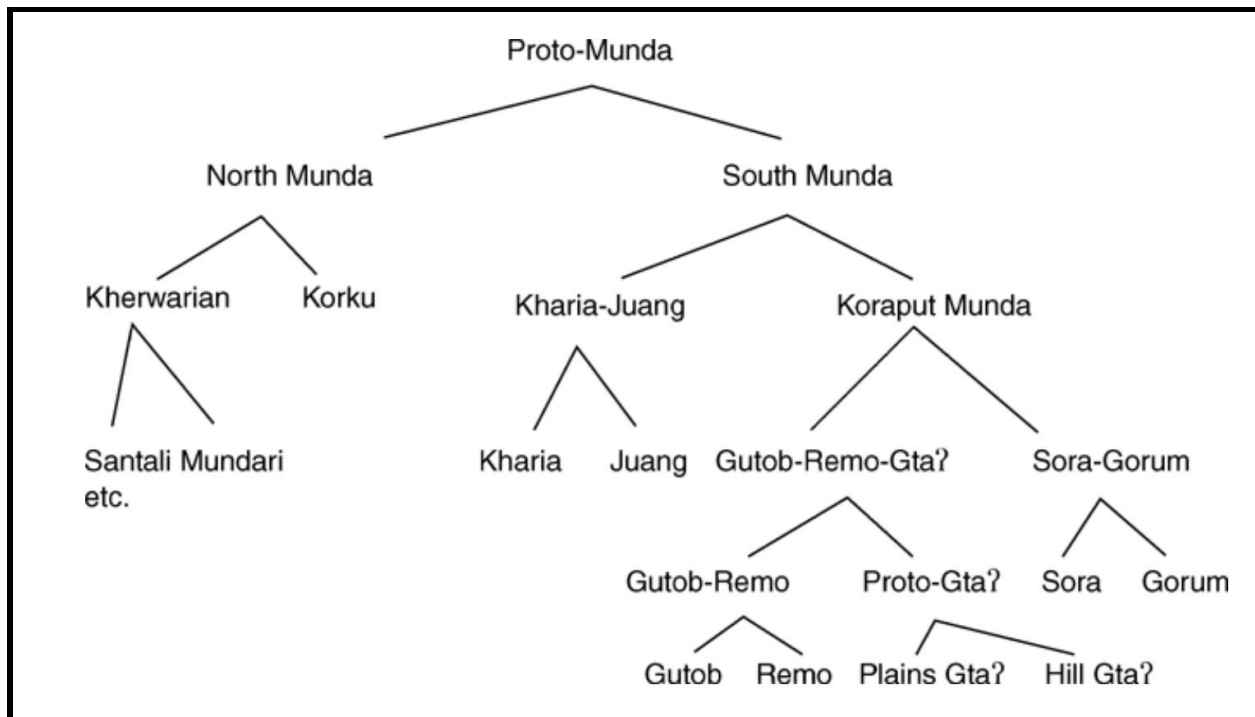


Figure 2.5 Traditional Munda Classification. [Retrieved from Anderson, 2014.]

### **Tibeto-Burmese Branch**

The Tibeto-Burmese language family, also called the Tibeto-Burman and the Sino-Tibetan family, is one of the least studied language families in India. The language branch poses difficulties, which would explain its lack of scholarly attention. First, the language branch has a largely unwritten history. Most of the languages are unwritten and spoken by constellations of tribes across India, the Himalayan region, and South East Asia (Sharma, 2004). In fact, the Tibeto-Burmese languages speakers are the smallest by population, yet the language family contains the largest number of dialects and languages after the Indo-Aryan family (Sharma, 2004). The development of languages and dialects are informed by geographical and political boundaries of the regions; most importantly, by the natural peaks and valleys of the Himalayan region. In his monumental Linguistic Survey of India (1903-1928), colonial-era linguist George

Grierson summarizes the Tibeto-Burmese language situation as “formless ever moving ant-hordes of dialect” (Sharma, 2004). The same geographic isolation which gives rise to the proliferation of dialects also poses challenges for linguists to conduct fieldwork, which would increase scholarship on the language family.

Presently, there are approximately 250 known Tibeto-Burmese languages and nearly 65 million speakers (Bradley, 1997). The estimation is nebulous due to the birth and death of Tibeto-Burmese languages since. The most widely spoken languages are Burmese, Tibetan, Karen, Nosu, Lisu/Lipo, Bai, Maithili, Bodo, Nasu, and Lahu (Bradley, 1997). Within India, most speakers of Tibeto-Burmese are in the north, along the border of the Himalayas. States where Tibeto-Burmese is spoken include Jammu, Kashmir, Uttaranchal, Himachal Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Meghalaya, Assam, Manipur, Mizoram, and Tripura (Sharma, 2004). While many dialects and languages under the Tibeto-Burmese branch are undiscovered, the 2011 Indian Census data found just 0.8% of the Indian population speak Tibeto-Burmese languages.

### **SECTION III: LANGUAGE HISTORY AND POLICY**

India is a country with nearly five thousand years of history, during which it was never unified under a single language (Mohan, 2010). The country has endured periods of history where language groups have been divided, both systemically and haphazardly. There have also been periods where language has been carefully studied and recorded, language policy planning that have resulted in protest, and systemic organization of states to suit the needs of a new nation. The following section will briefly discuss the history of language treatment by the occupants and residents of the Indian subcontinent in three phases: Pre-British Colonial Period, the British

Colonial Period, and Independence Period. Discussion of language policy during the Independence Period will focus on languages included in the Constitution.

