

Research Article

## The Making and Unmaking of Languages in Schools

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### ABSTRACT

This paper discusses some of the issues and challenges of languages-in-education in multilingual polities such as India. The paper critically examines the relationship between languages of the school and languages of the surroundings and looks at ways in which this relationship can be made symbiotic. One of the major tasks undertaken by modern nation-states is the creation of languages-of-the-states from the ecology of the languages-of-the-people. While the former is discrete, explicitly codes and has relatively sharp boundaries the latter can more accurately be described with the help of the metaphor of flow and as having fuzzy boundaries. The creation of discrete languages from fluid linguistic varieties has been an area of major concern and constitutes as major chunk of language politics over the past few centuries. Standardization of languages is thus a need of nation-states. What is crucial is the ways in which the standardization process is implemented and therein lies the nature of language politics involved. If the process is such that it creates an antagonistic relationship between languages-of-the-states and languages-of-the-people then a large part of our linguistic diversity will be pushed to the brink of extinction. One way of developing a symbiotic relationship is to take a closer look towards the possibilities offered by diglossia. If an H could be developed in a way that it does not offer an advantage to any particular group by limiting its use to monitored use of language as such then the L's can peacefully coexist in the domain of spontaneous, unmonitored use of language. If, instead, the L of a particular group is developed for H functions then it creates an avalanche of preferences towards that particular variety at the cost of other L's.

**Keywords:** Linguistic diversity, Ausbau, Standardization, Lingua franca, Diglossia, Double perspective

<sup>1</sup>The names of the authors appear in alphabetical order. As both authors feel equally responsible for the way the article has turned out, there is no first author of this article.

## INTRODUCTION

The Department of Linguistics, University of Mumbai – as part of its outreach initiative – engages with school teachers from various parts of Maharashtra through workshops which are organized in collaboration with organizations such as Dr. Rakhmabai Educational Research and Resource Centre, Pune and more recently with Unnati Institute for Social and Educational Change. These workshops form a centerpiece of the Department's concerns regarding the preservation, maintenance and development of linguistic diversity of Maharashtra.

The centrality of an engagement with school teachers to our concerns regarding the future of our languages comes from an understanding of the increasing role of the state in the daily lives of people. Contrary to the oft repeated statements regarding the receding role of the state in the era of globalization, we believe that the state is only increasing its presence in the daily lives of its citizens. The developments in the last decade clearly indicate such a trend.

Nation-states are created through a process of creation of its citizens. One of the major sites of this process of citizen-creation has been schools. In the last two centuries, right across the globe, one observes a flurry of activity in the field of literacy which correlates with the creation of a nation-state. India has been no exception to this trend. The state needs to create citizens who would serve as a personification of its ideals. It is therefore not a matter of surprise that education, especially school education, is such a politicized field. After all, if the ideals of what a nation-state should be changes so would the process of citizen-creation. This link of schools with the image of states makes education one of the most politicized arenas of modernity. We refer to politics as a larger process of choice-making rather than just the process of selection of a government.

Nations are considered to be a result of self-identification of people with a group of other people, resulting in a feeling of 'We' as opposed to 'They'. While 'We' may be full of internal stratifications and conflict there exists a sort of agreement that 'We' forms one unit of socio-cultural organization. Formation of nations is a result of a long process 'living together' which may be facilitated by various socio-cultural factors, language being one of them. Nations, in such an understanding, are the creations of a historical process and not some inherent property of people. As a result, what the nation constitutes is never a settled issue but is rather an ongoing process.

During the past few centuries, nations have served as a basis of state-formation giving rise to what are referred to as 'nation-states' and is based on the idea of sovereignty of nations. It is in these sites of creation and recreation of nations and nation-states that we inhabit our languages (Haugen, 1966).

