GLOBALIZATION, ENGLISH AND LANGUAGE ECOLOGY

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Globalization and Its Impact on Languages

The question of globalization and its impact on languages can be answered

(a) by explaining the processes of hybridization and emergence of new languages or
(b) by charting out the new functions of languages and their development or
(c) by explaining the roles of languages in the bi (multi) lingual contexts and the sociolinguistic issues of languages shift/ attrition etc.

"When languages come into contact socially, they do not remain unchanged like physical objects in contact, but undergo change like chemical objects. The changes may be either in the function or in the form of languages concerned or in both" (Annamalai, 2001:208).

Although the three answers are interdependent, the relative priorities of the researchers would differ. The present paper deals with the last problem i.e. sociolinguistic explanation of the interrelations between languages in the already bilingual contexts. The explanation is of greater concern to the countries, which have been colonies in the recent past. This paper will deal with the probabilities of language shift or language attrition and language maintenance in India. This discussion is significant for language planning and policy.

Not Merely an Economic Agenda

Globalization is most often understood purely as economic agenda whereas it is, in fact a package of economic interests and socio-political ideologies seeking to re-enact colonialism. Now that the post-industrial markets are packed with not only buffer stock of material goods but also with non-material products, what were socio-cultural practices are now marketable commodities. Globalization is thus the world wide distribution (sale) of material goods, some institutions, of cultural products such as movies, music, toys, videos, news, media, dressing and food habits, communication

skills and languages, of some services such as transport, hospitality, accountancy, consultancy, so on and so forth.

Globalization is the packaged politics of breaking national and political boundaries to the advantage of the powerful part of the globe: the ideologically loaded discourse of globalization is the colonial story of "white man's burden".

Globalization and Alienation – The Role of English

Globalization encourages the individuals to alienate themselves from their local domains and nationalistic feelings and opt for global products (brands including English as a global language). English is now being marketed as a global product; ELT has become an industry. To cope with the situation, a huge monetary and intellectual investment goes into English Language Teaching (ELT) on the globe.

The premise of this paper is that globalization will enhance this process consequently affecting the language ecology and creating linguistic inequality transparent with economic inequality.

Even though the conceptualization of the situation as 'murder' or 'genocide' of languages should be avoided in socio-linguistic scholarship, the position that there is no danger of extinction or devaluation of the languages of the less developed economies in the wake of globalization (Mufwene 2002) is also not tenable.

Aiding Power and Preferences for Languages

There may not be visible and direct use of physical or political power (Mufwene 2001, 2002; Brenzinger 1998), but the market and socio-economic forces are also a form of power and preferences for languages. The socio-linguistic pressures shaping attitudes also reflect non-material power. The latter in fact is the most relevant mode in the context of globalization and neo-colonization. The concepts of globalization and colonization must be used in their synchronic semantics rather than involving their diachronic development.

Linguistic Ecology in India

This paper attempts to understand the linguistic ecology in India by explaining the functional distribution of English vis-à-vis Indian languages. The paper takes into account the circumstances in which English grew into a powerful language in India so as to predict its future in the context of globalization. Languages as social-political actions are transparent to the political circumstances. Thus what roles the languages in a given situation will acquire or whether they will survive or die can be traced into the socio-political configurations and it can be based on the past experience: "the best predictor of future social behaviour is past social behaviour, all other things being equal" (Drake 1984: 146).

India, said to be a sociolinguistics giant (Pandit 1972), is "functionally multilingual with forty-seven languages used in education as medium, eighty seven in press, seventy one in radio, thirteen in cinema and thirteen in state-level administration" (Annamalai 2001:35).

Strengths and Weaknesses of Indian Languages

There are languages, which have a strong tradition to support them and are used by the people in most domains of their lives. These languages are recognized as official languages of the states in India since independence from the colonial rule. There are tribal languages, which serve the day-to-day oral communication within the tribes without any official status although the constitutional provision for the preservation or conservation exists (constitution of India, article 29 (a, b) and 30). Hindi and English are constitutionally enshrined as link languages at the national level.

