

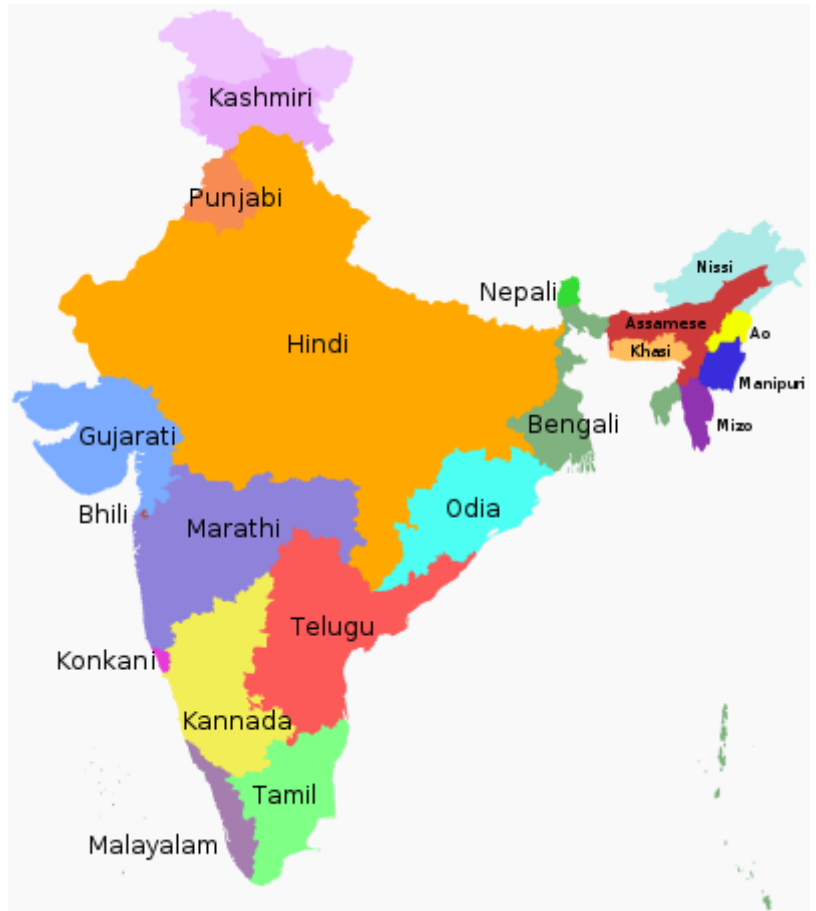
Languages with official status in India

The Constitution of India designates the official language of the Government of India as Hindi written in the Devanagari script, as well as English.^[2] There is no national language as declared by the Constitution of India.^[3] Hindi and English are used for official purposes such as parliamentary proceedings, judiciary, communications between the Central Government and a State Government.^[2] States within India have the liberty and powers to specify their own official language(s) through legislation and therefore there are 22 officially recognized languages in India of which Hindi is the most used. The number of native Hindi speakers ranges between 14.5 and 24.5% in total Indian population, however, other dialects of Hindi termed as Hindi languages are spoken by nearly 45% of Indians, mostly accounted from the states falling under the Hindi belt. Other Indian languages are each spoken by around 10% or less of the population.^[4]

States specify their own official language(s) through legislation. The section of the Constitution of India dealing with official languages therefore includes detailed provisions which deal not just with the languages used for the official purposes of the union, but also with the languages that are to be used for the official purposes of each state and union territory in the country, and the languages that are to be used for communication between the union and the states *inter se*.

During the British Raj, English was used for purposes at the federal level.^[5] The Indian constitution adopted in 1950 envisaged that Hindi would be gradually phased in to replace English over a fifteen-year period, but gave Parliament the power to, by law, provide for the continued use of English even thereafter.^[6] Plans to make Hindi the sole official language of the Republic met with resistance in some parts of the country. Hindi continues to be used today, in combination with other (at the central level and in some states) State official languages at the state level.

The legal framework governing the use of languages for official purpose currently includes the Constitution, the Official Languages Act, 1963, Official Languages (Use for Official Purpose of the Union) Rules, 1976, and various state laws, as well as rules and regulations made by the central government and the states.



