

Third language choice: Hindi in non-Hindi States, Sanskrit in Hindi-belt

Data hint that Sanskrit and Hindi are preferred by default due to a lack of supply and demand, even if they are not imposed

DATA POINT

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With the debate over Tamil Nadu's refusal to adopt the three-language policy still ongoing, the latest data needed to address key questions on the issue is lacking. Vital data that could help bring clarity is the list of languages currently being taught in schools across the States. Notably, DMK MP Kanimozhi Karunanidhi raised this question in the Rajya Sabha (RS) last month. However, the reply only provided the share of schools that taught three-languages, without mentioning the specific languages.

The last survey with this detail was the 2009 All India School Education Survey, which is not publicly available. *The Hindu* accessed a copy of the report through sources in the Education Ministry. Notably, even in the 2009 survey, school-wise data on languages taught is limited to the primary stage. However, the insights remain relevant, as a Lok Sabha reply from 1995 states that 27 States/UTs had implemented the three-language formula (Table 1).

An analysis of the 2009 survey (Table 2) shows that in Bihar, 99.1% of schools taught Hindi, 64% taught English, and 56% taught Sanskrit in the primary stage, with only 8% teaching other languages. Similarly, in Uttar Pradesh, 94% taught Hindi, 75.3% taught English, and 65.2% taught Sanskrit in the primary, with just 7% offering other languages. For Uttarakhand, the numbers were 99.5% Hindi, 85.5% English, 79.4% Sanskrit, and 2.6% others.

Data from these three States show that in Hindi-speaking States, the third language offered is mostly limited to Sanskrit. This is notable as the 1968 National Education Policy (NEP) had pre-

ferred a modern southern language in Hindi-speaking States.

Officials in Himachal Pradesh's Department of Education told *The Hindu* that in the last 15 years, there was no enrolment for Telugu, Tamil, and French "due to unavailability of teachers". Also, in the State, 34% of the 100 sanctioned Punjabi teaching posts are vacant, 71% of the 100 Urdu teaching posts are vacant, while only 9.8% of the 5,078 Sanskrit teaching posts are vacant presently. The high number of teaching posts and low vacancy at present also hints at Sanskrit being the preferred third language even now.

A similar situation continues in Uttar Pradesh currently. Bhagwati Singh, Secretary, Madhyamik Shiksha Parishad, Uttar Pradesh, said, "We have one student of Malayalam, three students of Tamil, and five students of Kannada registered with us. These students appear as private candidates".

Data from the 2009 survey also show that in Gujarat, over 97% schools taught Gujarati and 20.9% taught English, and 64% taught Hindi in the primary stage, with only 2.2% teaching other languages. In Karnataka, 97.5% offered Kannada, 86.2% English, 30.4% Hindi, and just 15% others. In Punjab, 79.2% schools offered Hindi, with less than 1% offering languages other than English and Punjabi. This hints at another trend, that in non-Hindi speaking States, the third language is mostly limited to Hindi.

Moreover, the RS reply shows that in Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal and Odisha – States that had agreed for the three-language formula – less than 50% schools had implemented it as of 2023-24 (Map 3). In Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, and Haryana, less than 60% schools had implemented, pointing to uneven execution among those States that agreed.

Detailed data for recent years is the need of the hour. (With inputs from Amit Bhelari and Mayank Kumar)

Whither the three language formula

The data for the charts were sourced from All India School Education Survey (2009), Lok Sabha questions & answers and includes *The Hindu's* calculations

Table 1: The table shows the status of implementation of the three-language formula in States/UTs as per a reply in the Lok Sabha on December 13, 1995

Category	States/UTs
The State governments that adopted/implemented the three-language formula as of 1995	Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Chandigarh, Delhi, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Rajasthan, Orissa, Sikkim, West Bengal, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura, Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Lakshadweep, Daman & Diu, Goa, Gujarat, Karnataka, Maharashtra
Status not available in the report	Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Manipur
The State governments that had not implemented the three-language formula as of 1995	Jammu & Kashmir, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry

Map 3: State-wise share of schools teaching three languages as of 2023-24

In the map, the darker the colour, the higher the share of schools that teach three languages

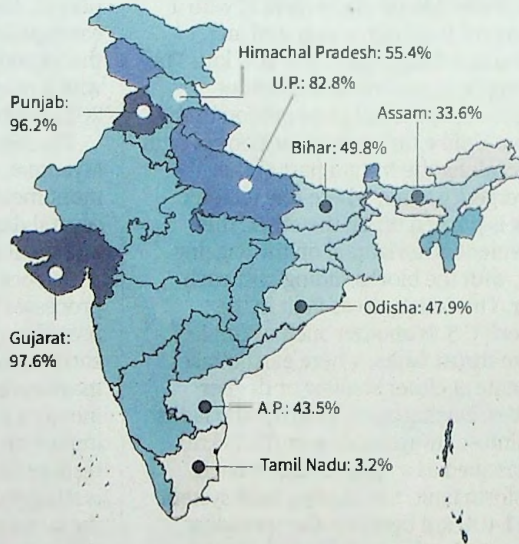


Table 2: The table shows the share of schools that taught the regional language, English, Hindi, Sanskrit, and other languages in the primary stage, across select States, as of 2009

State	Regional	English	Hindi	Sanskrit	Others
Undivided A.P.	94.3	83.1	6.3	-	7.2
Arunachal	-	90.8	81.2	-	23.3
Assam	77.8	11.9	0.5	-	24.2
Bihar	-	64.0	99.1	55.9	8.4
Chhattisgarh	-	37.1	99.3	-	3.6
Delhi	-	87.4	92.0	-	13.7
Gujarat	97.3	20.9	64.1	-	2.2
Haryana	-	70.9	94.4	-	5.4
Himachal	-	68.3	97.3	-	1.5
Jharkhand	-	37.4	99	0.1	17.5
Karnataka	97.5	86.2	30.4	-	15.0
Kerala	90.4	72.0	8.4	-	33.0
M.P.	-	52.5	99.1	1.2	10.9
Maharashtra	91.3	60.0	6.2	-	9.1
Manipur	86.3	86.5	35.2	-	27.6
Meghalaya	88.2	64.8	1.1	-	15.4
Mizoram	78.7	85.3	4.2	-	24.9
Nagaland	-	97.7	5.4	-	72.3
Odisha	94.8	64.3	0.2	-	7.9
Punjab	97.8	79.8	79.2	-	0.8
Rajasthan	-	52.5	98.7	-	5.8
Sikkim	87.9	86.6	43.8	-	26.0
Tamil Nadu	95.5	73.9	3.7	-	4.8
Tripura	98.5	79.7	0.5	1.8	18.3
U.P.	-	75.3	94.0	65.2	7.0
Uttarakhand	-	85.5	99.5	79.4	2.6
WB	94.2	86.5	2.0	-	3.5

Others refer to languages other than English, Hindi, Sanskrit and the regional language in each State. The total in each row does not add up to 100 as one school can teach more than one language

The All India School Education Survey (2009) includes govt./govt. aided, private aided/unaided, recognised and unrecognised schools



1 The share of schools teaching three languages is more than 90% in only five States/UTs

2 The share is below 50% even in States such as Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Odisha, and Goa, which had agreed to implement the three language formula