



LANGUAGE AS POWER: EXPLORING POLITICAL RIGHTS AND THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES IN MULTILINGUAL SOCIETIES

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INTRODUCTION

Language is not a mere means of communication, but a tool of unsurpassed force that coordinates and regulates the activities of social and political life. It influences how human beings perceive the world. The language within any society can be used as a tool of inclusion and exclusion, availability of opportunities, and a tool through which political discourses can be justified or criticised. The idea of power behind the language results in the necessity to examine the part of speech, discourse and the linguistic hierarchy's role against the background of political rights, presentation, and the position in the particular social system. Such convergence of representativeness and power is further politically and culturally confined when it comes to language in bilingual and multilingual societies. These societies are of ethnic diversity, colonization or migration the presence of which is typically a patchwork of language belongingness that is typically a portion of both an instrument of including an instrument of dominance, an example of this is the language policies because it is both a tool of inclusion but is also a tool of domination; it can be the tool that defines whose languages would be given official status, and those who might not. In this instance, lingual diversity becomes a political field which is marked by struggle moved to the political sphere of citizenship, equality and participation.

Theoretically speaking, the analysis of language as power can take place in different dimensions and on different levels, starting with the theory of discourse and power-knowledge suggested by Michel Foucault and ending with the concept of linguistic capital proposed by Pierre Bourdieu. Foucault focuses on how discourse comes into existence and maintains systems of truth and authority. Whereas Bourdieu puts linguistic power into social hierarchy. The frameworks collectively signify that language does not operate neutrally but rather

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structurally. These dynamics are evident in multilingual societies during the establishment of linguistic stratification, in which some languages are given precedence in the legal, schooling, or political sectors, but other languages are ignored or undermined. In this work, the place of language as power in multilingual societies seeks to point out the multifaceted relationships that are involved between linguistic diversity and political agency. It examines how theoretical insights have contributed towards the distribution of rights, representation, as well as social equity in the light of theoretical conceptions of language and power. Lastly, this research paper will conclude that the acknowledgement and protection of societies.

OBJECTIVES OF STUDY

The main goal of this paper is to discuss the ways in which language can be a powerful source of power that has a serious impact on the distribution, enforcement and demand of political rights in multilingual societies. In consideration of the fact that the concept of language is not merely a tool of communication, but also a source of structural power that instils hierarchies of dominance and inclusion. This study seeks to shed light on how language practices and policies determine political participation, citizenship and governance. In particular, it attempts to show that language control is exerted, whether by the use of official designations, curriculum mandates, or media presentation. In order to attain this objective, the study has a number of specific goals which combine theoretical and empirical research.

First, it will dive into the major political theories that see language as a type of power based on original insights, in order to generate a solid theoretical base. As an example, the discourse theory created by Michel Foucault will be examined to demonstrate how language creates the regimes of power and truth that allow some narratives to take control in terms of political speech and silence others in the multilingual context. In the same manner, it will analyse the concept of linguistic capital introduced by Pierre Bourdieu; it reveals about issue of how language skills acquired in predominant languages translate to social and political advantages, perpetuating class and ethnic divides. Other theorists, including Antonio Gramsci on cultural hegemony Jurgen Habermas on communicative action, will also be included to evaluate the way in which language promotes or inhibits deliberative democracy in various societies. This theoretical discussion will not only point to the using how linguistic power is ideologically predetermined, but also criticise the way this ideology is applied in modern political rights.

It also examines how language as power has wider implications for the theory and policy reforms on democracy in a multilingual environment. It will recombine the theoretical points of view with the findings of the case study to suggest avenues to improve political rights by using inclusive language policies, including multilingual educational changes or judicial adaptations. This objective aims to criticise the neoliberal effects on language use in globalised societies, whereby the English language is usually replacing local languages, thereby adding to power inequality. All of these goals eventually become unified to promote a more balanced interpretation of political rights, one that considers linguistic diversity as one of the foundations of inclusive governance.