States and union territories of India by the most commonly spoken first language.^{[1][a]}

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Official languages of the Union

The Indian constitution, in 1950, declared Hindi in Devanagari script to be the official language of the union. Unless Parliament decided otherwise, the use of English for official purposes was to cease 15 years after the constitution came into effect, i.e., on 26 January 1965. The prospect of the changeover, however, led to much alarm in the non Hindi-speaking areas of India, especially Dravidian-speaking states whose languages were not related to Hindi at all. As a result, Parliament enacted the Official Languages Act, 1963,^[7] ^[8]^[9]^[10]^[11]^[12] which provided for the continued use of English for official purposes along with Hindi, even after 1965.

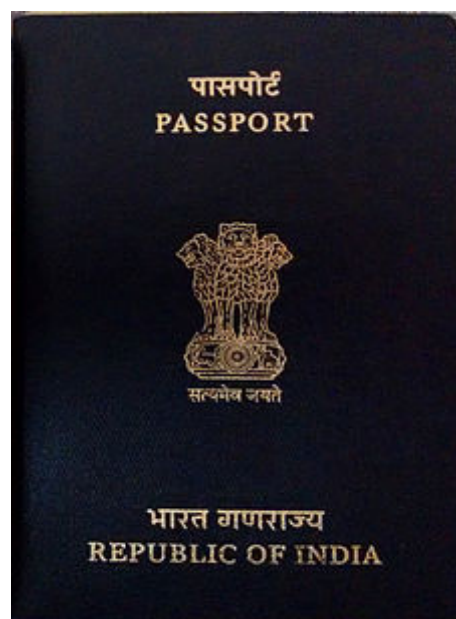
In late 1964, an attempt was made to expressly provide for an end to the use of English, but it was met with protests from states such as Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Punjab, West Bengal, Karnataka, Puducherry and Andhra Pradesh. Some of these protests also turned violent.^[13] As a result, the proposal was dropped,^[14]^[15] and the Act itself was amended in 1967 to provide that the use of English would not be ended until a resolution to that effect was passed by the legislature of every state that had not adopted Hindi as its official language, and by each house of the Indian Parliament.^[16]

The position was thus that the Union government continues to use English in addition to Hindi for its official purposes^[17] as a "subsidiary official language,"^[18]

but is also required to prepare and execute a programme to progressively increase its use of Hindi.^[19] The exact extent to which, and the areas in which, the Union government uses Hindi and English, respectively, is determined by the provisions of the Constitution, the Official Languages Act, 1963, the Official Languages Rules, 1976, and statutory instruments made by the Department of Official Language under these laws.

Parliamentary proceedings and laws

The Indian constitution draws a distinction between the language to be used in Parliamentary proceedings and the language in which laws are to be made. Parliamentary business, according to the Constitution, may be conducted in either Hindi or English. The use of English in parliamentary proceedings was to be phased out at the end of fifteen years unless Parliament chose to extend its use, which Parliament did through the Official Languages Act, 1963.^[20] In addition, the constitution permits a person who is unable to express themselves in either Hindi or English to, with the permission of the Speaker of the relevant House, address the House in their mother tongue.^[21]



The front cover of a contemporary Indian passport, with the national emblem and inscriptions in Hindi and English language

In contrast, the constitution requires the authoritative text of all laws, including Parliamentary enactments and statutory instruments, to be in English, until Parliament decides otherwise. Parliament has not exercised its power to so decide, instead merely requiring that all such laws and instruments, and all bills brought before it, also be translated into Hindi, though the English text remains authoritative.^[22]

Judiciary

The constitution provides, and the Supreme Court has reiterated, that all proceedings in the Supreme Court of India, the country's highest court and the High Courts, shall be in English.^[23] Parliament has the power to alter this by law, but has not done so. However, in many high courts, there is, with consent from the president, allowance of the optional use of Hindi. Such proposals have been successful in the states of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, and Bihar.^[24]

Administration

The Union government is required by law to progressively increase the use of Hindi in its official work,^[19] which it has sought to do through "persuasion, incentive and goodwill".^[7]

The Official Language Act provides that the Union government shall use both Hindi and English in most administrative documents that are intended for the public.^[25] The Official Languages Rules, in contrast, provide for a higher degree of use of Hindi in communications between offices of the central government (other than offices in Tamil Nadu, to which the rules do not apply).^[26] Communications between different departments within the central government may be in either Hindi or English, although a translation into the other language must be provided if required.^[27] Communications within offices of the same department, however, must be in Hindi if the offices are in Hindi-speaking states,^[28] and in either Hindi or English otherwise with Hindi being used in proportion to the percentage of staff in the receiving office who have a working knowledge of Hindi.^[29] Notes and memos in files may be in either Hindi or English, with the Government having a duty to provide a translation into the other language if required.^[30]

In addition, every person submitting a petition for the redress of a grievance to a government officer or authority has a constitutional right to submit it in any language used in India.

