

*Language Conflict and National Development: Group Politics and National Language Policy in India.* By Jyotirindra Das Gupta. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970. Pp. xii+293. \$6.75.

*National Communication and Language Policy in India.* By Baldev Raj Nayar. New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Inc., 1969. Pp. xvi+311. \$12.50.

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In many new and some old states, language is an important political issue. Yet there are only a few studies of the formation and consequences of

language policy. As Herbert Passin has remarked, this issue has received much less scholarly attention than other major problems of nationhood. Thus the practically simultaneous appearance of two thorough and thoughtful case studies of language policy in India, the multilingual "new state" par excellence, is a considerable sociolinguistic (not to mention politico-linguistic) event. Whether by coordination or coincidence, moreover, these two treatises on closely related topics are complementary rather than duplicative. If a speaker of one of the languages having no separate words for "policy" and "politics" wanted examples of the difference, the respective concerns of Nayar and Das Gupta would be a nearly ideal reply. Nayar's book is intended as a descriptive and prescriptive analysis of language policies and their consequences. Das Gupta's volume, on the other hand, describes and evaluates the political activities which determine language policies, as well as the side effects of these political activities.

Nayar's basic assumption is the Deutschian one that there must be some minimum capacity for interregional (elite) communication without which a multilingual political community is unlikely to persist, especially if subjected to stress. Without attempting to prove this assumption, Nayar adopts this communicational capacity as a desideratum while discussing alternative Indian official language and medium of instruction policies. Believing that states can create nations, Nayar is confident (unlike many others) that deliberate policy *can* have significant effects on linguistic behavior; his typical criticism of a given language policy is that it is not "decisive" enough. "The thoroughness with which policy is implemented is the crucial factor, not the mere formal acceptance of policy," writes Nayar (p. 177).

Unfortunately, this emphasis on policy implementation is not adequately matched by a clear analysis of the particular consequences of various language policies. Much of the book is straight history, and it is not always clear what important lessons this history teaches. The conclusions drawn are usually related to specific issues in the Indian language debate, but some are of more general interest. For example, Nayar shows that it is possible to avoid compulsion, and hence resistance, by adopting policies that rely on already existing incentives to induce certain choices. Where such incentives do not exist, however, he argues that policies must contain substantial rewards and penalties or else result in hypocritical evasion.

Interestingly, Nayar takes pains to show that history has already done most of the work required of policy, and this may be his most significant conclusion. He summarizes considerable evidence supporting the case that India, in spite of its legendary language diversity and the original unrelatedness of the Indo-Aryan and the Dravidian languages, has become a single "linguistic area" in which the speakers of one language can learn another language of the area with relative ease because of semantic and grammatical one-to-one correspondences. He argues that Hindi, regardless of its official status, has "naturally" become the predominant (mass) *lingua franca* of India. He also claims, contrary to common belief, that knowledge of English as well as the desire for it is increasing, rather than

decreasing, if measured in certain reasonable ways (for instance, the number of persons able to communicate satisfactorily in English when the need arises).

On occasion Nayar makes, or approvingly cites, claims whose justification is questionable. His quotation from Grierson that Hindi dialects are "capable of expressing with crystal clearness any idea which the mind of man can conceive" (p. 63), followed by his Chatterji-based claim that the "basic rules of grammar for literary Hindi can be accommodated on a single printed page, while those for its spoken version in the districts around Delhi would occupy an even smaller space, and those for the *lingua franca* would fit on a postcard" (p. 94), reminds one (unfairly?) of the excesses of some Esperanto-wallahs. On the whole, however, Nayar is careful, reasoned, and linguistically impartial in his not exactly conclusive quest for the communicational consequences of language policy choices.

Das Gupta, like Nayar, begins by asking how linguistic cleavages are affecting the ability of India to remain a democracy. On this issue both books can be read as optimistic answers to Selig S. Harrison, who asked a decade ago whether the "fissiparous" tendencies in India's inevitable regional and linguistic rivalries would endanger the country's democratic institutions. Both Nayar and Das Gupta affirm that language conflict itself has had both integrative and disintegrative consequences for India, in contrast with the predictions of Harrison and of others (currently, for example, Alvin Rabushka and Kenneth Shepsle) who have theorized, sometimes on the basis of voluminous data, about the menace posed for nonauthoritarian nation building by so-called primordial loyalties. But while this issue is peripheral for Nayar, it is the heart of the matter for Das Gupta. Like those who have lately joined voices to bury the pluralist myth in the study of American politics, Das Gupta has contributed a forceful and convincing one-two punch in the ever more popular battle against the *antipluralist* (authoritarian, monistic, amalgamationist) myth in the literature of political development.

The first punch is an argument about organization. Briefly stated, it is that language conflict has given rise to, and been managed by, voluntary associations, which in turn have mobilized large masses of people into political participation, have developed procedures of democratic recruitment and bureaucratic administration, and have linked their members to the state and federal governments by both mediating demands and serving as co-opted semipublic agencies. These organizations are language associations, which, though formed in order to promote a particularistic linguistic interest, ironically help destroy or at least counterbalance parochial loyalties by linking their members and clients to a "modern," universalistic, and all-India political process.

The second punch is an argument about coalitions and compromise. Based on the cross-cutting-cleavages hypothesis, this argument holds that since language cleavages in India cut across two of the most divisive other cleavages, namely religion ("community") and political party (including ideology), the salience of language as a political cleavage increases the

frequency of temporary, shifting coalitions and the tendency of parties to work out compromises rather than insisting on extreme solutions. For example, by dividing northern Hindus from southern Hindus, the conflict over Hindi policy ameliorates conflict between Hindus and Muslims. Even the language associations themselves, says Das Gupta, draw into membership, and leadership too, sympathizers from various language groups, not just the group whose language is being promoted. The factional splits within the Hindi movement also help to prevent the well-organized and well-financed Hindi associations from imposing onerous policies on intensely offended interests. (This factionalism suggests an irrikerian hypothesis that movements, whenever they approach victory, keep splitting up into maximal losing coalitions.) One might question Das Gupta's logic when he claims that even violence over language aids compromise in that it awakens government to intense feelings otherwise ignored (p. 240), or when he asserts, in bold contrast with almost every other commentator (see Dankwart A. Rustow, "Transitions to Democracy: Toward a Dynamic Model," *Comparative Politics* 2, no. 3 [1970]: 359-60), that language conflicts are inherently *more* negotiable than socioeconomic ones (p. 269). I would rather attribute the compromisability of language politics in India to the fact that those doing the compromising are usually the political parties, which, as Das Gupta shows, have membership recruitment and voter support rather than particular language policies as their first principles. Also, it is clear from both Nayar and Das Gupta that even those who take to the streets over language are motivated by careerist goals more than linguistic ones. But, if anything, these examples show how little there is to quibble with.

The great merit of Das Gupta's book—and what recommends it to a far wider audience than those interested in India or sociolinguistics—is that it is more than a mere descriptive case study. Like Lijphart's study of the Netherlands, it is a methodologically, definitionally, and theoretically self-conscious effort to marshal evidence from a tough case bearing on a question of general importance. Michels felt that his law was more iron as his evidence became more ironic, so he tried to show that even Social Democratic parties and unions were oligarchic. If, as it appears, Das Gupta has demonstrated that even the linguistic zealotry of the 1960s helped develop India into an integrated, pluralistic, participant policy, he too has shed much light on some general and important questions about political conflict.