Colonial Rule and Education in India

During British colonial rule English was introduced and then imposed by the British as the language of enlightenment and governance. At that time, the imperial language policy was a multi-pronged agenda in contingency: the British rulers' economic interests, political management and spread of British colonial cultural products, such as religion, life style, science etc. The exercise was conducted with the enthusiasm of colonial ideology.

The enthusiasm is more than obvious in Charles Grant's tract on India: "The Hindoos err, because they are ignorant and their errors have never fairly

been laid before them. The communication of our light and knowledge to them would prove the best remedy for their disorders; and this remedy… If judiciously and potentially applied it would have great and happy effects upon them, effects honourable and advantageous for us" (Grant 1792 quoted in McCully 1966:11; Annamalai 2001:91).

Grant's enthusiasm was not limited to the spread of western knowledge but extended to the introduction of English as it, according to him, was 'an obvious means of assimilating the natives with their rulers' (McCully 1966: 13).

Assimilation and Homogenization

The ideology of assimilation and homogenization was a refrain: "educated in the same way, interested in the same objects, engaged in the same pursuits with ourselves, they (Indians) become more English than Hindoos, just as Roman provincials became more Roman than Gauls or Italians (Charles Trevelyan, a member of the committee of public instruction quoted in McCully 1966:72; Annamlai 2002:93).

Thus colonial education also had a political objective besides the enlightening and evangelizing objectives mentioned above (Annamalai 2001:92).

Monistic Solutions to Multi-faceted Indian Problems

Quoting Khubchandani(1983:118) on multilingual Indian education transparent to life, Agnihotri and Khanna (1997:32-33) argue that the colonial rulers, being uncomfortable with the tradition of linguistic heterogeneity in India, proposed "monistic solutions to the Indian education system by *creating opposition between English and the vernacular languages*" (Emphasis added).

Macaulay, the architect of Education policy in India, proposed to teach European literature and science in English as "the claims of our own language (English) it is hardly necessary to recapitulate. It stands preeminent even among the languages of the West… It may safely be said that the literature now extant in that language is of greater value than all the literature which three hundred years ago was extant in all the languages of the world together… The question now before us is simply whether, when it

is in our power to teach this language, we shall teach languages in which, by universal confession, there are no books on any subject which deserve to be compared with our own" (Macaulay 1835 in Edward 1985:31).

Lord Bentick gave concurrence to Macaulay's proposal and directed to use all the funds in "imparting to the native population a knowledge of English literature and science, through the medium of the English language". Hardinge threw a bite by deciding to offer employment only to those who were trained in English (Agnihotri and Khanna 1997:23-24).

Macaulay's Minute and Spread of English in India

The acceptance of the proposal by British government led to the proliferation of English in India as it became "the sine qua non for the scholar, the job seeker, and the affluent in the society" (Sinha 1978:80). The government withdrew financial support to the Indian educational institutions and Indian languages. Thus Indian education systems were destroyed and Indian languages bore a major setback.

On the other side, English language became powerful and new schools and colleges teaching western subjects in English language were set up. "This change… meant that any Indian who aspired to a role in public life or private business had to imbibe of western knowledge… The *educational system and the English language were the salient points at which culture contact between the two nations occurred*" (Flynn and Flynn 1976:176 ; Emphasis added).

Very soon English became another language in India. In the next century and a half, a new community of English speaking Indians emerged and it was this community, which took over power from the colonial rulers in 1947. This is an interesting phenomenon where the colonial rulers left but their language stayed back.

What Happened or What Happens After Independence?

The language and education policy since independence has, of course, provided some important role to Indian languages in comparison with the colonial policy of using only English as the medium of instruction. The pay off is that a section of Indian masses has access to education and the Indian languages have a role. However, the achievement is very far from the

aspirations of the freedom struggle and the Indian masses. To understand the goals of freedom movement, I quote Gandhi (1948): "The redistribution of provinces on a linguistic basis was necessary if provincial languages were to grow to their full height. Hindustani … could not be the medium of instruction in the provinces, *much less English*"(quoted in Desai 1956:91; Agnihotri and Khanna 1997: 24-25; Emphasis added). Similarly, in 1917 the Calcutta University Commission expressed its dissatisfaction by saying that "…there is something unsound in a system of education which leaves a young man , at the conclusion of his course unable to speak or write his own mother tongue fluently and correctly" (Aggarwal 1983 : 41).