Implementation

Various steps have been taken by the Indian government to implement the use and familiarisation of Hindi extensively. Dakshina Bharat Hindi Prachar Sabha headquartered at Chennai was formed to spread Hindi in South Indian states. Regional Hindi implementation offices at Bengaluru, Thiruvananthapuram, Mumbai, Kolkata, Guwahati, Bhopal, Delhi and Ghaziabad have been established to monitor the implementation of Hindi in Central government offices and PSUs.

Annual targets are set by the Department of Official Language regarding the amount of correspondence being carried out in Hindi. A Parliament Committee on Official Language constituted in 1976 periodically reviews the progress in the use of Hindi and submits a report to the President. The governmental body which makes policy decisions and established guidelines for promotion of Hindi is the *Kendriya Hindi Samiti* (est. 1967). In every city that has more than ten central Government offices, a Town Official Language Implementation Committee is established and cash awards are given to government employees who write books in Hindi. All Central government offices and PSUs are to establish Hindi Cells for implementation of Hindi in their offices.^[31]

In 2016, the Modi government announced plans to promote Hindi in government offices in Southern and Northeast India.^{[32][33]}

The Indian constitution does not specify the official languages to be used by the states for the conduct of their official functions, and leaves each state free to, through its legislature, adopt Hindi or any language used in its territory as its official language or languages.^[34] The language need not be one of those listed in the Eighth Schedule, and several states have adopted official languages which are not so listed. Examples include Kokborok in Tripura and Mizo in Mizoram.

Legislature and administration

The constitutional provisions in relation to use of the official language in legislation at the State level largely mirror those relating to the official language at the central level, with minor variations. State legislatures may conduct their business in their official language, Hindi or (for a transitional period, which the legislature can extend if it so chooses) English, and members who cannot use any of these have the same rights to their mother tongue with the Speaker's permission. The authoritative text of all laws must be in English, unless Parliament passes a law permitting a state to use another language, and if the original text of a law is in a different language, an authoritative English translation of all laws must be prepared.

The state has the right to regulate the use of its official language in public administration and in general, neither the constitution nor any central enactment imposes any restriction on this right. However, every person submitting a petition for the redress of a grievance to an officer or authority of the state government has a constitutional right to submit it in any language used in that state, regardless of its official status.

In addition, the constitution grants the central government, acting through the President, the power to issue certain directives to the government of a state in relation to the use of minority languages for official purposes. The President may direct a State to officially recognise a language spoken in its territory for specified purposes and in specified regions, if its speakers demand it and satisfy him that a substantial proportion of the State's population desire its use. Similarly, States and local authorities are required to endeavour to provide primary education in the mother tongue for all linguistic minorities, regardless of whether their language is official in that State, and the President has the power to issue directions he deems necessary to ensure that they are provided these facilities.

State judiciary

States have significantly less freedom in relation to determine the language in which judicial proceedings in their respective High Courts will be conducted. The constitution gives the power to authorise the use of Hindi, or the state's official language in proceedings of the High Court to the Governor, rather than the state legislature, and requires the Governor to obtain the consent of the President of India, who in these matters acts on the advice of the Government of India. The Official Languages Act gives the Governor a similar power, subject to similar conditions, in relation to the language in which the High Court's judgments will be delivered.^[35]

Four states—Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan—^[36] have been granted the right to conduct proceedings in their High Courts in their official language, which, for all of them, was Hindi. However, the only non-Hindi state to seek a similar power—Tamil Nadu, which sought the right to conduct proceedings in Tamil in its High Court—had its application rejected by the central government earlier, which said it was advised to do so by the Supreme Court.^[37] In 2006, the law ministry said that it would not object to Tamil Nadu state's desire to conduct Madras High Court proceedings in Tamil.^{[38][39][40][41][42]} In 2010, the Chief Justice of the Madras High Court allowed lawyers to argue cases in Tamil.^[43]