A corollary of the processes of creation described above is that a nation-state needs to create language(s) which would be useful in furthering its existence. Just as a nation-state needs to create its citizens, it also needs to create its own languages. Just as a nation-state derives its basis of existence from nations, a nation-state creates its own languages on the basis of the linguistic ecosphere of the nation. The arrays of choices are immense and the nature of choices made would depend upon the ideals of the nation-state (stated and/or otherwise). As a result, the relationship between languages-of-the-state and the languages-of-the-people becomes a crucial issue in the lives of the people, often an issue of survival. In situations where the relationship is antagonistic (for a range of languages) then, given the ever-increasing power of the state, the languages-of-people come under severe stress and are pushed to the brink of extinction. The imminent danger which majority of languages of the world are facing is a result of this antagonistic relationship.

Schools serve as an important site where the-languages-of-the-state and the-languages-of-the-people directly engage with each other. Children (and their families) bring their languages into the school premises and the whole school apparatus is geared towards imparting the-language-of-the-state to the children, as part of the larger process of creating future citizens. If one hopes to change an antagonistic relation between the-languages-of-the-state and the-languages-of-the-people to a symbiotic one, schools would naturally serve as an important site of engagement and deliberation and the school teacher as an important human resource through whom such engagements can be made sustainable.

However, it has been observed globally that wherever schools reach, the linguistic diversity begins to shrink (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000). Only a few languages find their place in the linguistic practices of schools, especially as a language of instruction and of textbooks. The other languages of children entering the schools are left outside of the school premises. In more open-minded, liberal practices, the other languages of the children may be *permitted* in the school premises but always as subsidiary and an interim step towards shifting gradually to the official school-languages. As a result, these languages are deemed as inferior, lacking in sophistication, unworthy of being the school-languages etc. As a result, the school premises also become a ground for cultivating particular kinds of language attitudes directly or indirectly. Consequently, it is often felt that until a language gains a place in schools- mainly as a medium of instruction- it has no hope of survival. If the languages not in used in schools are looked down upon, they need to claim space in schools to elevate their status, to be expanded in functions and thereby have a chance of being vitalized and maintained. Such a thought has been underlying many language policies and education policies in India (Pandey and Ozarkar

2018, 2015). In other words, schools are a major battlefield on which the future of languages is determined one way or the other.

It is because of the immense importance of the linguistic practices in schools and education sector in general, our team at the Department of Linguistics, University of Mumbai has been engaging with the school teachers, educationists and activists working in the area of education. In May-June 2019 (31<sup>st</sup> May to 4<sup>th</sup> June) the Department organized another such workshop in collaboration with Unnati Trust for Social and Educational Change. Over 40 participants consisting of school teachers, government officials working the field of education and activists from all over Maharashtra took part in this workshop. This extremely intensive workshop consisted of more than 40 hours of work consisting of interactive lectures, discussions and individual as well as group activities. Main themes brought out for the discussion involved comprehensive and critical understanding of linguistic diversity especially with respect to India as a multilingual situation, diversity of spoken and written forms of a language, dialects & registers, standardization, diglossia, language attrition and extension of Bleich's concept of 'double perspective'. Through an intensive interaction with the participants of this workshop around these topics, several important issues were raised up for discussion. Such interactions are always a great learning experience for all of us, as we get a glimpse of the ground reality of the challenges faced by the teachers & students and the innovative solutions that the teachers come up on their own initiative. These workshops open an opportunity for us to have a dialogue with the school teachers and activists to understand their concerns and future directions in which our joint collaboration should head. What follows in this write-up is a result of what we learned out of the interaction during the course of the workshops. We discuss below some of the important issues which came up in the discussion during the workshops.

## **CRITICAL PERSPECTIVE ON DIVERSITY**

### **Linguistic diversity: a problem and a resource**

Mother-tongue education is important both for a child's better cognitive development & success in schools as well as for the development of the mother-tongue itself. However, when it comes to implementation of such a policy, the question of 'how many languages are to be included in school premises' inevitably surfaces. Such questions show that while the enormous linguistic diversity in India is a matter of pride and celebration for us, it also is seen as a practical difficulty. These aspects of linguistic diversity need to be discussed and acknowledged. It is true that the linguistic diversity and multilingualism can be used as powerful resources. But only by acknowledging and discussing how the diversity is a problem can we turn it into a solution for the problems of diversity. Over the centuries, societies have developed new linguistic varieties to overcome the problems

created by linguistic diversity. Phenomena such as pidgins, creoles, koine-s, lingua franca-s, linguistic convergence are a result of such attempts (Hymes, 1973).

