

# Language Ideology with respect to Identity Politics in India

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## ABSTRACT

There have been significant ignorance or resistance in terms of examining language ideology as there is no restriction to the level of investigation. The two parallel fundamentals operating here are Politics of an individual or a group identity and Identity Politics. The former part of the paper deals with the possible distinction between the neutral and critical grounds of the world. However, the broader notion is how the will to power shapes the identity. The constitutions of identity have political implications that binds us in a larger drive. The high political activism is based on identifying the activity of a group that have been oppressed or marginalized. Subsequently, The latter part proceeds with the examination of language with further analysis with respect to ethnography of speaking, language contact, competition and politics, doctrines of correctness, standardization and purism, language policy and the historical studies and literacy. Going by the Indian thinking Indus Civilization has always focused on the question of 'Who we are?' and 'What the 'self' means'? It is very self-centric, not geocentric, not anthropologist, not even theologian? The paper is an effort towards identifying the respective constructions and design.

This paper primarily deals with the identity politics which not only involves the political implications but also various parts of religion, caste, minorities and gender. There is also a lot of discussion that revolves around the language and the language varieties that are directly related to language or linguistic ideology often in seeming mutual unawareness. The other point of contact can be between language and language varieties.

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## 1. Introduction

The terms language and ideology go hand in hand in with respect to anthropology, sociolinguistics, and cultural studies. The ideologies are not only socially important but they are also important for linguistic analysis. Rather, they also have a vision to enact links of language group to personal identity, aesthetics, morality and epistemology.

As R. Williams puts it, "a definition of language is always, implicitly, or explicitly, a definition of human beings in the world". Language is an individual's worldview. There are multiple social classification of language use like nation-state, schooling, gender, dispute settlement and law hinge not leaving behind gender and law institutions too.

The constructions of identity have political implications that bind us in a larger drive. IDEOLOGY is basically the term that is invoked by a lot of studies that address cultural conceptions of language, under the notion metalinguistics, attitudes, prestige, standards, aesthetics, hegemony etc.

## 2. Erasure, Iconization and Fractal Recursivity

In the essay 'Language Ideologies and Differentiation by Susan Gal and Judith T. Irvine published in their book 'Regimes of Language' they discuss the three major jargons in order to explain Ideology in Linguistic Anthropology. The three terms are Erasure, Iconization and Fractal Recursivity. Erasure refers to tidying up information which is considered not relevant to the motives of the institutions creating them, political inclinations or colonial ends. It is a process that will ignore or transform the parts of reality to make it fit into an institution backing correct way. It is an important tool while enforcing ideological reality.

Icons tend to imply erasure backed by institutions to formulate the reality in a certain way. The ideal example of icons would be maps. Iconization is not possible without erasure. Some aspect has been pushed far back in the background so that it can't be seen for us to be mute spectators. Forgetting is not a natural process. It is intentional by larger political economy with specific interests at stake. These interests might not want you to take in consideration certain aspects of reality. Erasure is the most effective tool of ideology.

Further, breaking the term recursivity means a conceptual schema that reactivates. However, the word fractal has a mathematical connotation which has a literal meaning of a fraction, a split or a dichotomy. Hence, this term in totality is an ideological schema that then becomes reactivated recursively. This dichotomy is applied to some other aspects of life for example the most popular East-West Dichotomy. Where West' is civilized and East is barbaric. Order which is the West refers to understanding the same language which is preferably English and Disorder which is east refers to the speaking of different languages.

## 3. Discourse Discussion

Disorder in a way here refers to too many languages, too many allegiances, ideas of nationhood, ideas of citizenship. Eastern person is iconized begins to represent a barbaric uncivilized savage, which potentially fits into this schema from architecture of buildings to the way neighbor are ordered or arranged to public life and similarly the government being disorganized.

These three processes happen simultaneously and they presuppose each other in different degrees. For each side of this dichotomy to exist there has to be a great deal of iconization which means that there is a great deal of erasure at both sides, wherein both sides of the procedure, both sides of the dichotomy interacted with one another. None of these three processes happen autonomously.

Iconisation relies on erasures and erasures are recursively applied here and there which implies an iconization at a different level which was already an icon of a different fractal representation and so on. One very crucial point to show the comparative study of language ideology is to detail the cultural and historical specificity of the visions of any language when studying Identity Politics. The essence of identity politics is turning your disadvantage into an advantage.

The reason why language plays such an important role is because it is through the word that the consciousness tries to grapple with the external reality and what one calls the phenomenon. Therefore, every language and any language is a complete world view. Language is the symbolic system and symbolism has the capacity of enveloping a lot more than the mere quantitative measure of the symbol.