In 1938 Zakir Hussain committee recommended the use of mother tongue in education and its effective teaching because "without capacity to speak effectively and to read and write correctly and lucidly, no one can develop precision of thought or clarity of ideas" (quoted in Aggarwal 1983:54-55).

Half-hearted Approaches to Indian Language Problems

Although this sentiment was accommodated in framing policies after independence, the half-hearted and bad implementation of policies has created an atmosphere in favour of English rather than in favour of Indian languages. The post independence policy on language is inherently limited in three ways: firstly it provides choice between English and Indian languages in education knowing fully well that the relationship between English and Indian languages is hierarchical; secondly it is proposed to develop Indian languages before they can replace English; thirdly language use and economy are de-linked.

The three-language education policy in India requires the learners to learn three languages: the mother tongue, Hindi and English. Thus a section of Indian population who is by default trilingual is spread all over India. But it is significant that the task of learning English is taken much more seriously than of Hindi and Indian languages.

Competition Between Indian Languages and English

In the present context, Indian languages and English are competing for power i.e. the role of political control and social mobility: the sociolinguistic relation between languages in the present context is "more hierarchical functionally as the language use in domains like administration, and

education provides greater access to power and status than others. It is not the old, equally sharing functional distribution of Indian languages" (Annamalai 2001: 37).

There are more number of English medium schools, more number of publishers of English books, more number of English newspapers, and magazines, more number of teachers and students, more number of writers of creative texts, information and coffee table books than there were in the past and there are now in any Indian language. Those who can afford education in English have opted to use English in academic learning. Thus the number of English medium schools has increased. Even those who have studied through Hindi or any other Indian language, and have improved their social and financial position, send their children to the English medium schools. Surely the motivation is pragmatic: English will help them in social mobility and in improving life style.

Socio-economic Backgrounds and Language Attitudes

A study on 'socio-economic background, language attitudes and motivation to postgraduate in English, Punjabi and Hindi in Punjab' (Singh2001) has revealed that the students who opt to postgraduate in English mostly belong to educated, urban and rich families. Their parents are highly educated and they themselves have studied in English medium schools. They have tendency to use English even in their day-to-day life, for example to write personal and business letters, invitation cards, public notices etc. to hold informal and formal discussion on academic and other matters. Even when they use Punjabi or Hindi, they often switch over to English and prefer English words to Punjabi or Hindi vocabulary. They watch English movies, videos, programmes, and news channels etc. They prefer to read creative and informative books in English in their leisure time. The use of English is trickling down from the elite to lower middle class and from formal academic administrative official domains to informal day-to-day social domains.

Instrumental Value – Most Significant Contributor

It is significant that they hold no negative attitude toward Punjabi and Hindi. The students, who postgraduate in Punjabi or Hindi, belong to agrarian, rural, urban poor families. They wanted to postgraduate in English if there were choice for them. They studied in government or government aided

Punjabi/Hindi medium schools. Significantly **their choice for English is motivated by the instrumental value and prestige of English**. This case study, which I assume is the symptomatic of other parts of India, thus confirms the thesis that people choose those languages which are more useful to them if they have to choose (see also Agnihotri and Khanna 1997).

Deepening Functional Hierarchy Between English and Indian Languages

In the emerging post-industrial socio-economic and political network called 'globalization', the functional hierarchy between English and other Indian languages is likely to increase. Globalization will give impetus to English language in India by increasing its use in new domains, such as advertising, media, consultancy, information technology, call centres, travel and transport hospitality, accountancy and cross-national networking etc. While the Indian languages are not prepared for such domains, nor there is any visible initiative to do that, English will naturally enter these domains as they are originating from English itself.