Teachers have to deal with the diversity in their classrooms everyday. Most of the teachers we interacted with during our workshops- both from the city schools and rural areas- had students in their class from more than one language background. The teachers' language, the language of the textbooks and the children's languages are all different. While the teachers find creative solutions to their daily difficulties at their individual levels, they are aware of the difficulty that linguistic diversity poses. It is therefore crucial to discuss the various aspects of the diversity and develop a critical perspective on it.

States such as Maharashtra (among others) have officially introduced multilingual education and the new language textbooks published by Balbharati of SCERT, Maharashtra are multilingual in nature. However, it is also important to critically evaluate these textbooks to understand what attitudes towards minority languages and 'dialects' of the state official language underlie them. For instance, why only the Marathi language textbooks are 'multilingual'? They are 'multilingual' for they have a collection of poems and stories from a variety of different languages spoken in Maharashtra. However, the 'medium' of the books is standard Marathi: the instructions, the questions and explanations in the book are all in standard Marathi. Further, none of the textbooks of any other subject are multilingual. Their medium is standard Marathi. So, the place of the other languages in the textbooks is that of a specimen, a token. The textbook editors have missed the point of 'multilingual education'. Some other approaches that have been contemplated and attempted include translating or creating textbooks in other languages. However, when it comes to doing so for all the languages spoken in the state, the vast linguistic diversity looms over as a huge practical problem.

A more recent alternative being contemplated is to give up the idea of the textbooks entirely, and let the teachers and other stakeholders create textbooks or reading materials locally in the languages of the children in their school, with the help of the local community. There are many problems in giving up the idea of textbooks at this stage, which are well beyond the scope of the discussion in this paper. We, however, believe that the supplementary reading materials could be generated in this manner, but the publishing and distribution of textbooks from the state-owned bodies like SCERT should not stop. We also believe that the textbooks should be something that the teachers and students need to *evaluate* in the process of learning the subject, rather than teach-and-learn the textbook unquestioningly. Countering the authority of the textbooks in no way implies that there should be no textbooks! The authority of the textbooks needs to be countered by making a teaching-learning process a textbook-evaluation exercise.

### **Linguistic diversity: among the languages and within a language**

The very notion of diversity also needs to be assessed carefully. Generally, linguistic diversity is understood in terms of the presence of a number of 'languages' and 'dialects' which can be labelled as distinct varieties- regional and social dialects, distinct languages or basically user-oriented codes. A consequence of this limited understanding of multilingualism can be observed in the 'multilingual' textbooks. However, there is linguistic diversity within a single linguistic variety, in terms of styles and registers. There are several distinct forms of the same language when it is used in a variety of different spoken contexts such as a market-place conversation, a speech, a dialogue in a play, poetry recitation etc. Similarly, there are a variety of different forms of written language- a formal letter, an informal note, novel, newspaper editorial etc. Each subject taught in schools also has a specialised register and a specialized requirement of use of a language. There is usually an *implicit* awareness about some such differences within the forms of the same language among the language users. The language textbooks often offer specimen of some such forms of a language by including excerpts from different kinds of written literature. In this sense, these older, 'monolingual' textbooks were also always 'multilingual'.

However, there is an urgent need to be explicitly aware of this diversity within a language in the education sector. To teach a language in schools is to teach the various registers in use in a particular region. Those registers are not equally available to all sections of the society. It is the job of the schools to make them available so. This is also the spirit of the 'Language-across-curriculum' approach. It is imperative to teach the 'language of every subject' i.e. the registers of science, registers of history, math etc to the children in school. Only by controlling these registers can they control the knowledge and knowledge-creation in various fields. In addition, they need to be made explicitly aware of these various registers, so that they would be able to acquire the registers of different fields on their own in, for instance, higher studies.

