

Re: New pronunciation of Bangalore

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Michael Farris wrote:

Aidan Kehoe napisal(a):

Sure, but no European country has to deal with 216 languages spoken by 10,000 or more.

No, but there's no rational reason that the various state languages (which average the number of speakers of major European Union) languages couldn't be used for just about everything within the states.

No rational reason, but for reasons other than rational, the Central (i.e., Federal) government didn't allow* Tamilnadu to establish universities with Tamil as the medium of instruction. Tamilnadu isn't even allowed to require all schools in Tamilnadu to teach Tamil. I have a cousin who has learnt only English and French in school.

* <http://www.geocities.com/TamilTribune/99/0903.html>

Engineering Education in Tamil

Many students in Tamil Nadu find it difficult to study engineering with English as medium of instruction. It would be easier to study the basic concepts and procedures at the undergraduate level in Tamil. (Experience in technologically advanced nations like Germany, France, Russia, Japan and China where engineering education is in one's mother tongue proves the point.) With this in mind, the state government of Tamil Nadu developed a curriculum and books for undergraduate engineering education in Tamil. Many highly qualified engineers and professors participated in this effort over several years; many of them volunteered their time, for the love of Tamil. An expert panel reviewed the curriculum, books and availability of lecturers and professors, and certified that a student studying engineering in Tamil in one of the approved colleges and passing the examinations would be as good an engineer as one studying in English. Arrangements were made to offer

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engineering undergraduate courses in Tamil in a few selected colleges. Announcements were made that students may apply to study in either English medium or Tamil medium. It was totally optional; no one was forced to study in Tamil. Only those who want to study in Tamil would be admitted to the Tamil-medium courses. Hundreds of students applied for the English medium and hundreds applied for the Tamil medium. (The Tamil medium students would have to take some English courses and prove their proficiency in English.) All was set to go. Then something happened on the way to Tamil medium engineering education in Tamil Nadu The Indian government blocked it.

Indian Roadblock

All new engineering programs need approval from the All India Council on Engineering (AICE) created by the Indian government. It refused to approve the Tamil medium engineering program in 1997 and approval is still pending (as of July 2002). There is nothing Tamil Nadu can do about it.

What was the reason for disapproval? Is it that the curriculum does not meet the requirements for an engineering degree? No. AICE did not say that, because the curriculum was meticulously developed by a committee of well-qualified engineers and professors to meet the standards set forth for English medium engineering programs. Then, what is wrong with the Tamil-medium program? Is it that these students will lack sufficient knowledge of English to understand reports and documents prepared in English? No. That was not the reason given either because the Tamil-medium program requires that the students pass English examinations to demonstrate adequate proficiency in English. Then why did the AICE disapprove the program? AICE says that it wants to wait until other states also develop engineering programs in their mother languages. Why should Tamil Nadu wait until similar programs are developed in other languages? Hindian dominated Indian government imposes Hindi everywhere. Are they waiting until the other languages also catch up? Then why this step motherly treatment for Tamil?

Off topic but not so much maybe, one of my language learning regrets is (so far) never becoming very fluent in an Indian language. I did a couple of years of home study of Hindi but the handbook was awful (based on Sanskrit grammar which makes only minimal sense in Hindi). Being more interested in dravidian (I liked southern indian music and food better than northern) I later spent some time on Tamil but the degree of diglossia there is deeply depressing for an outsider. I'd like to try Malayalam someday (partly because of the reputed relatively close match of colloquial and formal forms) and was hoping there'd be more beginners info on the net.

Let me know when this someday arrives and I'll see what learning materials I can dig up.

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Kannada, language of Bangalore (and Karnataka state) seems interesting culturally to me as it's the original language of one of my favorite Indian movies (the Forest) and my favorite Indian novel (Samskara).

–michael farris