

CHAPTER-18

Multilingualism as unity: Linguistic state formation and national integration in India

Ms Simran Parveen
Research Scholar, Dept of Linguistics, CUK
parveensimi62@gmail.com
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ABSTRACT

India is one of the most linguistically diverse nations in the world. Due to this diversity, many feared that it would threaten national unity after independence. But the opposite happened. India adopted linguistic accommodation as a core strategy for nation-building. This paper examines the formation of Andhra Pradesh in 1953, the first linguistic state in independent India, as a focused case study to understand whether the formation of linguistic states strengthened or weakened national unity. This study employed a qualitative historical methodology, drawing on government reports, historical accounts of the Andhra movement, and secondary scholarly sources, to compare linguistic, administrative, and socio-political conditions before and after the formation of Andhra Pradesh. The findings suggest that linguistic recognition reduced alienation among Telugu speakers, strengthened democratic participation, and ultimately reinforced national unity rather than fragmenting it. This paper argues that multilingualism in India functions not as a threat but as a unifying force that brings people together.

KEYWORDS: Multilingualism, Linguistic States, National Unity and Integration, Linguistic diversity, and Andhra Pradesh.

1 Introduction

India is one of the most linguistically diverse countries in the world. Hundreds of languages and dialects are spoken across its regions. This reflects deep cultural, historical, and social diversity. Rather than treating this linguistic plurality as a problem, the Indian nation-state has approached multilingualism as a social reality that must be accommodated within a democratic framework. From the time of independence, India adopted a strategy that sought to balance national unity with respect for linguistic and cultural diversity.

Unlike some countries that focus on one common language, India recognises and manages many languages at the same time. Instead of imposing a single national language, the Indian Constitution recognises multiple languages and provides institutional protection to linguistic communities. Through constitutional provisions, federal governance, and educational policies, the Indian state has attempted to ensure that no language is considered inferior or excluded from public life. This approach reflects the belief that democratic inclusion strengthens national integration rather than weakening it.

One of the most significant ways India has managed linguistic diversity is through the formation of states based on language. Linguistic state reorganisation was not merely an administrative exercise; it was a political response to demands for recognition, dignity, and effective participation in governance. By drawing state boundaries according to linguistic

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distribution, the Indian state aimed to reduce alienation among linguistic communities while maintaining national unity.

The formation of Andhra Pradesh in 1953 was an important step in this process. As the first linguistic state formed in independent India, Andhra Pradesh became a testing ground for the idea that linguistic recognition could function as an integrative democratic principle. Rather than encouraging separatism, the formation of a Telugu-speaking state sought to bring governance closer to the people by enabling administration in the mother tongue and recognising linguistic identity within the national framework.

This paper examines the formation of Andhra Pradesh as a case study to analyse whether linguistic state formation contributed to national integration in India. By comparing linguistic, administrative, and socio-political conditions before and after the formation of the state, the study explores how multilingualism has been managed in practice. Through this focused example, the paper argues that linguistic state formation has played a constructive role in strengthening unity in a multilingual nation like India.

1.1 Research Questions

- What was the linguistic and administrative condition of Telugu speakers before the formation of Andhra Pradesh?
- How did the formation of Andhra Pradesh alter linguistic, political, and cultural conditions for Telugu speakers?
- Did linguistic state formation strengthen or weaken national integration?

1.2 Research Objectives

- To examine the linguistic situation of Telugu speakers before 1953
- To analyse changes after the formation of Andhra Pradesh
- To compare pre- and post-state formation conditions
- To assess whether linguistic reorganisation contributed to national unity

1.3 Literature Review

Joseph Lo Bianco (2010), in his paper *Some Ideas about Multilingualism and National Identity*, explores the deep connection between language and how a nation is formed. He argues that language is not just for talking; it has a "Symbolic" value for our identity and a "Material" value for our survival. Language represents who we are, but it also determines our access to the economy and the law. When a group's language is excluded from government use, they lose "Material" rights, such as the ability to secure professional jobs or navigate the legal system effectively.

Taking a different perspective on unity, Michael Clyne (2011) in *Multilingualism and Integration* discusses the "Monolingual Mindset," which is the problematic belief that a country must have only one language to remain united. He argues that this mindset views diversity as a threat rather than a resource. Clyne proves that true "Integration" occurs when a country accepts and supports multiple languages. By doing so, the state makes all linguistic groups feel like valued members of the nation, which actually increases national stability.

Paul Friedrich (1962) in *Language and Politics in India* explains that in diverse nations, language is a powerful political tool that can either divide or unite. He highlights the concept of "Literary Prestige," noting that groups with a rich history of literature and poetry are more likely to demand political recognition. He argues that when a community feels their cultural heritage is being sidelined by a dominant "official" language, they will use their linguistic identity to mobilize for political change.