### **Comparative language teaching and learning**

In order to cultivate an explicit awareness of the linguistic diversity between and within languages, the teachers and students both need to be aware of the similarities and differences among the varieties and registers. It is required to pay careful attention to the structural aspects of languages and registers. One of the ways in which it can be done is to use a comparative approach towards languages. A comparative approach serves several goals. First of all, in this approach, linguistic diversity in the classroom can be used as a major resource. A comparison of linguistic structures found in the languages spoken by the children in the classroom could be made central to all grammatical

discussions through various language games, activities and fun puzzles. The children could discover the linguistic patterns through such comparison. This is necessarily a collective activity in which the entire class along with the teachers can participate, which in itself is a merit. In such an approach, the languages and linguistic varieties of the children are not only *permitted* into the classroom, but they are brought into the very act of teaching and learning in a significant way. Such comparative activities are impossible without the contribution of languages other than the one of textbooks. The languages and linguistic varieties which are otherwise kept out of the school premises are this integral to the teaching-learning experience in this way. Further, through such activities, children *discover* the grammatical rules rather than rote-learn them as given in grammar textbooks. Discovering grammatical rules involves skills of observation, description, generalization and hypothesis-making, which are essential features of any scientific activity. These skills not only develop a scientific temper among the students but are also easily transferable to other domains of study. Through such activities, students can evaluate the standard prescriptive grammars instead of accepting them as authority. Moreover, such a comparative approach foregrounds for the children that their languages are both similar to each other in some aspects and different in other aspects. It is possible to use this awareness to drive home the point that there is nothing inherently inferior in any languages as compared to the standard varieties or official languages. The origins of this feeling of inferiority regarding one's language lie somewhere else.

### **Language continuity and discrete languages**

The metaphor of a continuous flow is commonly used for languages. In the works of linguists like Khubchandani (1997, 1985) this metaphor is central to the understanding of multilingual situation such as India. They have discussed languages as having fuzzy boundaries. Therefore, the question is, are languages countable? In India, the grassroot, traditional wisdom about languages also goes along with the metaphor of flow. There are common sayings in many Indian languages about differences being visible in a language every few miles (e.g. in Hindi '*koskos par badlebaani*'). People in India are quite aware of such differences among linguistic varieties and the changing face of the language over a continuous regional space ('*kshetra*' of Khubchandani 1997). However, when the Census of India receives over 19569 'mother-tongues', it is interpreted as people's lack of awareness about 'actual linguistic mechanisms' in use. Could it be interpreted instead as the reflection of their common experience of languages being a flow, which can be marked only by differences? How could the people, aware of minute differences among linguistic varieties, have failed to be aware of which variety they speak? A similar puzzlement was noted by the British rulers in India during the colonial

period. A quote in the Imperial Gazette clearly demonstrate this:

Few natives at the present day are able to comprehend the idea denoted by the words of 'a language'. Dialects they know and understand. They separate them and distinguish them with a meticulous, hair-slitting subtlety, which to us seems unnecessary and absurd; but their minds are not trained to grasp the conception, so familiar to us, of a general term embracing a number of interconnected dialects. It is as if we, in England, spoke of 'Somersetshire' and 'Yorkshire' dialects but never used the term 'English language'. It thus follows that, while dialect-names in the following pages have been taken from indigenous nomenclature, nearly all the language-names have been invented by the Europeans. Some of them, such as 'Bengali', 'Assamese', and the like, are founded on words which have received English citizenship, and are not real Indian words at all; while others, like 'Hindustani', 'Bihari' and so forth, are based on already existing names of countries or nationalities. (Imperial Gazetteer of India, Vol. I 1909: 350-351).