### **Pre-British Colonial Period**

Throughout its history, India was divided and ruled into local kingdoms or empires. In ancient India (before the rise of the Mauryan Empire) about 80 kings ruled over the continent divided into their respective kingdoms (Mohan, 2010). Oftentimes, language boundaries were not taken into account as the country was partitioned into regional kingdoms. Such is the case of medieval Hyderabad, which was being reorganized as the Kingdom of Nizam by merging three linguistic groups: Telugu, Marathi, and Kanarese (Mohan, 2010).

For the majority of Indian history, oral tradition was the norm. As a result, there are often little to no records of written laws that were left behind. However, the first record of language law can be traced to Emperor Ashoka (268-266 B.C.) who is remembered as the first ruler to recognize the language rights of his subjects. He ordered his edicts to be translated to the people in their language and not to be delivered in his language only (Mallikarjun, 2012).

### **British Colonial Period**

British presence in India influenced language in India long before official colonial jurisdiction had been established. As early as the seventeenth century, British influence has influenced the promotion of certain languages above others. Persian served as the lingua franca in India long before British arrival but, in order to gain access to the elites and rulers of Indian society, the British promoted the use of classical languages like Sanskrit and Arabic above Persian (Mohan, 2010). English officially replaced Persian at the behest of the British East India Company in 1835 and soon after Sanskrit and Arabic also gave way to English. British politician

Thomas Babington Macaulay advocated for the institutionalized use of English in education in his famous letter, Macaulay's Minute of 1835, in which he asserted there was a direct link between education and administration of the country. His proposal was implemented a few months later and set in motion the demise of the use of several classical languages and many vernacular tongues (Virmani, 2013).

Nonetheless, several formal reviews were conducted during the period of British rule. The first formal language review in India occurred during the period of British colonial rule through George Grierson's *Linguistic Survey of India* (1858-1941). The survey was largely motivated by administrative needs to understand the languages and culture of the new colony. Regardless, the survey was a monumental collection published across 21 volumes and contains discussion of 732 varieties of South Asian languages, lexical and grammatical analysis of 268 varieties of major South Asian language families, and enumeration of 216 vocabulary items across 364 languages and dialects (Majeed, 2018). The *Linguistic Survey of India* also influenced the way Censuses were conducted in India, particularly the 1961 Census (Majeed, 2018).

Additionally, cartographical efforts were also commissioned under British rule and served numerous purposes for colonial maintenance: mapping important sites such as temples, forts, battle sites, or newly acquired territories; navigation; mapping pilgrimage routes and roads; and for planning revenue collection (Virmani, 2013). The 18th century saw a rise in the production of maps, beginning with the British annexation of Bengal. James Rennel undertook a series of highly detailed maps of India, one of his most famous being *Map of Hindoostan* (1782), "which proved a decisive turning point, accelerating cartographic productions of the country and its regions" (Virmani, 2013, p. 108). Rennel's publication spurred a series of projects related to cartography. The London Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge published an atlas in

the 1830s and 1840s containing detailed maps of India in order to highlight the territory as an imperial possession, thus part of British identity, while underscoring the practical need for control of the area (Barrow, 2004 as cited in Virmani, 2013). While Rennel's cartographic survey led to new projects in mainland Britain, it also led to new undertakings in India. Convinced mapping was a key tool for military conquest and a "standard instrument of government" for administrative control, British officials in India began a large scale, trigonometric survey of India between 1802-1892 (Edney, 1997 as cited in Virmani, 2013). Thus, while the Indian subcontinent had been recorded in various cartographic projects, it had always been under the direction of and for the use of the British Empire. After independence, the leaders of the new nation recognized this deficiency and commissioned new cartographical projects.

### **Independence Period**

India gained independence from the British in 1947. However, many questions faced the leaders of the new nation. A major issue that faced the leaders was how to preserve the language, culture, and traditions of such a diverse nation while unifying it under a new state. There was a movement to adopt a national language, in hopes of providing a unified and stable state. The desire to look for a common language during the Independence era was an essential part of nation building since "national symbols such as a common language can provide a sense of community and hence some measure of ontological security" (Smith, 1998, p. 72). The leaders of the new nation wanted to establish features of a unified nation not only for internal stability, but to differentiate India from the newly formed Pakistan nation (partitioned in 1949), which shared a common cultural history with India. However, the process of selecting a national

language proved to be contentious; with many religious and regional groups advocating for the adoption of various languages as the official language.

In particular, debates regarding the adoption of Hindi or Urdu as the national language took place across religious lines. Linguistically, Hindi and Urdu had much in common with their history and linguistic structure; both derived from a common dialect, Khari Boli, and share common verbs, pronouns, and vocabulary (Aneesh, 2010). However, tensions between Hindu and Muslim populations worsened during British rule and peaked after Partition. For Hindi to become a potential candidate for the national language, it would have to transform into something uniquely Indian, thus isolating itself from Urdu. Thus, modern Hindi and Urdu created a distinct set of vocabulary and appearance, before becoming candidates for the national language. The spoken languages were differentiated by borrowing liberally from each language's respective mother language: Hindi from Sanskrit and Urdu from Persian and Arabic (Aneesh, 2010). The languages' appearances were distinguished from one another by adopting two scripts; Hindi was chosen to be written in the Devanagari script, which is derived from Sanskrit, and Urdu in Persian/Arabic script (Aneesh, 2010). The modifications to each language were a conscious effort to distinguish each language as widely apart as possible and the scripts "came in handy to define what constitutes nation-ness in the two" (Aneesh, 2010).