List of official languages by states

List of official languages of states of India

No.	State	Official language(s)	Additional official language(s)
1.	<u>Andhra Pradesh</u>	<u>Telugu</u> ^[44]	
2.	<u>Arunachal Pradesh</u>	<u>English</u>	
3.	<u>Assam</u>	<u>English, Assamese</u> ^[45]	<u>Bengali</u> in three districts of <u>Barak Valley</u> ^[46] , <u>Bodo</u> in <u>Bodoland Territorial Council</u> areas
4.	<u>Bihar</u>	<u>Hindi</u> ^[47]	<u>Urdu</u> ^[47]
5.	<u>Chhattisgarh</u>	<u>Hindi</u> ^[48]	
6.	<u>Goa</u>	<u>Konkani</u> ^[49]	<u>Marathi</u> ^{[50]:27} ^[51]
7.	<u>Gujarat</u>	<u>Gujarati</u> ^[52]	<u>Hindi</u> ^[52]
8.	<u>Haryana</u>	<u>Hindi</u> ^[53]	<u>English</u> , ^[50] <u>Punjabi</u> ^[54]
9.	<u>Himachal Pradesh</u>	<u>Hindi</u> ^[55]	<u>English</u>
10.	<u>Jammu and Kashmir</u>	<u>Urdu</u> ^[50]	
11.	<u>Jharkhand</u>	<u>Hindi</u>	<u>Urdu</u>
12.	<u>Karnataka</u>	<u>Kannada</u>	
13.	<u>Kerala</u>	<u>Malayalam</u>	<u>English</u>
14.	<u>Madhya Pradesh</u>	<u>Hindi</u> ^[56]	
15.	<u>Maharashtra</u>	<u>Marathi</u>	<u>English</u>
16.	<u>Manipur</u>	<u>Meitei (Manipuri)</u> ^[57]	<u>English</u>
17.	<u>Meghalaya</u>	<u>English</u> ^[58]	<u>Khasi</u> and <u>Garo</u> ^[59]
18.	<u>Mizoram</u>	<u>Mizo, English and Hindi</u>	
19.	<u>Nagaland</u>	<u>English</u>	
20.	<u>Odisha</u>	<u>Odia</u>	<u>English</u> ^[60]
21.	<u>Punjab</u>	<u>Punjabi</u> ^[50]	
22.	<u>Rajasthan</u>	<u>Hindi</u>	<u>English</u>
23.	<u>Sikkim</u>	<u>Nepali</u> ^[61] ^[62]	Additional ten local languages ^[b]
24.	<u>Tamil Nadu</u>	<u>Tamil</u>	<u>English</u>
25.	<u>Telangana</u>	<u>Telugu & Urdu</u>	
26.	<u>Tripura</u>	<u>Bengali, English and Kokborok</u> ^[63] ^[64]	
27.	<u>Uttar Pradesh</u>	<u>Hindi</u>	<u>Urdu</u> ^[65]
28.	<u>Uttarakhand</u>	<u>Hindi</u>	<u>Sanskrit</u>
29.	<u>West Bengal</u>	<u>Bengali</u> ^[50] , <u>English</u> ^[66]	<u>Nepali</u> in <u>Darjeeling</u> and <u>Kurseong</u> sub-divisions, ^[50] <u>Urdu</u> , <u>Hindi</u> , <u>Odia</u> , <u>Santali</u> , <u>Punjabi</u> , <u>Kamtapuri</u> , <u>Rajbanshi</u> , <u>Kurmali</u> and <u>Kurukh</u> ^[67] ^[68] ^[69]

List of official languages of Union Territories of India

Union territories^[50]

No.	Union territory	Official language(s)	Additional official language(s)
1.	<u>Andaman and Nicobar Islands</u>	<u>Hindi and English</u>	
2.	<u>Chandigarh</u>	<u>English</u>	
3.	<u>Dadra and Nagar Haveli</u>	<u>Gujarati, Marathi, and Hindi</u> ^[70]	
4.	<u>Daman and Diu</u>	<u>Gujarati, Konkani and Marathi</u>	
5.	<u>Delhi</u>	<u>Hindi</u>	<u>Punjabi, English and Urdu</u> ^[71]
6.	<u>Lakshadweep</u>	<u>Malayalam, Mahl (in Minicoy Island), English</u> ^[72]	
7.	<u>Puducherry</u>	<u>Tamil, English</u>	<u>Telugu, Malayalam and French</u> [c] ^[73] ^[74]