The State, however, requires discrete, synchronically stable languages with relatively sharper boundaries for its functions. To cater to the needs of administration, legal system etc, the State needs a common language which can transcend the linguistic variations across the speakers. Such a discrete, common variety needs to be 'developed' out of the continuum of linguistic flow. The nationalist thinkers during the colonial period in India were aware that a language needs to be developed for the functions of the statecraft. For instance, the awareness of the fact that Marathi language is spoken with vast variations across its speakers and that a relatively stable (not a free-flowing variety but a relatively sharply demarcated variety) variety needs to be deliberately developed, can be seen in Dadoba Pandurang Tarkhadkar's Marathi grammar (1857). He writes,

The main purpose (of writing this grammar) is to regulate, as far as possible, Marathi Language, which is very much cluttered because nobody ever tried to regulate her till date, and which is matted with lots of tangles, since nobody did a coiffure for her with a comb of grammar and bring her in a state of resolution by untangling some layers of tangles that were entangled for a long time.

Dadoba Pandurang (1857:10)<sup>2</sup>

A discrete language is an inevitable need of the State. Therefore, the real question is about the relationship between the languages-of-the-state and languages-of-the-people. The most significant, perhaps the first, large-scale attempt to visualize the discrete

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<sup>2</sup>Translated by Madhura Damle as part of her presentation in the Department of Linguistics, University of Mumbai in 2012.

languages in the multilingual space of India was carried out during the colonial rule by means of Linguistic Survey of India and the Census. During the colonial rule, the vast variation and linguistic diversity in India was seen with suspicion and distrust. The diversity was looked upon as unruly, uncontrolled behaviour and a sign of backwardness. The view of the colonial State was therefore that this enormous diversity needs to be 'managed', rather than celebrated. One way to manage the diversity was to label and classify the linguistic variations. In the Census carried out by the British administration, the mother-tongues returned by the people were labelled and grouped together in fewer number of languages- the very act created demarcated units of languages, now identified by certain labels. This practice has continued in the post-colonial India. Today, in the Census the 19569 plus mother-tongue are rationalized in 1369 mother-tongues. Further, these 1369 mother-tongues are grouped under 121 languages- 22 of which are Scheduled languages (see Census of India, 2011). Alternative views towards the linguistic diversity and possibilities of more symbiotic relationship between the languages-of-the-state and languages-of-the-people have never been sufficiently explored in independent India. On the other hand, the ideology of discreteness of languages has already permeated the minds of the people. The two experiences – of the flow of languages and of the discreteness of the languages- are both imbibed by the people, however the origin and functions of the discrete languages have not been clearly understood. As a result, the presence of two opposite experiences in the minds has resulted in confusion.

As the languages with fuzzy boundaries, the languages-of-the-people, are grouped under some consciously developed discrete languages of the State, the relationship between these languages have become hierarchical, rather than symbiotic. The languages-of-the-state are viewed as the 'real', 'proper', 'original', 'pure' languages while the language-of-the-people are aberrations or deviant forms of these languages. The languages-of-the-people, due to their differences from the languages-of-the-state, exhibit their unique character, which is also seen as 'natural', 'inartificial', 'spontaneous'. Thus, in minds of the speakers, a sense of tremendous love and pride for their variety as well as a sense of inferiority in comparison to the languages-of-the-state, exist simultaneously. In our interaction with the school teachers we observed that simultaneous presence the opposite feelings towards one's language has resulted in both repulsion and attraction towards the State language. The teachers, especially those who are speakers of various varieties of Marathi, feel that the schools, textbooks and assessment logic followed in schools impose the State languages on the children from different linguistic backgrounds and this must be countered. On the other hand, there are also deep-rooted notions about 'proper' language which coincides with the State language imparted through the textbooks. This can be readily seen in the matters of pronunciation. The pronunciation of a written word in the State language is always taken by the teachers as the 'real' and the 'correct'

pronunciation. If the same word also exists in the other varieties with subtly different pronunciation, the teachers often feel that the students should be taught the ‘correct’ pronunciation.