Meanwhile, public response to the Hindi/Urdu debate was overwhelming. Interest groups like the Hindi Sahitya Sammelana of Allahabad, formed in 1910, and Nagari Pracharini Sabha of Banaras, formed in 1893, advocated for the promotion of Hindi and the use of the Devanagari script (King, 1994 as cited in Aneesh, 2010). Oppositionally, groups such as Anjuman-e-Taraqui-e-Urdu, formed in 1903, and the Urdu Defense Association of Allahabad, formed in 1898, advocated for the promotion of Urdu (King, 1994 as cited in Aneesh, 2010). Ultimately,

slogans such as “Hindi, Hindu, Hindustani” and “Urdu, Muslim, Pakistan” summarized the role of language and religion in early nation building.

Given the desire to create a separate Hindi nation, Hindi became the preferential candidate over Urdu as a potential national language. The Sanskritization of Hindi was defended by asserting Sanskrit was the “natural mother” of all Indian languages (Aneesh, 2010). While languages across India borrowed- sometimes liberally- from Sanskrit, the assertion of Sanskrit as a “natural mother” is false (Aneesh, 2010). In fact, Indian speakers utilize at least three completely distinct language families- Dravidian, Munda, and Tibeto-Burmese- which are unrelated to Hindi. Opposition from the Southern states, the stronghold of Dravidian speakers, was kindled by the imposition of Hindi into regional literary traditions where it never existed.

However, Sanskrit remained highly esteemed across all linguistic groups and is commonly referred to as a point of shared culture, language, and history across the Indian subcontinent. Sanskrit’s inflated cultural currency was buoyed by 19th century religious reform movements, where the “back to the Vedas” outcry reflected a new cultural mood toward original purity (Aneesh, 2010). Linguist A. Aneesh notes “there is a curious fact about devising a national essence: it is not the contemporary but the most ancient that is generally found to be its most suitable expression. Sanskrit, one of the oldest languages with no “contamination” of the present, emerged as a natural choice for expressing the Indian cultural “essence”” (Aneesh 2010, p. 96). While Sanskrit appeared to be the solution to the ideological questions facing the new nation, several practical problems inhibited the adoption of Sanskrit as a national language. Just as Latin was replaced with modern Romance languages, Sanskrit stopped being spoken for well over 1,000 years and was replaced, both as a spoken language and a medium of literary expression, by local languages such as Avadhi, Braj, and Bengali (Aneesh, 2010). Furthermore, the vast

majority of the country could not read or write Sanskrit and only a narrow sect of Orthodox Brahmins could understand Sanskrit (Aneesh, 2010). A number of national leaders opposed the adoption of Sanskrit as a national language despite its ability to unify various groups, due to its practical shortcomings. Prominent statesman Ananthasayanam Ayyangar stated his position on Sanskrit: "Hindi is closest to Sanskrit. Our most ancient culture is secure in it, and it is spoken and understood by the maximum number of Indians" (National Archives, 1947 as cited in Aneesh, 2010).

The infeasibility of Sanskrit as a national language signaled a return of Hindi as the leading proposition for a national language. Southern states, in particular, were wary of the imposition of Hindi, a traditionally Northern language with no regional attachment to the South. The southern state of Tamil Nadu, which experienced burgeoning Anti-Hindi sentiments since 1938, pointedly expelled the idea of "Hindi Imperialism" in Tamil Nadu's literary and linguistic spheres (Forrester, 1966). Various stakeholders supported the rejection of Hindi in Tamil Nadu; the illiterate population would have to adapt to a new language to which they lack fluency; competitive examinations may be administered in an unfamiliar language to students; and businesspeople, lawyers, and middle-class members' livelihoods could be jeopardized if the state imposed Hindi in existing institutions (Forrester, 1966).

### **I. Constitution Assembly Debates Regarding Language**

Between December 9, 1946 and January 24, 1950 the Indian Congress held eleven meetings, spanning 165 days, to frame the new constitution (Agnihotri, 2015). On September 12, 1949 the Assembly began the proceedings to discuss the articles of the constitution which were to deal with language and would shape future language policy. Many of the language articles formed are contained within the Schedule VIII of the Constitution. Not only did the planners



have to form new policy, but they also had to create a common set of vocabulary that would allow for future development. After the strong opposition of “Hindi Imperialism” in the South, the violence of the Tamil Nadu protests, and the precarious nature of tribal languages without a written script the planners felt there should be some protections for languages embedded in the constitution itself. Articles 343-351 of the constitution pertain to language use and rights. The language laws in the constitution guide language use in administration, education, mass communication, as well as guide the rights of linguistic minorities, individuals, and languages themselves, since they have a right to develop (Mallikarjun, 2012).

## **II. Constitutional Language Provisions**

When the Constitution of India was officially adopted on November 26, 1949 and its Eighth Schedule outlined fourteen languages which would be given official status: Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Kashmiri, Malayalam, Marathi, Oriya, Pobjabi, Tamil, Telugu, and Urdu (Mallikarjun, 2012). The Eighth Schedule has been amended three times since: Bill No. 21 in 1967 expanded the list to include Sindhi; Bill No. 71 in 1992 expanded the list to include Konkani, Manipuri, and Nepali; and Bill No. 100 in 2003 expanded the list to include Bodo, Dogri, Maithili, and Santali (Agnihotri, 2015). Presently, there are 22 Scheduled languages, which have been given official status. There are currently thirty-eight languages pending before the Government of India for inclusion in the Eighth Schedule: (1) Angika, (2) Banjara, (3) Bazika, (4) Bhojpuri, (5) Bhoti, (6) Bhotia, (7) Bundelkhandi (8) Chhattisgarhi, (9) Dhatki, (10) English, (11) Garhwali (Pahari), (12) Gondi, (13) Gujjar/Gujjari (14) Ho, (15) Kachachhi, (16) Kamtapuri, (17) Karbi, (18) Khasi, (19) Kodava (Coorg), (20) Kok Barak, (21) Kumaoni (Pahari), (22) Kurak, (23) Kurmali, (24) Lepcha, (25) Limbu, (26) Mizo (Lushai), (27) Magahi, (28) Mundari, (29) Nagpuri, (30) Nicobarese, (31) Pahari (Himachali), (32) Pali, (33)