Focusing on the challenges of post-colonial societies, Mbulungeni Madiba (1999) *Multilingualism and Nation-building in South Africa* studied how new nations are built after colonial rule, specifically in South Africa. He introduces the idea of "Intellectualization," which is the process of developing regional languages so they can be used in science, law, and high-level government. He warns that if a nation continues to rely only on a colonial language (like English), it creates a gap between the elite and the common people, hindering true democratic nation-building.

The issue of fairness is central to László Marác (2017), who in *Multilingualism and Social Inclusion* focuses on "Linguistic Justice" as a requirement for a fair society. He explains that if a state favors one language, it creates "Linguistic Asymmetry," where some people have more power than others based purely on the language they speak. This leads to "Social Exclusion," where speakers of ignored languages are prevented from participating in civic life. He argues that a just society must remove these linguistic barriers to ensure everyone is included.

Lüdi, Höchle, and Yanaprasart (2012) in their paper *Methodological Triangulation in Multilingualism* provided a scientific way to study multilingualism called "Methodological Triangulation." This approach suggests that a researcher should not look at just one type of information. Instead, they should check four dimensions: official policies, how people actually speak in daily life, what people think about their languages (representations), and the general linguistic environment. This ensures a balanced and accurate understanding of complex linguistic situations.

Examining modern linguistic structures, Nils Ringe (2020) in *The Language(s) of Politics: Multilingualism in the EU* shows that language is a core part of policymaking. He argues that the choice of which language to use in meetings or laws is a strategic political decision that affects who holds power. He emphasizes that language is never "neutral"; it is a factor that shapes how political discourse is conducted and how institutional outcomes are reached.

Esa Aldegheri, Dan Fisher and Alison Phipps (2009) in their article *Reframing Integration as Restorative Praxis* argues that integration should be viewed as "Restorative Praxis," which means fixing the social and political "wrongs" of the past. It suggests that a marginalized group cannot be truly integrated into a nation until their dignity, culture, and rights are restored through active policy changes. Integration is thus seen as a process of healing and justice rather than just "fitting in."

Trilingualism, National Integration and Social Coexistence in Post-war Sri Lanka

This study examines how Sri Lanka tried to use three languages (Sinhala, Tamil, and English) to bring peace after a long civil war. It explains that language conflict can destroy a nation's social fabric if the state does not provide equal status to minority languages. The chapter emphasizes that "Social Coexistence" is only possible when all citizens feel their mother tongue is respected by the government.

Hanna Onyi Yusuf (2007): Language as a Tool for National Integration: Nigeria

Yusuf discusses Nigeria, a country that used English (a colonial language) as a "neutral" tool to unite many different ethnic groups. The goal was to avoid fights over which indigenous language should be dominant. This study highlights a specific model of national integration where a foreign language is used to bridge the gap between diverse local linguistic identities to prevent internal conflict.

1.4 Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative historical case study approach. Data has been collected from the following sources:

- Reports of the States Reorganisation Commission (1955)
- Historical accounts of the Andhra movement

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➤ Scholarly books and journal articles on linguistic nationalism in India

The study follows a comparative framework, analysing conditions before and after the formation of Andhra Pradesh to identify changes in linguistic recognition, political participation, and integration.

2 Linguistic Conditions Before Andhra Pradesh (Pre-1953)

Before 1953, the Telugu-speaking areas were part of the Madras Presidency. This was a large administrative region where Tamil speakers had more influence in government, education, and cultural life. Although a large number of people in the region spoke Telugu, the administrative system did not accurately reflect this. Tamil was mainly used in offices and official work, while Telugu was given less importance.

Because of this situation, Telugu speakers felt linguistically marginalised. Telugu had very little use in government offices and higher education institutions. Many government jobs were held by Tamil speakers, which made Telugu speakers feel excluded from administrative opportunities. At the same time, institutions that worked to promote the Telugu language and literature received very little support from the government. This created a strong feeling that the Telugu language and culture were being ignored.

As a result, awareness about language identity began to grow among Telugu speakers. Language was no longer seen only as a tool for communication; it became closely linked to self-respect and cultural pride. The demand for a separate Andhra state developed from this feeling. However, the movement did not aim to break away from India. Instead, it asked for proper administrative recognition within the Indian nation.

The movement reached a major turning point when Potti Sriramulu started a fast unto death demanding a separate Telugu-speaking state. His death in 1952 caused widespread protests and a strong public reaction across the region. This mass mobilisation forced the Indian government to rethink its policy on linguistic states, which eventually led to the formation of Andhra Pradesh in 1953.

2.1 Formation of Andhra Pradesh and its Aftermath (Post-1953)

After the formation of Andhra Pradesh in 1953, Telugu became the main language of administration, education, and public communication in the state. This change helped people interact more easily with government offices and public institutions. Using the local language in administration made governance more accessible and responsive to the needs of the Telugu-speaking population.

