India's Official Language Status Planning: The Eighth Schedule and Language Recognition

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Abstract

This paper attempts to evaluate India's official language status planning. Multilingualism is one of the salient features of India. India's language issues have been very sensitive, often leading to conflicts, even riots. Disengagement from language is impossible, as language is required in business transactions and public service. The state must deal with the issue of language recognition or language choice. Language can be centrifugal or centripetal. India's language recognition experiences indicate a recognition of language plurality, which appears divisive; yet, that plurality has turned out to be a unifying force that has lead to language harmony, where as language assimilation, though unifying in appearance, has been a divisive force leading to conflicts and riots. This paper begins with a description of language chapters in India's Constitution. Then it discusses the meaning and criteria of the Eighth Schedule, followed by a critique of the ideology of the Eighth Schedule. Finally, implications of India's language experience in relation to that of Taiwan's are discussed.

Keywords: language status planning, India, the Eighth Schedule, official multilingualism, language assimilation