Rajasthani, (34) Sambalpuri/Kosali, (35) Shaurseni (Prakrit), (36) Siraiki, (37) Tenyidi and (38) Tulu (Mallikarjun, 2012; Indian Ministry of Home Affairs, 2016). There is no set of defined criteria in order to include a language into the Eight Schedule. Scholars, politicians, and linguistics have theorized which factors provide a language with a strong case for inclusion in the Eighth Schedule. Dravidian linguist Bh. Krishnamurti outlined the factors contained in Figure 3.1 as criteria for a language to be included into the Eighth Schedule.

<b>Unofficial Criteria Proposed by Bh. Krishnamurti</b>	
1.	It has <b>literary</b> traditions and a <b>scripts</b> of its own
2.	It is spoken by the <b>largest number of people</b> in large contiguous geographical zones as a dominant language of certain regions
3.	It is being recognized as an <b>official</b> languages in newly formed States (Konkani & Manipuri)
4.	It is an <b>ancient language of culture and heritage</b> and also a <b>resource language in modernizing</b> the major literary languages (Sanskrit)
5.	It is being spoken by a <b>large population</b> , geographically distributed and dispersed, but with <b>own script and literature</b> (Urdu)

Figure 3.1 Proposed criteria outlined by Bh. Krishnamurti. Adapted from Mallikarjun, 2012.

In 2004, there was an attempt to designate criteria for language inclusion in the Eighth Schedule. The proposed criteria suggested the language in question should be spoken by at least one lakh persons, is part of school education, has a rich literary heritage, has recognition of the Sahitya Akademi Award (Mallikarjun, 2012). While the proposed criteria were not approved, it did garner the attention of government officials. The Indian Ministry of Home Affairs published the following statement in 2016: “As the evolution of dialects and languages is dynamic, influenced by socio-economic-political developments, it is difficult to fix any criterion for languages,

whether to distinguish them from dialects, or for inclusion in the Eighth Schedule to the Constitution of India... The Government is conscious of the sentiments and requirements for inclusion of other languages in the Eighth Schedule, and will examine the requests keeping in mind the sentiments, and other considerations such as evolution of dialects into language, widespread use of a language etc.” (Ministry of Home Affairs, 2016).

Once a language becomes a scheduled language in India, it is afforded several privileges in addition to its official status, outlined in Figure 3.2. At the time the constitution was enacted, inclusion of a language into the Eighth Schedule meant that the language was entitled to representation on the Official Language Commission and that the language could be used to enrich Hindi, the official language of the Union (Abbi, 2012). Additionally, if the language is tied to a geographical area, it is also called a regional language (Mallikarjun, 2012). Once a language is included in the Eighth Schedule, it is eligible to be used in books, textbooks, supplementary reading material, and for examinations. Since then, the government’s role has expanded to safeguard scheduled languages to ensure “they grow rapidly in richness and become effective means of communicating modern knowledge” (Abbi, 2012). Additionally, candidates seeking public service positions may take their examinations in any of the scheduled languages.

<b>Rights of Scheduled Languages</b>
Considered a modern Indian language
Included in the Official Language Commission
Given regional language status
Eligible for publication
Examinations for civil service and higher education may be administered

Figure 3.2 Rights of Scheduled Languages. Adapted from Mallikarjun, 2012 and Abbi, 2012.

### **III. Linguistic Reorganization of States**

Throughout the Post-Independence period, India remained carved into the provinces and princely states left behind by the British Empire (Appendix B contains James Rennel’s rendering of the princely states and provinces). Jurisdictional boundaries were drawn based on colonial administrative necessities and merged populations of differing religions, languages, and cultural traditions. The organization of states under British rule was designed to prevent the growth and development of vernacular languages, which served as a tool for colonial maintenance (Mohan, 2010). Further complicating administrative needs of the new country, states were interspersed between hundreds of princely states that recognized the sovereignty of the British Crown (Graziosi, 2017). In 1953, the Indian government formed the State Reorganization Commission to examine the issue of reorganization of states to ensure “the welfare of the people of each constituent unit as well as the nation as a whole is promoted” (Mohan, 2010). In 1955, the commission published the following justifications for reorganization:

- a.) Indian States, if linguistically constituted, will be able to achieve internal cohesiveness because language is a vehicle for communication of thoughts.
- b.) In a democracy, the political and administrative work of a state must be conducted in the regional language.
- c.) Under a democratic government it is imperative that legislatures must work in one language to ensure real consciousness of identity of interests between government and the people.
- d.) Educational activity can be stimulated by giving regional languages their due place.
- e.) The demand for linguistic [states] doesn't merely represent cultural revivalism but seeks to secure different linguistic groups political and economic justice.

This reorganization was meant to reverse the British policy which suppressed vernacular languages and unify people within states under one regional language, and thus culture (Mohan, 2010). It also served to protect linguistic minorities by implementing constitutional safeguards. The following year, the government passed the States Reorganization Act of 1956 to draw state lines along linguistic boundaries.