Eighth Schedule to the Constitution

The Eighth Schedule to the Indian Constitution contains a list of 22 scheduled languages. At the time the constitution was enacted, inclusion in this list meant that the language was entitled to representation on the Official Languages Commission,^[75] and that the language would be one of the bases that would be drawn upon to enrich Hindi, the official language of the Union.^[76] The list has since, however, acquired further significance. The Government of India is now under an obligation to take measures for the development of these languages, such that "they grow rapidly in richness and become effective means of communicating modern knowledge."^[77] In addition, a candidate appearing in an examination conducted for public service at a higher level is entitled to use any of these languages as the medium in which he or she answers the paper^[78]

Via the 92nd Constitutional amendment 2003, four new languages – Dogri, Maithili, Santali and Bodo – were added to the 8th Schedule of the Indian Constitution.^[79]

The table below lists the 22 languages set out in the Eighth Schedule as of May 2008, together with the regions where they are used.

Even though the English language is not included in the Eighth Schedule (as it is a foreign language), it is one of the official languages of the Union of India.^[80]

Language ^[d]	Family	Speakers (in millions, 2001) ^[81]	State(s)
<u>Assamese</u>	Indo-Aryan, North Eastern	13.2	<u>Assam</u> , <u>Arunachal Pradesh</u>
<u>Bengali</u>	Indo-Aryan, Eastern	83.4	<u>West Bengal</u> , <u>Tripura</u> , <u>Assam</u> , <u>Andaman & Nicobar Islands</u> <u>Jharkhand</u> ^[82]
<u>Bodo</u>	<u>Tibeto- Burman</u>	1.3	<u>Assam</u>
<u>Dogri</u>	Indo-Aryan, Northwestern	2.3	<u>Jammu and Kashmir</u> , <u>Himachal Pradesh</u> , <u>Punjab</u>
<u>Gujarati</u>	Indo-Aryan, Western	46.1	<u>Dadra and Nagar Haveli</u> , <u>Daman and Diu</u> , <u>Gujarat</u>
<u>Hindi</u>	Indo-Aryan	422	<u>Andaman and Nicobar Islands</u> , <u>Bihar</u> , <u>Chhattisgarh</u> , <u>Delhi</u> , <u>Himachal Pradesh</u> , <u>Jharkhand</u> , <u>Madhya Pradesh</u> , <u>Rajasthan</u> , <u>Haryana</u> , <u>Uttar Pradesh</u> , and <u>Uttarakhand</u>
<u>Kannada</u>	<u>Dravidian</u>	38	<u>Karnataka</u>
<u>Kashmiri</u>	Indo-Aryan, Dardic	5.5	<u>Jammu and Kashmir</u>
<u>Konkani</u>	Indo-Aryan, Southern	2.5	<u>Maharashtra</u> , <u>Goa</u> , <u>Karnataka</u> and <u>Kerala</u> (The <u>Konkan Coast</u>) ^{[83][84]}
<u>Maithili</u>	Indo-Aryan, Eastern	12.2	<u>Bihar</u>
<u>Malayalam</u>	<u>Dravidian</u>	33.1	<u>Kerala</u> , <u>Lakshadweep</u> , <u>Puducherry</u> , <u>Andaman & Nicobar Islands</u>
<u>Manipuri</u> (also Meitei or Meithei)	<u>Tibeto- Burman</u>	1.5	<u>Manipur</u>
<u>Marathi</u>	Indo-Aryan, Southern	72	<u>Maharashtra</u> , <u>Goa</u> , <u>Dadra & Nagar Haveli</u> , <u>Daman and Diu</u>
<u>Nepali</u>	Indo-Aryan, Northern	2.9	<u>Sikkim</u> , <u>Darjeeling</u> , <u>Northeast India</u>
<u>Odia</u>	Indo-Aryan, Eastern	33	<u>Odisha</u> , <u>Jharkhand</u> ^{[85][86][87]}
<u>Punjabi</u>	Indo-Aryan, Northwestern	29.1	<u>Chandigarh</u> , <u>Delhi</u> , <u>Punjab</u>
<u>Sanskrit</u>	Indo-Aryan	0.01	<u>Uttarakhand</u>
<u>Santali</u>	<u>Munda</u>	6.5	<u>Santhal tribals of the Chota Nagpur Plateau</u> (comprising the states of <u>Bihar</u> , <u>Chhattisgarh</u> , <u>Jharkhand</u> , <u>Odisha</u>)
<u>Sindhi</u>	<u>Indo-Aryan</u> , Northwestern	2.5	<u>Sindh</u> (now <u>Sindh</u> in <u>Pakistan</u>)
<u>Tamil</u>	<u>Dravidian</u>	70	<u>Tamil Nadu</u> , <u>Andaman & Nicobar Islands</u> , <u>Puducherry</u> , <u>Kerala</u>
<u>Telugu</u>	<u>Dravidian</u>	74	<u>Andhra Pradesh</u> , <u>Telangana</u> , <u>Puducherry</u> , <u>Andaman & Nicobar Islands</u>
<u>Urdu</u>	Indo-Aryan, Central	51.5	<u>Jammu and Kashmir</u> , <u>Telangana</u> , <u>Jharkhand</u> , <u>Delhi</u> , <u>Bihar</u> and <u>Uttar Pradesh</u>