SIGNIFICANCE OF TOPIC

The study of language as power within multilingual societies bears in-depth importance since it uncovers how linguistic practices are not peripheral but core to the formation and negotiation of political identities, political rights and power systems. With the growing globalisation and migration, societies struggle with linguistic diversity, and we can tackle inequalities that are mostly invisible in politics upon understanding the role of language. This discussion is one that goes past the scholarly discussion of the issue and provides an insight into real-life problems such as ethnic war, policy failures, and even democratic backsliding, but ends up promoting fairer systems in which linguistic pluralism is an essential part of justice and stability. Democracy lives on the idea of open discussion, but in a multilingual environment, monolingual prejudice may deprive large groups of people of the right to voice, and this contradicts the idea of equal voices. Multilingualism language policies improve democratic legitimacy because language will not be monolingual, and thus the debate, elections, and referendums will mirror the diversity of the society, thereby countering the populism that exploits linguistic divides. In politics, language also defines the structure of power, whether it be in a law-making process or an administration process. Effective governance involves bridging those divides through communication. Monolingual policies may be practised, which may result in poor implementation, corruption perceptions, and even resistance to the policies in different areas. Multilingual strategies, like the translation requirement or use of local languages, enhance institutional responsibility and legitimacy, with respect to gaining trust in the structures. Last but not least, citizen participation is closely connected with language, as it makes or hinders the possibility to involve into activism, voting, and the organisation of

communities. Disincentives such as non-native official languages discourage minorities from turning out, which biases representation and policy priorities.

Altogether, the importance of this topic lies in the possibility of making a policy that considers language as a part of human rights activities to have cohesive but diverse societies. By answering these interdependences, the research helps in theoretical advancements and operational solutions for navigating power in an increasingly polyglot world.

CHALLENGES FACED BY MULTILINGUAL SOCIETIES

Multilingual societies are faced with difficulties in the design and execution of policy. In many cases where constitutions introduce more than one official language, there are numerous real-life challenges.

Challenges in ensuring Linguistic Political Rights –

Implementation Gaps: Although many multilingual states give constitutional or legal acknowledgement to various languages, these rights are frequently not fulfilled in practice because of inadequate provision of translation facilities, institutional, as well as administrative coordination. The effect of this is that minority language speakers receive legal, educational, and governmental services unequally.

Socio-political Resistance: Majoritarian attitudes and resistance from political elites can prevent full inclusion of minorities; language rights are sometimes viewed as threatening national unity, leading to pushback and symbolic recognition without substantive institutional change.

Education Barriers: Minority languages can be marginalised in the mainstream education systems, limiting access by the non-dominant communities and creating generational inequality.

Legal Access: Street justice is always done by way of official documentation and legal procedures, which are usually done in dominant languages, thus depriving those who are non-fluent in the language the chance of fair accessibility of justice.

Language Impact on Political Inclusion/Exclusion –

Gatekeeping Citizenship: Linguistic skills are regularly linked to legal status, employment charges and civic participation. The dominant language policies of official communication and official records determine who becomes an insider or not in the world of the masses.

Social Inclusion and Exclusion: In situations where language policies privilege an individual or a few languages over the rest, the minority speakers may be left out of education, government, and the public. On the one hand, properly designed multilingual policies ensure inclusion and permit the existence of hybrid identities.

Symbolic Marginalisation: The repression or disregard of minority languages contributes to the erosion of culture and symbolic marginalisation, which undermines trust towards the state agencies and, in many cases, results in the outbreak of social conflict and political movements.

Language Policies and Power Relations –

Elite Consolidation: The political elites often consolidate their power by promoting language policies and national identity. The languages of dominant groups are elevated into official languages, which indicates the identities of dominant groups that are favoured and the marginalised communities whose identity must be assimilated or are excluded.

Historical Legacies: Policies and historical processes are frequently compensated; historical languages of colonisation, e.g., may continue to be dominant even after a country attains independence and due to which old hierarchies will be perpetuated.

Resource Allocation and Bureaucratic Bias: Access to Resources, preferential hiring, and government assistance are usually given to those who are knowledgeable in the major language.

Symbolic vs. Substantive Recognition: It would not suffice to provide a language with an official status without solid practical initiatives; meaningful inclusion would mean that the legal frameworks would provide an image of equality in accessing all the functions of the state, rather than mere recognition.

DEBATES AND PERSPECTIVES

Language has a fundamental role in providing the necessary rights, giving identities and other practices in multilingual societies. Language policy plays a major role in the functioning of the country in a way that it is important for providing justice, resource distribution and is necessary for the survival of the languages, so this proves that language is not just important for the means of communication. Language also plays a major role in keeping peace in a multilingual society as there is a huge diversity in that particular country.