The simultaneous feeling of repulsion-and-attraction or awe towards the state language often gives rise to a feeling of rejection of the State Language. The State languages are the standardized, deliberated cultivated languages. A very common concern that the teachers are facing today is whether standardization and a standard language are needed at all. This issue was brought out significantly in the discussion during our workshop.

### **Standardization process**

People generally associate language standardization with dominance. It is a common feeling of the people that the process of standardization necessarily involves imposition by social elite of their linguistic variety on the larger society. Teachers experience that the children from different linguistic backgrounds struggle to deal with the language of the schools and they interpret this experience as evidence of the standard language being thrust upon the children. They have begun to question whether the standardization and standard languages are needed at all, especially in schools. We realize that the urge to reject the standard language- i.e. the language-of-the-state- arises from the confusion in our minds between the need for a standard language and the process of standardization as it has taken place historically. This demands an urgent critical discourse on the issue of standardization.

Languages-of-the-state are standard languages and such languages are needed by the State for all its functions. The places where the State has larger role to play – administration, courts, education, the latter still being the largest and most important field- common languages transcending the vast linguistic diversity in the society are needed. A standard language serves as a lingua franca for communication between the State and its multilingual citizen groups. It also serves as a lingua franca for the various linguistic groups in a society to communicate with each other. In a modern society, it is through such a standard, common language, the people can access and participate in the functioning of the State. In other words, standard languages have a large role in democratizing the State functions and they also serve a unificatory role in a multilingual society by being a common linguistic ground. However, the process of standardization can also be hijacked by a section of the society to serve their own interests rather than catering to the interests of the society at large. Through controlling the access to the standard variety, such a section of the society- typically social elites- control the functioning of the State. Rather than serving as an instrument of participatory democracy, the standard language then becomes a tool to establish hegemony of a few over the

masses. What needs to be rejected and countered therefore, is the hijacking of the process of standardization and not the standardization process itself. Without the standard languages, a democratic functioning of the State is unimaginable and the multilingual society would also face fragmentation without any means of unification.

It takes careful and sensitive language planning endeavours to undertake standardization process in a democratic way and to counter its hijacking (Haugen 1964). In fact, the schools are one of the major sites where the hijacking of the process of standardization may be countered. It is one of the roles of the schools to impart the access of the languages-of-the-State to all the children. Further, it is absolutely crucial to understand that the standard language or the language-of-the-State is neither the mother-tongue of any child, nor should it replace the mother-tongue of a child. It is to be taught as a lingua-franca and should not enter the school in the grab of 'mother-tongue education' as it often does today.

### **Role of writing in multilingual society**

One of the ways in which the social elites control the standard variety is by perpetuating the notions of 'purity' and 'correctness' of a language. We have discussed above how an attempt to make the continuous language flow discrete by labelling and classifying some varieties under the nomenclature of a few other languages resulted in a hierarchical linguistic order. The linguistic varieties which were not written were classified as varieties of one of the written languages. Languages which were written further participated in the processes of standardization. We have also seen that the standard varieties serve certain functions, being a lingua franca is one of its important functions. Writing is also one of the major functions of standard varieties.

As a lingua franca, a standard variety can be spoken by different speakers with their own accent. It is a common experience that the standard variety has a relatively flat intonation while its regional varieties are found to be more 'musical' as they have unique rhythmic intonation. The reason being that as a lingua franca, the standard variety is 'neutral' and lack of a special intonation is a way to be neutral. When someone speaks the standard variety, it is possible that the intonation or certain pronunciations typical of her variety enter her utterances in the standard variety. These cues may also betray her linguistic background. But a lingua franca allows this to happen, as the sole purpose of a lingua franca is intelligible communication across groups. In other words, we can speak a lingua franca with a lot of variation and accent. Thus, would be the case for a standard variety. However, when it comes to writing, we all are united by the same set of commonly accepted norms. Like the standard variety, the written form of a language serves to unify a multilingual society. Hindi speakers have commonly experienced it: the