Of the 22 official languages, 15 are Indo-Aryan, four are Dravidian, two are Tibeto-Burman, and one is Munda.

Since 2003, a government committee has been looking into the feasibility of treating all languages in the Eighth Schedule to the Constitution as "Official Languages of the Union".^[88]

Union–state and interstate communication

The language in which communications between different states, or from the union government to a state or a person in a state, shall be sent is regulated by the Official Languages Act and, for states other than Tamil Nadu, by the Official Languages Rules. Communication between states who use Hindi as their official language is required to be in Hindi, whereas communication between a state whose official language is Hindi and one whose is not, is required to be in English, or, in Hindi with an accompanying English translation (unless the receiving state agrees to dispense with the translation).^[7]

Communication between the union and states which use Hindi as their official language (classified by the Official Language Rules as "the states in Region A"), and with persons who live in those states, is generally in Hindi, except in certain cases.^[89] Communication with a second category of states "Region B", which do not use Hindi as their official language but have elected to communicate with the union in Hindi (currently Gujarat, Maharashtra, and Punjab)^[90] is usually in Hindi, whilst communications sent to an individual in those states may be in either Hindi or English.^[91] Communication with all other states "Region C", and with people living in them, is in English.^[92]

See also

- Languages of India
- List of Indian languages by number of native speakers
- Names of the Indian Constitution in the official languages of India

Notes

- a. Some languages may be over- or underrepresented as the census data used is at the state-level. For example, while Urdu has 52 million speakers (2001), in no state is it a majority as the language itself is primarily limited to Indian Muslims yet has more native speakers than Gujarati.
- b. Bhutia, Gurung, Lepcha, Limboo, Mangar, Mukhia, Newari, Rai, Sherpa and Tamang are the Additional Official Languages for the purpose of preservation of culture and tradition.^{[50]:84}
- c. See Official languages of Puducherry
- d. Includes variants and dialects

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The ADMK leader has said in New Delhi "It's a shame to see my neighbouring state leader hailing from Telugu state speaking against the his own mother tongue.
The Dravida Samrakshana Samiti Head has said " it's a direct assault on our culture and is a insult for saying the minister hailing from South India. (Jitendra Singh)"(<http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-news-india/centre-to-promote-use-of-hindi-in-south-india-northeast-jitendra-singh/>)*The Indian Express* 2016-06-09. Retrieved 2016-06-11
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External links

- [Department of Official Language \(DOL\)](#)– Official webpage explains the chronological events related to *Official Languages Act* and amendments
- [Central Institute of Indian Languages](#)– A comprehensive federal government site that offers complete info on Indian Languages
- [Reconciling Linguistic Diversity: The History and the Future of Language Policy in India](#) by Jason Baldridge
- [Multi-lingualism and language policy in India](#)
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This page was last edited on 31 March 2018, at 14:54.

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