#### **SECTION IV: THE STATE OF LANGUAGE VITALITY IN INDIA**

Presently, there is a striking contrast between the statuses of languages in India, particularly between languages that have been given official recognition and those that have not. Seven of the scheduled languages appear among the list of 23 most spoken languages in the world. The 2001 Indian Census found that 96.6% of the population speaks one of the scheduled languages (Sengupta, 2009). Both statistics indicate the languages that have been scheduled appear to be healthy. On the other hand, India is the country with the highest number of

endangered languages in the world. The majority of these languages have not been given official recognition from the national or any state government.

### **Healthy Languages**

Languages that have been given official status have unsurprisingly fared well. Seven of the scheduled languages appear on Ethnologue's list of the top 23 most spoken languages in the world: (3) Hindi, the official language, has 600 million speakers; (6) Bengali has 268 million speakers; (10) Urdu has 230 million speakers; (14) Marathi has 99 million speakers; (15) Telugu has 96 million speakers; and (17) Tamil has 85 million speakers (Ethnologue, 2021).

Additionally, English, which has been recognized as an associate official language in India, remains the most spoken language in the world with 1.384 billion speakers worldwide and 125 million speakers within India (Ethnologue, 2021). Appendix C contains a list of the 23 most spoken languages in the world by total number of speakers with reference to languages spoken in India.

The vitality of these languages lies in the specific rights they are afforded as scheduled languages. Figure 4.1 provides a side-by-side comparison of how each of the rights of scheduled languages positively impacts LVE scale factors.

<b>Rights of Scheduled Languages</b>	<b>LVE Factors</b>
Considered a modern Indian language	<b>Factor 4:</b> Shifts in Domains of Language Use <b>Factor 5:</b> Response to New Domains and Media <b>Factor 8:</b> Community Members' Attitudes toward Their Own Language
Inclusion in the Official Language Commission	<b>Factor 7:</b> Governmental and Institutional Language Attitudes and Policies, Including Official Status and Use <b>Factor 9:</b> Amount and Quality of Documentation
Regional language status	<b>Factor 2:</b> Absolute Number of Speakers <b>Factor 3:</b> Proportion of Speakers within the total population <b>Factor 4:</b> Shifts in Domains of Language Use <b>Factor 5:</b> Response to New Domains and Media <b>Factor 7:</b> Governmental and Institutional Language Attitudes and Policies, Including Official Status and Use <b>Factor 8:</b> Community Members' Attitudes toward Their Own Language
Eligible for publication	<b>Factor 4:</b> Shifts in Domains of Language Use <b>Factor 6:</b> Materials for Language Education and Literacy <b>Factor 9:</b> Amount and Quality of Documentation
State service and higher education examinations may be administered	<b>Factor 4:</b> Shifts in Domains of Language Use <b>Factor 5:</b> Response to New Domains and Media <b>Factor 6:</b> Materials for Language Education and Literacy <b>Factor 7:</b> Governmental and Institutional Language Attitudes and Policies, Including Official Status and Use <b>Factor 9:</b> Amount and Quality of Documentation

Figure 4.1 Rights of Scheduled Languages Compared to LVE Factors. Adapted from Mallikarjun, 2012 and UNESCO, 2003.

Once a language is considered a modern Indian language, its cultural value increases and positively impacts community members' attitudes towards the language (Factor 8). Additionally, the language will likely be elevated to new domains of use, particularly into domains outside the home, and will likely subsequently expand into new mediums of expression (Factors 4 and 5, respectively). Inclusion in the Official Language Commission will affect governmental response

towards language maintenance policies (Factor 7) and, in turn, will affect documentation as directed by the commission's findings (Factor 9). Attaining status as a regional language affects multiple LVE factors. Once a language is considered a regional language, education, governance, and business can take place in that language within the regional area which shifts the domain of language use (Factors 4, 5, and 7). Additionally, because language use of a regional language becomes institutionalized, the speaker population in both absolute numbers (Factor 2) and within the total population (Factor 3) increases. Finally, the prestige of attaining regional language status will increase the cultural value of the language and shift community members' attitude towards the language (Factor 8). Once a language is scheduled, education in that language can be carried out, meaning the language can shift in domains of use (Factors 4 and 6). Furthermore, since educational materials in that language must be produced, documentation of that language increases (Factor 9). Finally, once a language is scheduled civil service and higher education examination may be administered in that language, which causes a chain effect. Educational materials in that language will have to be produced (Factor 6); causing the language's documentation to increase (Factor 9) and may shift into new domains and mediums of expression (Factors 4 and 5). Finally, governmental use of the language will increase, since government policies must be translated into scheduled languages (Factor 7). Thus, languages that have been scheduled receive language maintenance support by virtue of being scheduled.

### **Endangered Languages**

Contrastingly, several languages in India are endangered or at risk for endangerment. UNESCO's *Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger* lists 197 Indian languages as being endangered, making India the country with the most endangered languages in the world (complete list of endangered languages in India is contained in Appendix D). While



the sheer number of endangered languages can be astonishing, India is also the fourth most linguistically diverse country in the world (Ethnologue, 2021). Ethnologue estimates 30% of India's indigenous languages are at risk for endangerment (Ethnologue, 2021). Endangerment is graded into the following categories: extinct, critically endangered, severely endangered, definitely endangered, and unsafe. Figure 4.2 details numerical distribution of endangered languages among those categories along with the number of speakers of each language.