expression written as ‘vah kaam kar rahaa hai’ is pronounced in different varieties of Hindi differently (*vo, va* instead of ‘vah’, *rhaahai, rae, rjaae* etc instead of ‘rahaahai’). But everyone writes it the same way, irrespective of how one pronounces it. In an on-going study at the Department of Linguistics, University of Mumbai we observed a similar phenomenon for Marathi. People pronouncing the word for ‘tea’ written as ‘chahaa’ in Marathi differently as *chaa, chaahaa, chaaj* all wrote it as ‘chahaa’ (pc. Priyanka Dingankar). What these examples show is that people write in the same way, using the norms of writing the standard variety although they may speak the standard variety with a lot of variations. We do not write the way speak and we can not speak the way we write.

In fact, writing and speaking are not merely two modes of manifesting a language, each of them serves different functions. Due to their functions and use, the written and the spoken forms of the same variety differ from each other structurally as well (Biber, 2009; Halliday, 1994). Linguists have long been insisting that no language is written the way it is pronounced. It is also true in a much wider sense. The spoken forms of the language are relatively less monitored by the speaker in the actual act of using the language, they are more spontaneous. The written forms usually present the outcome of a more conscious monitored organization of language use. The two forms differ in their organization and as a result in their grammatical structures as well.

The social elites hijacking the process of standardization, however insist that the language users speak the way they write. As the standard varieties are written, everyone must be speaking the way the standard variety is written- in other words, everyone ‘speaks the standard variety’. If they speak it differently, it must be due to their lack of awareness of how to speak. In other words, all the variations of speaking the standard are seen as ‘impurities’ of speaking, ‘incorrect’ ways of speaking. By the same logic, all the varieties grouped under a single nomenclature are seen as incorrect forms of the standard varieties. It is in this manner, by cultivating the notions of purity and correctness, that the social elites control the standard varieties. As a result, the writing instead of serving as a unificatory force, results in creating hierarchical and conflicting relationship among the varieties.

The ideology that we write the way we speak and vice-versa is extremely deep-rooted in school practices. Its effect is stronger in Indian society, because as compared to English, most standardized Indian languages using Nagari-based writing systems have a relatively more direct relationship between a sound and its written symbol. It has often been asserted that the Indian languages are written the way they are spoken, unlike in the case of English. The thought is also disseminated through textbook exercises and language teaching practices. Through these attitudes, the notions of the purity and

correctness get associated with the standard language and the attitudes of inferiority are cultivated among the children in schools. Instead of countering the hegemonic tendencies at schools, the schools become the site of furthering them.

### **Diglossia**

A possible relationship between the standard and the other varieties could be one modelled on diglossia (Abel, 1998; Britto, 1986; Dasgupta, 2012). Tamil diglossia is a well-known and good example of this situation. However, elsewhere in India, the model of diglossia has not been sufficiently explored. In a diglossic situation, functions of a standard variety are typically the 'H' functions while the 'L' functions are carried out in mother-tongues of the speakers. The variety serving H functions is usually a neutral variety which is not anybody's mother-tongue. As a result, no section of the society gets an advantage of access to the functions of the statecraft. It needs to be explored if the standard varieties could be carefully developed to serve as neutral varieties with a diglossic relationship with the other languages. Such a relationship will be symbiotic rather than one of conflict. Diglossic relationship would also entail that the standard varieties do not look to substitute and threaten the other varieties. On the contrary, the H-varieties would provide a neutral ground for the L-varieties to engage with each other.

### **'Double perspective' in pedagogy**

Such a neutral ground provided by the H-varieties for the L-varieties is in consonance with the functions of writing. Instead of thinking of writing as a mere skill limited to a medium of language and something that is a derivative of speech, one needs to look at writing from a functional perspective. Writing is a function of language which involves monitored, self-aware uses of language, thereby aligning closely with H-varieties. The self-awareness and monitoring involve awareness of the other linguistic varieties (dialects, registers and styles) as well as articulations from multiple perspectives. Thus writing (as a function) involves a double perspective (Bleich 1988): the perspective of the writer includes a perspective about other perspectives. This means that the perspective of the writer cannot exist without awareness of the other perspectives. It forms a necessary and sufficient condition for writing. This characteristic of writing cannot be sufficiently emphasised and has not been at the centre of language-teaching activity. Through our interaction with school teachers and our general experience of language problems in our surroundings we are of a firm belief that double perspective of language should form the corner-stone of the language pedagogical practices.

