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# Hindi Diwas and India's Constitutional Language Policy: Balancing Official Language, Linguistic Diversity and National Integration

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## Recent Developments:

- **Hindi Diwas 2026** was observed on **14 September 2026**, commemorating the Constituent Assembly's adoption of Hindi in Devanagari script as the **official language of the Union** on 14 September 1949. The occasion was marked by the **6th All India Official Language Conference** in Mumbai on 14–15 September 2026.
- The 2026 conference highlighted the broader policy objective of strengthening coordination among **Hindi and other Indian languages**, rather than treating Hindi as a substitute for India's linguistic diversity.
- The Union Government reported that **Hindi Shabd-Sindhu** had expanded to around **8 lakh words**, with more than 50,000 words incorporated from local Indian languages, reflecting efforts to enrich Hindi through linguistic interaction.
- In 2025, the Government launched the **Bharatiya Bhasha Anubhag** under the Department of Official Language to provide an institutional platform for India's linguistic diversity and greater interaction among Indian languages.
- The **Official Language Resolution, 1968** continues to provide an important policy framework by emphasising the development of Hindi alongside the coordinated development of other languages in the Eighth Schedule and the implementation of the three-language formula.

## Historical Background of the Language Question:

### *Linguistic Situation at Independence:*

- At Independence, India possessed substantial **linguistic, regional and cultural diversity**, making the choice of an official language a politically sensitive constitutional question.
- English had inherited an important role in **administration, legislation, higher education, courts and inter-governmental communication** from the colonial period, while Indian languages were widely used in social and regional life.
- The Constituent Assembly therefore had to reconcile three objectives: replacing colonial linguistic dependence, ensuring administrative continuity and protecting India's multilingual character.
- The central debate was not merely about choosing a language but about determining how language could support **national integration without producing linguistic domination**.

### *Major Issues Before the Constituent Assembly:*

- The Assembly debated whether India should adopt **Hindi, Hindustani, English or another linguistic arrangement** for Union-level purposes.
- A major disagreement concerned whether Hindi should replace English immediately or whether a **transition period** was necessary to allow institutions, administration and citizens to adapt.

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- Another important issue was whether linguistic uniformity was necessary for national unity or whether **unity could coexist with multilingualism**.
- The debate also involved practical questions concerning terminology, technical vocabulary, judicial language, legislation and communication between different regions.

### Constituent Assembly Debates and the Munshi-Ayyangar Formula:

#### *Nature of the Compromise:*

- The language question generated prolonged debate because Hindi supporters sought a stronger role for Hindi, while representatives from several non-Hindi-speaking regions expressed concerns about immediate replacement of English.
- The eventual compromise became known as the **Munshi-Ayyangar Formula**, associated with **K.M. Munshi** and **N. Gopalaswami Ayyangar**.
- The formula provided that **Hindi in Devanagari script would be the official language of the Union**, while English would continue for specified official purposes during a **15-year transitional period**.
- The Assembly adopted the relevant provision on **14 September 1949**, which later became the constitutional framework reflected primarily in **Article 343**.

#### *Why the Compromise Was Significant:*

- The compromise avoided declaring Hindi the **national language**, a distinction that remains important for understanding India's constitutional language policy.
- The Constitution recognised Hindi as the **official language of the Union**, while simultaneously retaining institutional space for English and protecting linguistic diversity.
- The arrangement represented an attempt to combine **decolonisation, administrative continuity and federal accommodation**.
- The Constituent Assembly's language settlement therefore illustrates the broader constitutional principle that national integration need not require cultural or linguistic uniformity.

### Constitutional Framework of Language:

#### *Part XVII and the Official Language of the Union:*

- **Part XVII of the Constitution** contains the principal provisions relating to official languages.
- **Article 343** provides that the official language of the Union is **Hindi in Devanagari script** and specifies the international form of Indian numerals for official purposes.
- Article 343 originally provided for the continued use of **English for 15 years from the commencement of the Constitution**, while allowing Parliament to provide by law for the continued use of English after that period.
- **Article 344** provides for a Commission and a Committee of Parliament concerning the progressive use of Hindi and other matters relating to the official language.
- **Articles 345–347** deal with the official languages of States, communication between States and the Union, and recognition of languages spoken by sections of a State.
- **Article 348** provides for the use of English in the **Supreme Court, High Courts and authoritative texts of legislation**, subject to constitutionally permitted arrangements.
- **Article 350** allows citizens to submit representations for the redress of grievances in languages used in the Union or the concerned State.
- **Article 350A** directs States and local authorities to endeavour to provide facilities for **mother-tongue instruction at the primary stage** for children belonging to linguistic minority groups.
- **Article 350B** provides for a **Special Officer for Linguistic Minorities**.
- **Article 351** directs the Union to promote the spread and development of Hindi while enriching it through forms and expressions from **Hindustani and other languages included in the Eighth Schedule**.

### ***Eighth Schedule:***

- The **Eighth Schedule** currently contains **22 languages**, namely Assamese, Bengali, Bodo, Dogri, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Kashmiri, Konkani, Malayalam, Manipuri, Marathi, Maithili, Nepali, Odia, Punjabi, Sanskrit, Santhali, Sindhi, Tamil, Telugand Urdu.
- At the commencement of the Constitution, the Eighth Schedule contained **14 languages in total**, including Hindi; therefore, it is inaccurate to describe the original arrangement as Hindi plus 14 additional languages.
- The expansion of the Eighth Schedule demonstrates the constitutional system's capacity to accommodate linguistic diversity over time.