<b>Table 2: Distribution of Endangered Languages in India as Per Number of Speakers</b>								
Degree of Vitality	Data Not Available	Zero to 5,000	5,000 to 10,000	10,000 to 20,000	20,000 to 50,000	50,000 to 1,00,000	Above 1,00,000	Total
Extinct	—	9	—	—	—	—	—	9
Critically endangered	4	22	2	4	2	1	—	35
Severely endangered	—	6	—	—	—	—	—	6
Definitely endangered	4	19	8	6	6	4	15	62
Unsafe	3	4	5	3	22	12	35	84
Total	11	60	15	13	30	17	50	196

Source: Constructed from data in UNESCO (2009).

Figure 4.2 Distribution of Endangered Languages in India as Per Number of Speakers.

(Retrieved from Sengupta, 2009).

The numerical distribution in tandem with other linguistic data reveals the deteriorating vitality of language in India. The nine extinct languages- Ahom, Aimol, Andro, Chairel, Kolhreng, Rangkas, Sengmai, Tarao and Tolcha- have become extinct since the only 1950s onwards (Sengupta, 2009). While universal external factors like globalization have affected language in the entirety of India, a geographic correlation between many of the endangered and extinct languages has been noted; Northeast India and the tribal belt regions of West Bengal,

Orissa, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu, Kashmir, and Uttarakhand are where speakers of the majority of endangered languages reside (Sengupta, 2009).

Furthermore, the distribution among the number of speakers in each category shows a distinct correlation. 92% of the languages under the more severe categories of endangerment, critically and severely endangered, have fewer than 5,000 speakers (Figure 4.2). Smaller speech communities are at higher risk of endangerment since smaller communities typically encounter more difficulty weathering natural disasters and the imposition of majority languages.

Additionally, nearly 85% of the endangered languages that have the most vitality- thus, fall under the unsafe category- have larger speech communities. Nearly 85% of languages in the unsafe category have more than 20,000 speakers (Sengupta, 2009). While the absolute number of speakers alone do not indicate overall vitality, a larger population of speakers are an indicator of overall language vitality and LVE scale does use the absolute number of speakers (Factor 2) in calculating language vitality. Finally, nearly two thirds of languages that are not scheduled suffer from endangerment: half of the languages fall under the unsafe category, fourteen fall into the definitely endangered category, and two are in the critically endangered category (Sengupta, 2009).

While 95% of the endangered languages are not recognized in the constitution or by any state, nine endangered languages are an anomaly. Two languages, Manipuri and Bodo, are included within the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution and fall within the unsafe category of endangerment (Sengupta, 2009). Furthermore, seven languages that are recognized by state governments– Ao, Angami, Chang, Khasi, Khiemnungan, Konyak and Manipuri – also are included among endangered languages. These anomalies reveal governmental recognition alone

does not safeguard language vitality and existing language policies must be updated to adequately maintain language vitality.

### **CONCLUSION**

While language endangerment is rising globally, leaving 40% of the world's languages endangered, there are steps that can be taken to safeguard language vitality. A loss of a particular language is a loss for the world, not just for the community of speakers who use that language. Scholars and linguists have noted that language is inextricably linked to the culture and heritage of the people who speak it. Furthermore, the loss of a language means the loss of linguistic diversity in the world. Various processes such as racial and ethnic profiling, globalization, government attitudes, and ecology play a role in language endangerment. However, there are actions that can be taken in order to safeguard language vitality.

Various scales have been developed to advise governments, linguistics, and agencies in measuring language vitality. The Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (EGDIS) and UNESCO's Language Vitality and Endangerment (LVE) scale are the two most popularly utilized scales to measure language health. India is a country with a high level of language diversity and is the fourth most linguistically diverse country in the world (Ethnologue, 2021). Four language families are spoken most on the Indian subcontinent: Dravidian, Indo-European, Austro-Asiatic (Munda), and Tibeto-Burmese. Various language policies have been implemented throughout India's history and constitutional provisions for language protection have been made during the Independence Period. However, India has the most endangered languages in the world. Nine languages which have been given national and state recognition are among the 197 endangered languages, revealing the necessity for updating language provisions to adequately protect language vitality.

## Appendix A

### LVE Factor Scales

#### *Factor 1: Intergenerational Language Transmission*

<b>Degree of Endangerment</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Speaker Population</b>
<i>safe</i>	5	The language is used by all ages, from children up.
<i>unsafe</i>	4	The language is used by some children in all domains; it is used by all children in limited domains.
<i>definitively endangered</i>	3	The language is used mostly by the parental generation and up.
<i>severely endangered</i>	2	The language is used mostly by the grandparental generation and up.
<i>critically endangered</i>	1	The language is used by very few speakers, mostly of great-grandparental generation.
<i>extinct</i>	0	There are no speakers.

#### *Factor 3: Proportion of Speakers within the Total Population*

<b>Degree of Endangerment</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Proportion of Speakers Within the Total Reference Population</b>
<i>safe</i>	5	All speak the language.
<i>unsafe</i>	4	Nearly all speak the language.
<i>definitively endangered</i>	3	A majority speak the language.
<i>severely endangered</i>	2	A minority speak the language.
<i>critically endangered</i>	1	Very few speak the language.
<i>extinct</i>	0	None speak the language.

**Factor 4: Shifts in Domains of Language Use**

<b>Degree of Endangerment</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Domains and Functions</b>
<i>universal use</i>	5	The language is used in all domains and for all functions.
<i>multilingual parity</i>	4	Two or more languages may be used in most social domains and for most functions.
<i>dwindling domains</i>	3	The language is used in home domains and for many functions, but the dominant language begins to penetrate even home domains.
<i>limited or formal domains</i>	2	The language is used in limited social domains and for several functions.
<i>highly limited domains</i>	1	The language is used only in a very restricted number of domains and for very few functions.
<i>extinct</i>	0	The language is not used in any domain for any function.

