

ST. JOSEPH'S COLLEGE (AUTONOMOUS), BANGALORE
III SEMESTER BA/ BSW MID SEMESTER TEST AUGUST 2019
GENERAL ENGLISH- SSA SPECIAL COURSE (GE-313)

Time: One hour

Max marks: 30

INSTRUCTIONS

1. This paper contains **Three** printed sheets.
2. Please write **SPECIAL** on the front page of your answer booklet.
3. You will lose marks for exceeding word limits.
4. You are allowed to use a dictionary, during the examination

- I. **Read the following article by Nisha Susan that appeared on *The Live Mint* on 9 Jun 2019:**

What all languages you speak?

I asked my five-year-old nephew in Bengaluru recently whether he could speak Malayalam or Hmar*, two of the many languages his parents speak. He said airily, "Please, those are old-people languages." I didn't know whether to giggle or faint.

His nine-year-old brother has a fairly wide vocabulary in both. He speaks to one grandmother in Hmar. He replies to his other grandparents' Malayalam in English. His Hindi is competent but he has never watched a Hindi movie, and, like his sibling, dismisses Bollywood as stuff for old people. This week, he starts a mandatory three-year stint with Kannada at school. He is not looking forward to it but seems entirely unafraid.

His Malayali grandparents speak English as well as basic Hindi, Kannada and Tamil. They understand more than they speak and unleash their muddled grammar on the world without wincing. And this is Bengaluru's biggest gift to its residents—the confidence to speak whatever you speak badly and get on with your life.

Jewellers here speak five languages and so do cooks. You can watch movies in at least six languages every week. And in a world that prizes English as the language of employment, it's fantastic to see Bengaluru residents with linguistic confidence go at English too without worrying that they are "bad" at it, as if being "bad at English" is a character trait. Years ago, my friend once got into a rollicking argument with an auto driver. She speaks excellent Kannada but at some point in the argument, she snapped at the driver in English and he replied to her in the same language. Today, no one would assume that auto drivers don't speak English because millennials in Bengaluru have added English and Hindi to their linguistic kitty of Kannada, Tamil, Telugu, Dakkani**.

In this warm bath of languages, I now see older folks who didn't speak much English or Hindi too attempt it with elan. I am currently watching a 40-year-old domestic worker increase her English and Hindi every week by leaps and bounds, confident as she is in her excellent Tamil and Kannada. Elsewhere in Karnataka too, you are likely to meet many, many multilingual people—those who add Tulu, Kannada and Kodava *takk* to the mix. Forty per cent of Karnataka residents speak two languages. It's hard to take Karnataka's past and present language chauvinism very seriously in this city, where a half-Marathi childcare worker scolded me recently "for not speaking Tamil properly after living in Bengaluru for so long". Or when the activist in whose presence I would speak only Kannada out of terror of his language chauvinism turns out to be a Tamilian. Or when my friend's father insists that as long as he lives in Koramangala, he only has to speak Telugu. Or when you regularly hear two people on the street switching between three languages in one conversation. To live in Bengaluru is to accept that different parts of your brain operate in different languages and that there are some flyovers between these parts.

How can you be afraid when there are jokes about Malayalis speaking Kannada in Bengaluru? I will tell you one. Ask the nearest Malayalam-Kannada-speaking person to explain. Man 1 to Man 2 at bus stop: *Ee bus Jayanagargehogumo?* Man 2 to Man 1: *Hogumayirkyum* (Editor's note: Man asks for directions in Kannada mangled by Malayalam. Man replies in Kannada equally mangled by Malayalam. Why is this funny?)

Given the recent debate about teaching Hindi everywhere, we should ask what all this is in aid of. If national integration is the big aim, then it is better if the Hindi-speaking belt learns Tamil or Kannada, as was also originally intended by the three-language formula of 1968. Instead, we have sad census data indicating that 87% of Hindi speakers are monolingual. If the aim is employment and social capital for millions of young Indians, then we should be investing heavily in English learning for everyone, not *kintu-parantu-ing* (dithering) all over the place. And if the aim is for us to get along with strangers, understand our grandmothers' jokes and be cheerful in interviews, we should be investing in multilingualism.

The language scholar G.N. Devy argues that India should classify cities with million-plus populations as "multilingual territories". He told *Mint* in 2018: "Imagine a city like Bengaluru, where Kannada is a mandatory language, either as a subject or medium of instruction, or both. If the city has to have Special Language Resource Centres for the other 21 scheduled languages as well as for Khasi and Garo of the North-East and Tulu, Byari and a few other languages of Karnataka, it would require about 30 language resource centres. If schools formally permit children to spend a day and a half of each week at these centres, SLRCs could help the children through the languages they understand; in revisions, tutorials and supplementary work. Every child can select one-two language resource centres of her or his choice. This will help reduce the clash between the home language and the school language. If used imaginatively, this will also help soften the clash between the home language and the language of knowledge."

*The Hmar language belongs to the Kukish branch of the Sino-Tibetan family of languages. Speakers of the language are also known as Hmar. Spoken mostly in Manipur, Mizoram, Assam, Tripura, Meghalaya.

****Dakkaniis an Indo-Aryan language spoken in southern India. It is similar to Urdu in its influence from Arabic and Persian with a Prakrit base, but differs because of the strong influence of Marathi, Telugu and Kannada spoken in the states of Maharashtra, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and a few Muslims in Tamil Nadu.**

I.A. Answer ANY THREE of the following in about 150 words each: (3x10= 30)

1. "And this is Bengaluru's biggest gift to its residents—the confidence to speak whatever you speak badly and get on with your life." Do you agree when Nisha Susan says the above? Does Bangalore's cosmopolitan-ness offer one the space to not care about the language one communicates in or is Bangalore particular about Kannada? Elaborate with suitable examples.
2. Explore the role and function of languages like Telugu, Malayalam, Tamil and others in Bangalore city according to the writer. Do you think Kannada is silenced by other languages?
3. The manner in which language functions in a Bangalore or a Mumbai is different from the way it functions in a Kolkata or a Chennai. How do you understand this statement? How then does language shape the city and its culture?
4. There was a time when the only Kannada non-Kannadigas knew was "Kannada gothilla" or "Swalpa adjust maadi." Now one can survive in Bangalore without knowing a word in Kannada. Do you think the current manner in which languages function in Bangalore is progressive and appropriate? Argue your point of view using suitable examples.