When languages are in use, they hone themselves in the process to adjust to the new domains and 'registers'. If the new knowledge of new social contexts and praxis is created, it has to be created in some language, which means the given language has to work at par with the emerging knowledge and contexts. It has to simultaneously style itself to be transparent to the new functions. Language being a crucial factor in modernization and also a socio-cultural institution, "like other institutions of the society, it also is modernized in the process. Language modernization is crucial because other institutions of the society function through language… Moreover, the modernization discourse is located in the language and is mediated by it." (Annamalai, 2001:90).

A Game of Catching Up

While English as the global language is privileged in this sense, Indian languages constantly have to but can not catch up with developments that introduce new terms, new concepts, new styles, and new registers which have no immediate equivalent in them. The languages can catch up with these developments if "each new development, each new sector becomes absorbed in the system so that language develops – *if it is allowed to do so* –

and becomes a viable means of expression for the relevant sector or development" (Harris 1969:277; emphasis added).

If there is no noticeable effort to develop a native language for the emerging needs, its functional load automatically becomes lesser than the other language, which is available for the new needs, even if the original domains of the former are not encroached upon by the latter. In the Indian context, the language planning and policy are inherently misdirected in the sense that it is practically difficult to develop a language unless it is put to practice. Language may develop only in practice; all other efforts can only be catalytic and auxiliary.

A Vacuous Constitutional Support

Thus the policy document that gives the Indian native languages constitutional support and power proves only the power in letter not in spirit. Secondly when there is choice, human beings are more likely to choose what is readily available, at the same time more prestigious and pragmatically more beneficial. The choice between English, Hindi and other regional languages in education and administration has provoked the Indian educated elite to continue to use English, which is likely to continue.

Marginalization Process

English is seen as an indispensable resource and linguistic capital which many post-colonial peoples and governments seek for themselves and their younger generations…(it is) the most important language for socio-economic advancement and for access to higher professional education and to…knowledge intensive job market (Lin and Martin, P.3). 'Language allegiance' is directly related to economic factors rather than to other cultural order (William 1979, Edward 1985, Gellner 1964, Greene 1981) some languages will be marginalized as all languages cannot be of equal sociopolitical status in society based on economic inequality. Once we identify that a given language is less powerful and less transparent to pragmatic needs of the people due to some political and economic policies, unless the policies are changed, the less powerful language is continuously relegated to the background.

The history of human beings shows that they later or sooner tend to discard objects, which lose their relevance. Such objects hold only archival value.

They are likely to concentrate their resources on what is of greater current use. This would be truer in the case of intangible objects like knowledge of a language because it cannot be showcased in a museum. They change the policies to withdraw the economic and intellectual resources so that they can use these resources.

Can We Learn Anything At All?

We can learn from our recent actions: English language was retained as one of the official link language for use in education and administration with the proviso that Hindi will be developed so that it will replace English within fifteen years. But it could not be achieved.

The official language act had to be amended in 1967 to continue the use of English and Hindi as official languages (Apte 1976: 156). It gave signal that the interest of the national ruling elite and the recorded as well as oral rhetoric was "more symbolic than substantive" (DasGupta 1976: 204). In spite of socio-political pressures from within to banish English and enthrone Hindi and Indian languages, the pragmatic needs consequent of economic policies and ideological orientations, English has continued to flourish in terms of number and in terms of status.

Sentimental Attachment to One's Own Language – Not a Guarantee

It is difficult to expect people to stick to their language only for the sentimental cultural association while the socio-economic environment is favourable to the other language. If the socio-economic environment favours the language other than the mother language of a person, he is more likely to shift the language. This behaviour is "an adaptive response to changes in a particular culture…Arguments for language maintenance without arguments for concurrent changes in the present socio-economic ecologies of speakers seem to ignore the centrality of native speakers to the whole situation" (Mufwene 2002: 177).

Why Do People Shift Their Loyalty?