**Factor 5: Response to New Domains and Media**

<b>Degree of Endangerment</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>New Domains and Media Accepted by the Endangered Language</b>
<i>dynamic</i>	5	The language is used in all new domains.
<i>robust/active</i>	4	The language is used in most new domains.
<i>receptive</i>	3	The language is used in many new domains.
<i>coping</i>	2	The language is used in some new domains.
<i>minimal</i>	1	The language is used only in a few new domains.
<i>inactive</i>	0	The language is not used in any new domains.

***Factor 6: Availability of Materials for Language Education and Literacy***

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Availability of Written Materials</b>
5	There is an established orthography and a literacy tradition with grammars, dictionaries, texts, literature and everyday media. Writing in the language is used in administration and education.
4	Written materials exist, and at school, children are developing literacy in the language. Writing in the language is not used in administration.
3	Written materials exist and children may be exposed to the written form at school. Literacy is not promoted through print media.
2	Written materials exist, but they may only be useful for some members of the community; for others, they may have a symbolic significance. Literacy education in the language is not a part of the school curriculum.
1	A practical orthography is known to the community and some material is being written.
0	No orthography is available to the community.

**Factor 7: Governmental and Institutional Language Attitudes and Policies, Including Official Status and Use**

<b>Degree of Support</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Official Attitudes towards Language</b>
<i>equal support</i>	5	All languages are protected.
<i>differentiated support</i>	4	Minority languages are protected primarily as the language of private domains. The use of the language is prestigious.
<i>passive assimilation</i>	3	No explicit policy exists for minority languages; the dominant language prevails in the public domain.
<i>active assimilation</i>	2	Government encourages assimilation to the dominant language. There is no protection for minority languages.
<i>forced assimilation</i>	1	The dominant language is the sole official language, while non-dominant languages are neither recognized nor protected.
<i>prohibition</i>	0	Minority languages are prohibited.

**Factor 8: Community Members' Attitudes towards Their Own Language**

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Community Members' Attitudes towards Language</b>
5	<i>All</i> members value their language and wish to see it promoted.
4	<i>Most</i> members support language maintenance.
3	<i>Many</i> members support language maintenance; others are indifferent or may even support language loss.
2	<i>Some</i> members support language maintenance; others are indifferent or may even support language loss.
1	Only <i>a few</i> members support language maintenance; others are indifferent or may even support language loss.
0	<i>No one</i> cares if the language is lost; all prefer to use a dominant language.

*Factor 9: Type and Quality of Documentation*

<b>Nature of Documentation</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Language Documentation</b>
<i>superlative</i>	5	There are comprehensive grammars and dictionaries, extensive texts; constant flow of language materials. Abundant annotated high-quality audio and video recordings exist.
<i>good</i>	4	There are one good grammar and a number of adequate grammars, dictionaries, texts, literature, and occasionally updated everyday media; adequate annotated high-quality audio and video recordings.
<i>fair</i>	3	There may be an adequate grammar or sufficient amount of grammars, dictionaries, and texts, but no everyday media; audio and video recordings may exist in varying quality or degree of annotation.
<i>fragmentary</i>	2	There are some grammatical sketches, word-lists, and texts useful for limited linguistic research but with inadequate coverage. Audio and video recordings may exist in varying quality, with or without any annotation.
<i>inadequate</i>	1	Only a few grammatical sketches, short word-lists, and fragmentary texts. Audio and video recordings do not exist, are of unusable quality, or are completely un-annotated.

[Retrieved from UNESCO Ad Hoc, 2003.]





## Appendix C

### Most Spoken Languages by Number of Speakers

Rank	Language	Family	Branch	Number of Speakers
1	English	Indo-European	Germanic	1.348 billion
2	Mandarin Chinese	Sino-Tibetan	Sintic	1.120 billion
3	Hindi	Indo-European	Indo-Aryan	600 million
4	Spanish	Indo-European	Romance	543 million
5	Standard Arabic	Afro-Asiatic	Semitic	274 million
6	Bengali	Indo-European	Indo-Aryan	268 million
7	French	Indo-European	Romance	267 million
8	Russian	Indo-European	Balto-Slavic	258 million
9	Portuguese	Indo-European	Romance	258 million
10	Urdu	Indo-European	Indo-Aryan	230 million
11	Indonesian	Austronesian	Malayo-Polynesian	199 million
12	Standard German	Indo-European	Germanic	135 million
13	Japanese	Japonic	—	126 million
14	Marathi	Indo-European	Indo-Aryan	99 million
15	Telugu	Dravidian	South-Central	96 million
16	Turkish	Turkic	Oghuz	88 million
17	Tamil	Dravidian	Southern	85 million
18	Yue Chinese (including Cantonese)	Sino-Tibetan	Sintic	85 million
19	Wu Chinese (including Shanghainese)	Sino-Tibetan	Sintic	82 million
20	Korean	Koreanic	—	82 million
21	Vietnamese	Austronesian	Vietic	77 million
22	Hausa	Afro-Asiatic	Chadic	75 million
23	Iranian Persian	Indo-European	Iranian	74 million

Table of the 23 most spoken languages by number of speakers. Languages recognized by the Indian Constitution are highlighted in gray. [Adapted from data provided by Ethnologue, 2021.]