### **From the 15-Year Transition to the Present Arrangement:**

#### ***Official Languages Act, 1963:***

- The Constitution originally envisaged a **15-year transition period**, after which Parliament could regulate the continued use of English.
- As the transition period approached its end in **1965**, concerns intensified in several non-Hindi-speaking regions regarding the possible replacement of English by Hindi.
- Parliament enacted the **Official Languages Act, 1963**, which provided for the continued use of English alongside Hindi for specified official purposes after the expiry of the constitutional transition period.
- The legislation consequently prevented the language policy from developing into an exclusive Hindi-only administrative system.
- The present framework therefore combines **Hindi as the official language of the Union with continued statutory use of English** for specified purposes.

#### ***Federal and Administrative Dimensions:***

- Under **Article 345**, a State Legislature may adopt one or more languages in use in the State or Hindi as its official language, subject to constitutional provisions.
- Under **Article 346**, the language authorised for Union official purposes governs communication between the Union and States and between States, while States may agree to use Hindi for inter-State communication in specified circumstances.
- This arrangement gives States considerable scope to preserve their **regional linguistic identities** while maintaining channels of Union-State communication.
- The language framework therefore reflects the federal character of the Constitution by combining **Union-level coordination with State-level linguistic autonomy**.

### **Official Language Policy and the Three-Language Approach:**

#### ***Official Language Resolution, 1968:***

- The **Official Language Resolution, 1968** sought to accelerate the progressive use and development of Hindi while simultaneously supporting the development of other languages in the Eighth Schedule.
- It also endorsed the **three-language formula**, envisaging Hindi and English along with another modern Indian language in Hindi-speaking areas and Hindi, the regional language and English in non-Hindi-speaking areas.
- The Resolution reflects an important policy principle: **promotion of Hindi need not imply neglect of other Indian languages**.
- It also recognised the need to safeguard the interests of people from different linguistic regions in **Union public services and examinations**.

### **Hindi, Multilingualism and Constitutional Pluralism:**

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### ***Unity in Diversity:***

- India's language policy demonstrates that **national unity and linguistic plurality can coexist within a constitutional framework**.
- Hindi has an important role as the Union's official language and as a major language of inter-regional communication, while the Constitution does not establish linguistic uniformity as a prerequisite for national integration.
- The constitutional protection of linguistic minorities, regional languages and mother-tongue education reflects the principle of **inclusive citizenship**.
- The evolution of the language framework from the original 15-year transition to continued use of English also demonstrates the Constitution's capacity to respond to **social and political realities**.

### ***Contemporary Relevance:***

- Language policy has implications for **education, governance, judiciary, public services, digital governance and access to government information**.
- Greater availability of government material in Indian languages can improve **administrative accessibility and citizen participation**, particularly for citizens who have limited familiarity with English.
- At the same time, effective multilingual governance requires investment in **translation, terminology, linguistic technology and institutional capacity**.
- Recent initiatives concerning translation systems, Indian-language coordination and expansion of Hindi terminology indicate the growing importance of **language technology in governance**.

### **Challenges in India's Language Policy:**

#### ***Balancing Promotion and Choice:***

- A central challenge is maintaining the constitutional objective of promoting Hindi while ensuring that **regional languages and linguistic minorities retain meaningful space** in education, administration and public life.
- Language policy can become politically sensitive when administrative efficiency is perceived as conflicting with **linguistic identity and federal autonomy**.

#### ***Judicial and Technical Vocabulary:***

- Expanding Indian-language use in **higher education, scientific research, law and technology** requires standardised terminology, high-quality translations and sustained institutional capacity.
- The continued role of English in higher courts and authoritative legal texts reflects the complexity of replacing an established technical language across specialised institutions.

#### ***Digital and Technological Inclusion:***

- Artificial intelligence, machine translation and multilingual digital platforms can reduce language barriers, but their effectiveness depends upon **high-quality linguistic datasets, terminology standards and contextual accuracy**.
- The development of multilingual language technologies can therefore contribute to **digital inclusion without requiring linguistic homogenisation**.

### **Significance for UPSC:**

- **Polity:** Part XVII, Articles 343–351, Eighth Schedule, Official Languages Act, 1963.
- **Federalism:** Union-State communication, State choice of official language and linguistic autonomy.
- **Governance:** Accessibility of administration, translation and citizen participation.
- **Social Justice:** Protection of linguistic minorities and mother-tongue education.

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- **Culture:** Preservation of India's linguistic heritage and composite culture.
- **National Integration:** Balancing common communication with linguistic diversity.
- **Current Affairs:** Hindi Diwas, All India Official Language Conference, Bharatiya Bhasha Anubhag and language-technology initiatives.

### Value Addition for UPSC:

#### *Constitutional Takeaway:*

- India has **no constitutionally designated national language; Hindi in Devanagari script is the official language of the Union under Article 343**, while English continues to be used for specified official purposes under statutory provisions.

#### *Mains Perspective:*

- The language question demonstrates the Indian Constitution's approach of **accommodation rather than uniformity**, where national integration is pursued through institutional compromise, linguistic safeguards and federal flexibility.
- A balanced language policy should promote **accessibility, administrative efficiency and Indian-language development** while respecting linguistic diversity and the constitutional rights of linguistic minorities.

#### *Prelims Facts:*

- **Hindi Diwas:** 14 September.
- **Constitutional provision:** Article 343.
- **Constitutional Part:** Part XVII.
- **Official language of the Union:** Hindi in Devanagari script.
- **Continued use of English:** Enabled through the Official Languages Act, 1963.
- **Linguistic minorities:** Article 350B.
- **Mother-tongue instruction:** Article 350A.
- **Development of Hindi:** Article 351.
- **Eighth Schedule:** 22 languages at present.