The definition of Linguistic Ideology in the essay by Kartharyn A. Wood, it is explained that it is; "set of beliefs about language articulated by users as a rationalization or justification of perceived language structure and use", with a greater social emphasis as "self-evident ideas and objectives a group holds concerning roles of language in the social experiences of members as they contribute to the expression of the group" and the "the cultural system of ideas about social and linguistic relationships, together with their loading of moral and political interests." And most broadly as "shared bodies of commonsense notions about the nature of language in the world".

The most important distinction however is between the neutral and critical grounds of the world. The neutral encapsulates the cultural system of representation and the critical is about the representations of social cognition, with particular social origins or functional characteristics. What we are dealing with here is the latter part of the distinction. When we talk about language in terms of identity politics of a country or a region we are talking about not just the evolution of a language to its present social position but also the underlying themes of religion, caste, nation-state that have been functioning parallel. Languages can be reviewed in terms of ethnography of communication, multilingualism; literacy studies; historiography of linguistics, public discourse on language, and meta pragmatics and linguistic structure.

#### 4. Origination, Developmental Phase and It's Relevance

Genesis of Language in any context is not scientifically valid. Languages develop differently in different landscapes. Similarly, an approach towards the fact that languages are like human beings, they are born and hence they would die is a logical fallacy. A language doesn't die and can only be killed, they die because they are over-structured.

The history of Roman Empire, the Empire collapsed the Latin disappeared and what Latin people used to call vernaculars took over that's the seed of Modern European History. Even though Europeans tried to talk about are past and historiography, the quest to understand slowly changed, slowly

the command of language became the language of command. Thus, it became indispensable to know language in order to attain knowledge. If it happens, the world believes what this language has his alone truth. It became a commonly accepted notion that oral is a taboo and only what is written holds value.

On the contrary in the Indian Context the knowledge traditions have always been oral. A. K. Ramanujam said that everybody in India knows Mahabharata because no one reads it. Knowledge has no relationship with writing as a matter of fact very few languages have a script. English for example has no script of its own. It still borrowing from Roman Script.

However, when we are discussing something as crucial as the positions and the political connections of languages in India. A historical briefing about the positions of language in India is implied. The huge population base in India requires a common thread of communication. The choice of this tongue, known in India as the "link" language has always been a part of significant controversy. The battle has always been between English and Hindi. The proponents of Hindi have always advocate English as a foreign language. English, they believe is used by only a small, privileged segment of the population, the part that English plays in the public domain and government affairs constitutes a highly effective stop social mobility and democratization. Hindi, is not only spoken by a significant minority but can be far more convenient to spread as it will be congenial to the cultural habits of almost all the people. The other catch to this argument will be the Dravidian speakers in the southern part of India who do not believe that an unfair advantage by switching Hindi to the well-paid, nationwide bureaucracies, such as the Indian Administrative Services, the military and other forms of national service to the people living the Northern Parts of India.

Since India gained independence in 1947, linguistic affinity has always served as the basis for organizing interest groups; "the language question" itself has become a political issue. The efforts to reach a single language to be termed as a national language to serve the diversity in India has already failed its purpose.

It is more of a political question than a linguistic question to classify on the basis of a language or a dialect. The word language is often applied to a standardized or prestigious form which is spread over a large geographical area, on the contrary dialect is a term that is actually used for the various forms of speech that lack prestige or the ones that are restricted to certain regions or castes but are actually regarded as the forms of the same language.

The different states have consistently failed to fulfill the obligations that are stated in the national constitutions to provide the education for linguistic minorities, in their mother tongues, even if the minority language is termed as a Scheduled Language. It is a subject requirement of the constitution that legal documents and petitions can be submitted to any of the government authorities in any of the Scheduled Languages. This authority is never exercised much. However, under such conditions people from the linguistic minorities may feel that their language is oppressed by the majority and the majority may feel threatened by minor concession.

Below are some factors that are discussed in terms of the different approaches towards Language Ideology:

## 5. Ethnography of Speaking

It is actually derived from the cultural and the neutral conceptions of language that happens primarily through description of vernacular speech taxonomies and meta linguistics. The critical response that the speech act theory had towards the ethnography of speaking is what stimulated the thought towards linguistic ideology. Speech Act Theory as a privatized view of language that actually emphasizes the psychological state of the speaker juxtaposing the social consequences.

According to the essay, "Silence has been recognized carrying a paradoxical potential for power that depends greatly on its varying ideologization with and across communities. Advocating a view of linguistic ideology as interactional resource rather than shared cultural background."

In the context of India, the way Hindi has attained an undue advantage over other languages is a critical point of discussion. This is the ethnography of communication in case of India.