## Appendix D

### List of Endangered Languages in India

<b>A'tong</b>	<b>Darma</b>	<b>Koireng</b>	<b>Miju</b>	<b>Sherdukpen</b>
<b>Adi</b>	<b>Deori</b>	<b>Kokborok</b>	<b>Milang</b>	<b>Sherpa</b>
<b>Ahom</b>	<b>Dimasa</b>	<b>Kolami</b>	<b>Minyong</b>	<b>Shompen</b>
<b>Aimol</b>	<b>Gadaba</b>	<b>Kom</b>	<b>Mising</b>	<b>Simi</b>
<b>Aiton</b>	<b>Galo</b>	<b>Konda</b>	<b>Mizo</b>	<b>Singpho</b>
<b>Aka</b>	<b>Gangte</b>	<b>Konyak</b>	<b>Motuo Menba</b>	<b>Sirmaudi</b>
<b>Aka</b>	<b>Garhwali</b>	<b>Koraga</b>	<b>Moyon</b>	<b>Sora</b>
<b>Anal</b>	<b>Geta?</b>	<b>Korku</b>	<b>Mra</b>	<b>Spiti</b>
<b>Andro</b>	<b>Gondi</b>	<b>Koro</b>	<b>Mundari</b>	<b>Sulung</b>
<b>Angami</b>	<b>Gorum</b>	<b>Korwa</b>	<b>Muot</b>	<b>Tagin</b>
<b>Angika</b>	<b>Great Andamanese</b>	<b>Kota</b>	<b>Mzieme</b>	<b>Tai Nora</b>
<b>Ao</b>	<b>Gutob</b>	<b>Kui</b>	<b>Na</b>	<b>Tai Phake</b>
<b>Apatani</b>	<b>Handuri</b>	<b>Kului</b>	<b>Nahali</b>	<b>Tai Rong</b>
<b>Asur</b>	<b>Hill Miri</b>	<b>Kumaoni</b>	<b>Naiki</b>	<b>Takahanyilang</b>
<b>Badaga</b>	<b>Hmar</b>	<b>Kundal Shahi</b>	<b>Nihali</b>	<b>Tamang</b>
<b>Baghati</b>	<b>Ho</b>	<b>Kurru</b>	<b>Nocte</b>	<b>Tangam</b>
<b>Balti</b>	<b>Hrangkhoh</b>	<b>Kuruba</b>	<b>Nruanghmei</b>	<b>Tangkhul</b>
<b>Bangani</b>	<b>Idu</b>	<b>Kurux (India)</b>	<b>Nyishi</b>	<b>Tangsa</b>
<b>Bangni</b>	<b>Irula</b>	<b>Kuvi</b>	<b>Onge</b>	<b>Tarao</b>
<b>Bawm</b>	<b>Jad</b>	<b>Ladakhi</b>	<b>Padam</b>	<b>Taruang</b>
<b>Bellari</b>	<b>Jangshung</b>	<b>Lamgang</b>	<b>Padri</b>	<b>Thado</b>
<b>Bhadravahi</b>	<b>Jarawa</b>	<b>Lamongse</b>	<b>Paite</b>	<b>Tinan</b>
<b>Bhalesi</b>	<b>Jaunsari</b>	<b>Langrong</b>	<b>Pangvali</b>	<b>Tiwa</b>
<b>Bharmauri</b>	<b>Juang</b>	<b>Lepcha</b>	<b>Parji</b>	<b>Toda</b>
<b>Bhumji</b>	<b>Kabui</b>	<b>Lhota</b>	<b>Pasi</b>	<b>Tolcha</b>
<b>Biete</b>	<b>Kachari</b>	<b>Liangmai</b>	<b>Pengo</b>	<b>Toto</b>
<b>Birhor</b>	<b>Kanashi</b>	<b>Limbu</b>	<b>Phom</b>	<b>Tshangla</b>
<b>Bishnupriya Manipuri</b>	<b>Kangdi</b>	<b>Lishpa</b>	<b>Pochuri</b>	<b>Tulu</b>
<b>Bodo</b>	<b>Karbi</b>	<b>Luro</b>	<b>Pu</b>	<b>Turi</b>
<b>Bokar</b>	<b>Khamba</b>	<b>Mahasui</b>	<b>Purik</b>	<b>Wancho</b>
<b>Bori</b>	<b>Khampti</b>	<b>Malto</b>	<b>Purum</b>	<b>Yimchungru</b>
<b>Brokshat</b>	<b>Kharia</b>	<b>Manchad</b>	<b>Rabha</b>	<b>Zaiwa</b>
<b>Bunan</b>	<b>Khasali</b>	<b>Manda</b>	<b>Rangkas</b>	<b>Zangskari</b>
<b>Byangsi</b>	<b>Kheza</b>	<b>Mandiali</b>	<b>Remo</b>	<b>Zeme</b>
<b>Chambeali</b>	<b>Khiamngan</b>	<b>Mao</b>	<b>Rengma</b>	
<b>Chang</b>	<b>Khoirao</b>	<b>Mara</b>	<b>Rongpa</b>	
<b>Chokri</b>	<b>Khowa</b>	<b>Maram</b>	<b>Ruga</b>	
<b>Churahi</b>	<b>Kinnauri</b>	<b>Maring</b>	<b>Sanenyo</b>	
<b>Cuona Menba</b>	<b>Koch</b>	<b>Mech</b>	<b>Sangtam</b>	
<b>Dakpa</b>	<b>Koda</b>	<b>Meithei</b>	<b>Sengmai</b>	
	<b>Kodagu</b>	<b>Miji</b>	<b>Sentilese</b>	

List of endangered languages in India. [Adapted from Moseley, 2010.]

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