### **Hegemony of English and the languages of knowledge and culture**

The discussion on the languages in schools cannot take place by ignoring the elephant in the room which is English. We find at this stage two poles in India: one pole constitutes

those who look to promote English as a medium of instruction in schools and the other end of this pole lie those who firmly promote mother-tongue education. We find that often even among those who promote mother-tongue education, there are many who acknowledge the importance of English at higher studies and academia. There appears to be underlying agreement between the people regarding the role and importance of English. This agreement becomes clear when we hear some of the promoters of mother-tongue education justify that the mother-tongue education would not cause a disadvantage to the children at higher studies but in fact be beneficial to them in acquiring another language like English. The hegemony of English lies in such a consensus in the society on its importance. Thus, on one hand there is a feeling that English is unavoidable and on the other hand there also a deep concern and pride towards one's mother-tongues. This seems to have resulted in a sort of division of roles envisaged by the society between English and the mother-tongues: English is seen as the language of knowledge and modernity while the mother-tongues are deemed necessary for creativity, cultural expression, aesthetics. As a result, multilinguality is seen in the domains of emotion and culture. The effects of this consensus can be seen in various ways. One, we observe a lack of sufficient number of good quality academic journals, especially in the area of physics, biology etc. in say, Marathi. As a result, while Marathi has developed popular and sophisticated non-narrative prose (cf. Kloss, 1967), it lacks academic non-narrative prose outside literary studies.

Another example of this scenario can be found in the school system of Maharashtra. Some Marathi-medium schools in Maharashtra offer 'semi-English medium' option from 8<sup>th</sup> Standard onwards. Under the semi-English medium pattern, science and math are taught in English medium while all the other subjects such as history, languages, geography are taught in Marathi. It clearly shows association of knowledge in natural sciences with English while that of social sciences and humanities with regional languages. There largely appears to be a consensus in the society about this dichotomy. This wide-spread consensus has the potential of creating tension in efforts towards promotion of mother-tongues and of obtaining 'modern' education. Thus, for example, in recent times Odisha Government has made efforts to promote tribal languages by publishing dictionaries, primers etc. for those languages (Barik, 2018). The same Government also seeks to allot extra time-slots in schools for Math, Science and English subjects (Patnaik, 2019). Just how the tension between these two emphases will be played out will be of some interest to educationists across India.

## **IN LIEU OF A CONCLUSION**

A consequence of the dichotomy between language-of-knowledge and language-of-culture is seen in the large-scale attrition amongst students as far as reading and writing

skills in the H-varieties of their mother-tongues. Increasingly, the students are limiting the use of their mother-tongues to daily conversations, while operating H-functions through English. This could result in severe restrictions on the realization and development of linguistic potential of the H-varieties in India other than English.

Given the general debate around the issues concerning education, especially mainstream education, there appears to have emerged a large-scale uncritical agreement that the universalization of education involves extending of the existing 'benefits' of education to the marginalized sections. The hardly seems to be any discussion about the very foundations of educational practices which have up till now been the preserve of certain sections of society. Thus, for example, it is widely assumed that the education is for the development of the potential of an individual and the responsibility of this development lies solely with the individual student. While all the decisions are taken by the teachers, school bodies or the State, the individual student alone faces the burden of performance and its consequences. This ideology of individualism is very deep-rooted in the pedagogical practices of schools. It seems unquestionable to even the most sensitive of teachers. Thus, while the teachers we interacted with readily agreed on the benefits of collective teaching-learning process, they were insistent that the assessment should be of individual student. Unless this ideology of individualism is countered, it would be very difficult to seek true alternatives for the development of inclusive, democratic pedagogical practices.

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