

## **National and Official Language** **Handout for foundation batch**

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### **National Language**

The national language is one that is prevalent throughout the nation in the social, cultural, and political realms. A country may designate a language as a national language, either by law or otherwise. It is a symbol of national identity as is prevalent in many countries of the world. It is a bond of unity throughout the country. It facilitates greater cultural interaction between people belonging to different parts of the country.

### **Is the national language desirable for India?**

India is a land of diversity with more than 2000 spoken languages. Imposing any one particular language on people may have the following negative consequences:

- It May reduce other languages to the sidelines, and lead to their extinction, as many of them are already highly vulnerable.
- It May not be good for the unity of the country and promote secessionist forces.
- Constitutional guarantees given to linguistic minorities may suffer.
- It may hinder the developmental processes, especially in education, as maximum learning and development of a child happen in the mother tongue.

### **Official language**

It is a language that is given special status in a particular country, state, or other jurisdiction. It is usually used for administrative purposes such as in the courts, parliament, and administration.

### **Need for an official language:**

- It ensures coherence in administration.
- Brings politics and governance closer to the people.
- Ensures efficient administration.
- Promotes national unity.

### **Adoption of official language in India:**

- As per Article 343 (1), the official language of the Union shall be Hindi in the Devnagiri script, but the numerals to be used would be in international form.

- As per article 343 (2), English was supposed to continue as an official language of the union, along with Hindi, only for a period of 15 years, but clause (3) provides powers to the Parliament to extend the usage of English after the period of 15 years as well.
- In the aftermath of the anti-Hindi protest, the Parliament of India, passed the Official Languages Act, 1963 to extend the usage of English beyond the said period.

### **Important provisions of Official Languages Act, 1963:**

- English will continue along with Hindi as an official language of the union.
- Hindi communication between Hindi and non-Hindi states should be accompanied by an English translation.
- States can continue to communicate with each other in English.
- Every state shall have the freedom to conduct its own affairs in the language of its choice.

### **Article 344**

Article 344 provides for the formation of a commission, after 5 years and 10 years from the date of commencement of the Constitution, that shall consist of members representing different languages, specified in Schedule Eight. Such a commission shall make recommendations for promoting the use of Hindi, restricting the use of English, and protecting the claims and the interests of people belonging to the non-Hindi states. Article 344 (4) provides for the constitution of a committee of parliament that shall examine the recommendations of the commission and report their views on the same to the president.

### **The official language of the States**

- As per Article 345, the state legislature may adopt any one or more languages in the state or Hindi as an official language.
- Article 347 gives extraordinary powers to the president to direct the state government to adopt a language spoken by a linguistic minority in the state as one of the official languages.
- The language to be used in the Supreme Court, High Court, Parliament, and the legislature of the State shall be English, but the governor, with the previous consent of the President, may authorize the use of Hindi or other languages for use in High Court.

### **Special Directives**

- Article 350 prescribes that every person can make a representation in any language used at the union or the state, as the case may be, to an officer or authority in the union or state.
- Article 350A casts a responsibility on the states to promote and provide adequate facilities for education to children in their mother tongue at the primary stage.

- This provision is applicable to linguistic minority groups.
- Article 350B provides for the appointment of a special officer for linguistic minorities to recommend safeguarding the interests of linguistic minorities.

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