## 6. Language Contact, Competition and Politics

"Colonialism acts as a dominant model around the world today, the nationalist ideology of language structures state politics, the challenges the multilingual states and underpins ethnic struggles to such an extent that the absence of a distinct language can cast doubt on the legitimacy of claims to nationhood."

India on the perspective Identity politics in echoes of such movements with the Dalit Panther movement and subsequently the disempowered groups, adivasis, maosit agitation. The movements to save minority languages are framed around the same notions of language that derives the theory of oppression and oppressor.

In other countries for example China and Japan there are hardly any questions of Identity Politics. The language varieties that are in connections with the particular speakers are usually misrecognized not only as symbols of group identity, but as emblems of political allegiance or of social, intellectual or moral worth.

## 7. Language Policy

Language policy and planning has its heart in the sections of identity politics. The three fundamental orientation towards distinguishing the state of any language is resource, problem or right. On a complex level, "Cobbarius has sketched a taxonomy of language ideologies underlying the planning efforts: assimilation, pluralism, vernacularization and internationalization".

Planning and development of the languages of such a multilingual and a multi-cultural country like India is being done in multiple ways. The status and the corpus planning of the languages with the genetic as well as functional classifications done by the central government have brought in a lot of positive insights to the Indian situation from a quantitative point of view. However, as stated in the essay the model of development is pervasive in the post-colonial language planning with paradoxical ideological implications that condemn languages, like societies, to perennial status as underdeveloped.

## 8. Doctrines of Correctness, Standardization and Purism

Stated very clearly, the selection and elaboration of a linguistic standard has always stood in the purview of the complex issues about language, politics and power.

The ideas of better and worse speech have existed since time immemorial. However, there is far more agreement that language standards are not recognized as human artifacts, but are naturalized by metaphors such as that of the free market. The analysis when done ideologically addresses the questions so as how doctrines of linguistic correctness and incorrectness are rationalised or how they are related to doctrines of the inherent representational power, beauty and expressiveness of language as a valued mode of action.

In terms of the definition, the technique by which the traditional style of a language is manifested and preserved is defined as Language Standardisation. It may also appear that natural development of language in a speech community to impose one dialect or variety as a standard.

In the context of India, to acknowledge the Indianess of Indian English as an acculturated Indian language and to end its problematic status as a second or foreign language which has derived its authenticity from the foreign sources. However, to nurture the creative potential of Indian English which would humanize and democratize the language which is being primarily used by the institutions, state and corporation as a language of power in order to ensure the subordination and obedience of people.

Quoting the essay in terms of 'Purism', "Purist doctrines of linguistic correctness close off non-native sources of innovation, but usually selectively, targeting only languages construed as threats. The linguistic effects of purism are not predictable, and similarly, its social meaning and strategic use are not transparent."

## 9. Historical Studies and Literacy

How a language is derived and the way it is being used gives a lot of space to think where the language is coming from and how is it operating in the current society.

In the Post-independence period, only the languages that are printed should have a political authority, we decided to set up linguistic states in the country. This is the unique feature of state that we have inherited the philosophy of nationalism here from the European Country.

In 1961 Census, there were 1652 identified mother tongues claimed by people. However, in 1971 it was decided that languages which were spoken by more than 10000 people were listed. This was the first move towards killing or making these languages sans citizenship and this happened to more than 1400 languages. Speakers of these languages are made invisible in the country.

Apparently, if the language is not included in the 8<sup>th</sup> schedule in the census then no state, no machinery could support education in these languages be it private schools, universities or colleges. No funding is available, the right to education through the mother tongue is snapped.

As Ganesh Devy puts it when you do not teach a child the language that he learns at home, then what you impose on that child in Greek is *Aphasia*, which also in a way is cutting the tongue of the child. Aphasia is a state when the communication between the brain and the speech organ fails. Hence, keeping the numbers in mind we are imposing aphasia on speakers of

almost 1400 languages. We are encouraging a monolingual cacophony where 96% of the Indians speak 4% of the languages and 4% Indians speak 4% of the languages. There is a whole lot of great social injustice and rape of knowledge involved in it.

India in its own way has witnessed civilizations and has had a significant history of language movements and struggles that implied the positions of certain languages in the present scenario. Historical aspects cover almost all notions of what it is like to have studies language and still propagating it as a medium of literacy. The amount of share language acquires in

terms of the literacy rate says a lot about its position in the society.

## 10. Conclusion

In the paper I have tried to elaborate on the notions of language ideology in the Indian Context. Taking the help of the prescribed reading by Kartharyn A. Woolard I have tried to cover almost all significant aspects of language ideologies under the different approaches he has promoted to study. This paper highlights the importance of ideologies of languages in order to analyze them socially and linguistically.

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