Context of India: History, Polity and Identification: India is one of the most diversified countries in the world in terms of languages. There are more than 19,500 dialects and languages in India. In an official sense, the Constitution of India, in its Eighth Schedule, has given recognition to 22 languages. The sociological and political structure of the country is deeply tangled with the influence of language diversity. There are many countries that have a national language, but that is not the case in India, as India has classified itself as a country with vast linguistic diversity. Though there is no national language in India, there are two official languages in India, which are Hindi and English, at the central level. At the state level, the states enjoy the authority to select their own official language; these rights are also provided in the Constitution of India.

Even though there are many provisions for safeguarding a multilingual society, there is still the problem of language imposition. There are many policies which are set up by the government of India in which they promote Hindi as the language of administrative work, which can be clearly seen in states like Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, and West Bengal, where there is Three-Language Formula in which there are some benefits for the locals. These also led to many revolts and debates, which can be seen in the case of Maharashtra, in which there were some impositions made that Hindi should be made the third language in schools in Maharashtra, which was heavily criticized by the locals and the politicians as they thought that this would lead to linguistic homogenization and undermine Marathi as a language and there can also be degradation of the culture.

The main point of linguistic multilingualism lies in the fact of unity and diversity. In which the supporters say that integration of languages will help the nation maintain national unity through a common language; it will also help in fostering administrative efficiency and economic upliftment. The people who don't believe in these factors, or the critics of this theory, put

forward the point that the historical significance of local languages and marginalised minorities will face exclusion from the social structure; they can also face discrimination, it might also limit their rights, and resource limitations might also be an issue. There is also a point put forward by critics that language debate can also lead to subsequent issues related to religion, caste and hierarchy. This thing can be related to the importance of English; for example, it is also associated as a privileged factor in society.

Global Context: Linguistic, Political and Multilingualism Model: From a global point of view, language has led to many debates which were shaped by history, law and cultural factors. For example, in Europe, the European Union Parliament has been functioning in twenty-four languages, which are considered official languages. This is done in a manner to ensure that the citizens belonging to different linguistic backgrounds are included in all the administrative and democratic processes without feeling ostracised. This shows the prime example of “unity in diversity” in the institutional mechanisms.

There are other examples, such as in Canada. In Canada, they have achieved bilingualism; in Quebec, they have specially made sure that there are protections given to the French in the educational, administrative, and legislative sector and on the other hand, balancing the other minority language rights. Another prime example is of Belgium, it divided the population in three parts of Dutch, French and German on the basis of linguistic communities. These areas are given separate types of government institutions, and according to it, reflect the consociational model, which is meant to reduce friction and provide peace among all of the linguistic groups. South Africa is also a prime example in which the 1996 constitution gave eleven languages equal official status, though there is a major problem with its implications. UNESCO and the United Nations are major supporters of the fact that an individual should choose education, communication, political and democratic participation in their own preferred language.

Present and Future Debates: India and many other multilingual countries still face a major issue in the political structure, as there are many debates in its evolving stage. There might also emerge some new challenges, and the use of digital technologies can also play an important role in the future for shaping linguistic identities, change and transition in politics, which will decide the future of the linguistic landscape. There is a huge responsibility on the administrative and legal institutions to look at and innovate the concept of multilingualism as a way to deliver justice, spread equality and inclusion of all and not as an obstacle. So, the main aim of the

debate on linguistic society should primarily depend on what people want their society to be: a society which will acknowledge differences, bring everyone on the same ground and finally include each and every group through language.

RELATION TO POLITICAL THEORIES/ CONCEPTS FROM THE SYLLABUS

In political science, power plays an important role, so studying it becomes an important part of it. To review how it is produced, maintained and challenged. Pierre Bourdieu, a former French sociologist, introduced the concept of linguistic capital, which states the direct way to speculate language as a part or form of power. He argues that language can also be seen as a resource or a capital which is unevenly distributed in society. Those who have access to better languages and dialect they gain a prestigious place in society. This is a form of achievement that a person can achieve from his family, school and his own personal hard work. Michel Foucault, a French historian who is known for his theory of linking power with language and knowledge. He believes that language is an intrinsic part of society and not just an outer part of it. Language has the power to shape and see what can be known and heard, which is marginalised and which is on the upper hand. This can also be seen in modern institutions, as schools are creating norms in which language is legitimate and controls people. The debates are also taking place around the place through languages.