The creation of a Telugu-speaking state also increased opportunities for Telugu speakers in government employment. Since Telugu was now used in official work, people who were fluent in the language found it easier to enter public service. This reduced earlier feelings of exclusion and helped create a stronger sense of participation in the administrative system. Educational institutions also expanded the use of Telugu, especially at the school level, which improved learning outcomes and reduced language barriers.

Cultural development received greater attention after state formation. Institutions promoting the Telugu language, literature, and culture received more support from the state government. Writers, poets, and scholars found a more supportive environment for their work, which helped strengthen cultural confidence among the people. Language became a source of unity rather than a source of dissatisfaction.

Importantly, the formation of Andhra Pradesh did not weaken national unity. Instead, it strengthened people's connection with the Indian state. By recognising linguistic identity within the federal system, the Indian government allowed people to maintain their regional

identity while remaining part of the larger national identity. This example showed that linguistic reorganisation could support integration and democratic participation rather than threatening national unity.

2.2 *Comparative Analysis: Before and After*

This study aimed to investigate whether the formation of states based on linguistic grounds facilitated or hindered national integration in India, using Andhra Pradesh as a case study. By comparing the linguistic conditions before and after 1953, the study aimed to understand the impact of linguistic recognition on governance, cultural identity, and democratic participation. The findings clearly show that before the formation of Andhra Pradesh, Telugu speakers faced linguistic marginalisation within the Madras Presidency. Their language had limited use in administration, education, and cultural institutions, which created dissatisfaction and feelings of exclusion. After 1953, the situation changed significantly. Telugu became the main language of governance and education in the state, making administration more accessible and inclusive for the local population.

The study also shows that linguistic reorganisation did not weaken national unity. Instead, it strengthened people's sense of belonging to the Indian state. By recognising linguistic identity within the federal system, India allowed citizens to maintain their regional and cultural identity while remaining loyal to the nation. This reflects the principle of nested identity, where regional identity exists within a broader national framework.

Overall, the case of Andhra Pradesh demonstrates that linguistic state formation was an effective and democratic strategy for managing India's multilingual reality. Rather than creating division, it helped reduce conflict, improve governance, and strengthen integration. This study therefore supports the view that linguistic reorganisation was a wise decision that contributed to India's unity in diversity.

Aspect	Before 1953	After 1953
Administrative Language	Tamil-dominated	Telegu
Cultural recognition	Marginal	Institutional support
Political participation	Limited	Expanded
Sense of belonging	Alienation	Integration

This comparison demonstrates that linguistic state formation addressed grievances without encouraging separatism. Instead of weakening India, it strengthened citizens' emotional and political attachment to the nation.

3 Findings and Discussions

This study examined the impact of linguistic state formation on governance and national integration by focusing on the case of Andhra Pradesh. The analysis was based on government reports, historical accounts of the Andhra movement, and secondary academic sources. The findings reveal clear differences in linguistic governance before and after the formation of the state in 1953.

Government reports from the post-1953 period indicate that the use of Telugu in administration increased significantly after the formation of Andhra Pradesh. Official communication, public services, and state-level governance became more accessible to the local population. This improved interaction between the government and citizens, reducing feelings of exclusion that were present earlier.

Historical accounts of the Andhra movement show that linguistic dissatisfaction was a major cause of political mobilisation before 1953. Telugu speakers felt that their language and culture were neglected within the Madras Presidency. The demand for a separate state was therefore not aimed at breaking away from India, but at achieving dignity, recognition, and fair representation within the Indian nation. After the formation of Andhra Pradesh, these historical

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sources indicate a decline in language-based protests, suggesting that linguistic grievances were largely addressed.

Secondary academic sources support the view that linguistic reorganisation helped stabilise India's federal structure. Scholars argue that recognising language-based identities within a democratic framework allowed regional aspirations to be accommodated without threatening national unity. In the case of Andhra Pradesh, linguistic recognition strengthened political participation and cultural confidence while maintaining loyalty to the Indian state.

The discussion also highlights that linguistic reorganisation redirected political energy from protest to development. Once linguistic demands were fulfilled, the focus of regional politics shifted towards economic planning, education, and social development. This suggests that recognising language helped strengthen democracy.

Overall, the findings support the argument that linguistic state formation functioned as an integrative democratic principle. By acknowledging linguistic identity through administrative restructuring, India strengthened inclusion and reduced conflict. The case of Andhra Pradesh demonstrates that linguistic recognition within a federal system can promote unity rather than weaken it.

4 Conclusion

This study set out to examine whether the formation of states on linguistic grounds helped or harmed national integration in India, using Andhra Pradesh as a case study. By comparing the linguistic conditions before and after 1953, the study aimed to understand the impact of linguistic recognition on governance, cultural identity, and democratic participation.

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