But the issue is not that people shift their language loyalty; the issue is why people do that. It is therefore necessary for a sociolinguist to be linguist slash to rise from a descriptive linguist to a critical linguist. Dasgupta (1995:157) strongly argues that the forces which threaten the role of Indian

languages and encourage English must be resisted since "it is in these languages that our communities can attain the sort of grace… a vital need for a community" and if such forces are not resisted , there is "the risk of selling out to the imperial system economically, culturally , and linguistically. That sell out is one of the possible futures…"

So far so good, but languages do not survive on their own nor do they survive on slogans, and also we have no right to keep only a section of the population resisting these imperial moves. It requires us to understand globalization not purely as an economic phenomenon but also as a cultural and linguistic phenomenon. When we negotiate for economic partnership, we should also negotiate for linguistic partnership, which is not so easy with the given policies and circumstances in India.

Involvement of the People, How?

The critical factor in the context of globalization is the involvement of the people in an economic system in which they must use the language other than their own in order to compete in the labour force and function adaptively. This is an aspect of globalization as homogenization, requiring that things work more or less the same way in the town as in the metropolis, and in the 'third' world as in the 'first' world, especially in the exercise of power and control on the working class and their culture including their language. This is how globalizing is colonizing. Absorption of the indigenous population by the colonizers has generally led to the loss of indigenous languages.

To Conclude

To conclude, we can say that sociolinguistic situation in India is precarious as to the role and status distribution between English and Indian languages. The present language policy in theory and practice cannot support the cause of Indian languages in the face of globalization. The reason is that Indian languages' role is limited to the 'half hearted' use in official context, local business, cultural contexts, truncated and optional use in education etc. It cannot energize them enough to face the competition from English with a very wide role in all hegemonic contexts existing and future. Thus multilingualism in India, which now is a practical reality, may erode as the time passes by and the commitments and policies change.

Even if in the near future, the native Indian languages will be able to retain their functional domains they will not be able to extend themselves to enter new domains and in the long run they will lose some of their existing domains too. "Bilingualism is often only a temporary phenomenon, to be replaced with dominant language monolingualism… Bilingualism can be a stable condition, but only when there exist domain of use for each language. The evidence assembled so far shows that domains specific to the minority variety are often encroached upon and eventually taken over, by the more powerful language…People do not maintain two languages forever when one is sufficient in all contexts." (Edward 1985:72). The other language thus becomes the first language.

Although there is general linguistic evidence that people may succumb (stick) to their first language for cultural association and activities but "with each loss of a domain, (it should be noted) there is a loss of vocabulary, discourse patterns and stylistic range" In such situations language attrition/shift takes place as the given language has been "denuded of most of its domains, there is hardly any subject matter left for people to talk about, and hardly any vocabulary to do it with" (Crystal 2000: 83)

This sociolinguistic situation of partial switchover creates a phenomenon which Fishman (1987) calls "the Folklorization of a language" - the use of indigenous languages only in irrelevant or unimportant domains.

The partial language shift gradually turns into complete language shift. Some people in India have already started to argue that English is no more a foreign language. Agnihotri and Khanna (1997: 111- 138) provide numerous examples. They quote Ms. Rachna Kanwar of The Times of India, a national daily newspaper in English: "I don't think English is neutral. It has a very strong ethnic identification as it is used heavily by South Indians, western states like Goa etc. Not only ethnic, it has an upmarket identification as well, which makes other Indian languages down market" (p.126).

Given the above circumstances, it can only be guessed that Indian languages hold no safe position in the face of challenges posed by globalization. Thus, a thorough review of language policy and practice is required and there is immediate necessity of reversing the paradigm of English for the pragmatic and international role and Indian languages for inter state and culture promoting role. What appears to be a sound and stable bilingualism is only a mirage. The process of globalization and the existing language planning

practice are euphemism for Western capitalist expansionism or "the planned reproductions of socio-economic inequality" (Pennycook1994:66).

Pennycook (1994:13) strongly argues that the wide spread use of English threatens other languages. This will further confirm the asymmetric relation between English and Indian languages, where English is the medium for acquiring new knowledge and keeping the nation abreast of its economic and development objectives and the native languages are for preserving old knowledge and ethnic cultures.

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