Theories about equality and justice also stands and important point of view, as it tells who gets the opportunity and about fair and equal treatment. There can be exclusion from political participation, which is an important part of democracy, which can take place because of barriers that can come through languages, thus can also be seen as injustice to the population. This is supported by political theorist Kymlicka, who states that the rights are complex in nature, but the policies which only promote one language can also put people belonging to other languages at a huge amount of disadvantage. Therefore, leading to one of the most prominent debates about language of distribution and recognition of marginals.

Democracy is an important part of politics, which means participation and representation of each and every citizen of the country. Language barriers can undermine the role of democracy if the people are not able to participate in debates, policy making not able to interpret laws; this means that they are facing linguistic exclusion. Therefore, there are debates that are taking place that tell us the importance of multilingualism in parliament, courts and policy-making. So that no one should feel excluded from these fundamental things based on language.

Multiculturalism is an important factor that is on the rise in many societies, which puts a heavy strain on the existing administration, which only gives importance to a certain group. Theorists supporting the theory state that the administration should include every linguistic community and the state should work as one while including every sector of the society, as it will help in the smooth running of the society. They also point out that the strict or rigid linguistic model can also deny basic rights to the people belonging to other linguistic communities. India's stand on this issue can be seen in its federal multilingualism, which deeply analyses the society and includes everyone in its citizenship theory.

Colonialism is an important factor which demerit the concept of multilingualism in a manner that the colonialists only gave importance to certain languages, which in most cases was English. Because of this imposition, there are still some nations that follow the same structure given by the colonialists. This theory is largely opposed in areas like South Asia and Africa, as the critics strongly oppose the concept followed by the colonialists and they impose the fact that there is a change required so that society can function in an equalised manner.

Therefore, all the points make it pretty clear that the language is deeply embedded in the political structure of the society and in the political science syllabus, as seen above through the examples of justice, democracy, power and equality.

RECENT EXAMPLES OF LANGUAGE-BASED POLITICAL CONFLICTS IN INDIA

Recent years in India have seen several notable language-based political conflicts, reflecting the deep-seated tensions in the country's multilingual fabric. These conflicts often stem from disputes over language policy, education, and official language status, highlighting persistent questions about identity, power, and governance in India's democracy.

Hindi Imposition Protests –

- In 2019 and in 2023, Tamil Nadu and other southern states held large-scale protests against efforts by the central government to advance Hindi as an obligatory language in school education and governmental operations.
- This provoked the claim by leaders and citizens that they weaken regional languages and identities, reviving the ancient anti-Hindi imposition movement that has dominated Tamil politics since the 1960s.

- The controversy escalated when the National Education Policy (NEP) of 2023 came into play, which, to many states in the south and northeastern part of the country, was seen as Hindi-favoured.

Demand for Recognition of Tribal and Regional Languages –

- There have been unquenchable calls by the tribal groups that inhabit states such as Jharkhand, Odisha, Chhattisgarh and Assam to introduce their languages (Santali, Bodo, and Gondi) into the education and administration systems.
- In 2022, the Bodo established in Assam protested against the situation concerning the application of the Bodo language and Bodo language status in education and government examinations when they were effectively left aside by the state government.

Language Row in Karnataka and Maharashtra –

- The ancient border and language conflict between Maharashtra and Karnataka, particularly in the Belagavi region, has been simmering periodically, with each state purporting administrative authority and cultural attachment depending on the supremacy of the Marathi or Kannada language.

CONCLUSION

At last, we come to the conclusion, which means that now we know that language is an inherent/embedded part of the multilingual society which is inherently connected with political rights and inclusion of people. Language is not only a source of communication but also a way in which it helps us to take part in democracy, political rights and constitutional recognition. However, there are still many challenges that are taking place, in which there are some sectors of society that are resisting the multilingual society.

At a global level, there are many examples of multilingual society which are trying to provide equal representation to each and every citizen; such examples are of Europe, Canada, Belgium, etc. These are the prime examples of the societies which tell us that what are the outcomes of incorporating the above policies are.

There are still many challenges in policy implementation because there are many problems in substantive inclusion; this means that the older policies are not able to solve the problems that

the marginalised are facing. This means that some changes are supposed to be brought in the administrative sector so that the minority sector should feel included, and the people should not feel marginalised based on languages and make sure that a single language doesn't hold a prestigious status in society. The power of language should be enjoyed by each citizen and not be left out.

At last, the main aim should be to acknowledge each and every language, accept the diversity and make it inclusive and democratic. This requires modifying the system to adjust to the new upcoming challenges to ensure fair practices. Therefore, language is the foundation for social unity and important for the Polity.

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