Language Ideologies and Multilingualism: Discourses of the Loss of Language

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Abstract—**This paper attempts to explore an ecological understanding of the loss of language in a multilingual country such as India. India is abundantly blessed with linguistic diversity. Tribal, minorities', and non-schedule languages can significantly contribute to the development of linguistic diversity of this country. Linguistic pluralities and ideologies intrinsically exist in various forms of sociolinguistic narratives of our societies. These narratives happen to be the primary representations of subaltern groups and also marginalized communities of this country. In this paper, we point out linguistic diversities and ideologies in 'commonsense' beliefs, political and sociocultural orientations. However, there is a cultural and linguistic loss that always takes place in the process of linguistic globalization and imperialism.**

Index Terms—**Language ideologies multilingualism endangerment diversity democracy hegemony.**

I. INTRODUCTION: WHY AN ANALYSIS OF LANGUAGE IDEOLOGY?

Many things are taken into consideration to understand the phenomenon of language ideologies in the context of the loss of language. Language loss has been a very serious discourse of debate from the mid-20th century. The thought and focus of linguists who are involved in the study of language loss involve the identification of reasons behind language shift and loss. Alongside, they also took part in developing the theoretical aspects of 'why language maintenance and preservation are of paramount importance in the studies on language endangerment processes. I do not know what an ideology is but I understand what an ideology is through its underlying mechanism that intrinsically evolves in a language. Many linguists across the world have been continuously concentrating on language ideology since half a century to envision multifaceted aspects of ideologies in relation to language especially in multilingualism.

The concept of language ideologies can be established many a time in the course of interactions between individuals and institutions of a speech community. Thus, it is necessary to examine definitions and conceptions of language and ideology in a wide range of sociocultural settings. They focus mainly on how such defining realities shape interrelations between individuals and institutions. The aspects of linguistic representations emerge both in implicit and explicit modes, which construe the intersection of language and human beings in a social world; this is what we mean by 'language ideology'. [1] This line of argument

is well fitted with Raymond Williams' observation, 'a definition of language is always, implicitly or explicitly, a definition of human beings in the world' (1977:21).[2] In the social process, the language ideology can be construed as whether it is implicit or explicit, but it is a difficult task to externalize in its totality. However, language ideology has not merely linguistic but sociocultural and anthropological importance. This importance lies between linguistic structures and social structures that mediate in the pursuit of language ideologies of a speech community. As Woolard rightly points out intersections of linguistic and sociocultural perceptions in construing linguistic ideology, 'ideologies of language are not about language alone. Rather, they envision and enact ties of language to identity, to aesthetics, to morality, and to epistemology. Through such linkages, they underpin not only linguistic form and use but also the very notion of the person and the social group, as well as such fundamental social institutions as religious ritual, child socialization, gender relations, the nation-state, schooling, and law' (1998:3).[3] On the other hand, Silverstein defines linguistic ideologies by emphasizing more on linguistic dimensions, 'sets of beliefs about language articulated by users as a rationalization or justification of perceived language structure and use' (1979:193). [4] There is no conflict as such between these views, but the mode of theorization of language ideology differs. Simultaneously Heath and Irvine respectively define the concept to explore the totality of social experience of a speech community as 'self-evident ideas and objectives a group holds concerning roles of language in the social experiences of members as they contribute to the expression of the group' (1989:53) [5] and as 'the cultural system of ideas about social and linguistic relationships, together with their loading of moral and political interests' (1989:255). [6]

All these scholarly discussions explicitly invoke multidimensional aspects of language ideology. One important question might emerge as to how these understandings of language ideology are compatible with Indian multilingual experiences. Indeed, these scholarly inputs are not confined to their own contexts alone; they are extended to across communities. However, this paper attempts to explore language ideologies in India, especially in a multilingual situation based upon common theoretical assumptions. It is also strongly felt to develop an understanding between language loss and language ideology in a multilingual country like India.

The Indian linguistic environment is persistently hierarchic, which created a dichotomy between dominant and dominated languages like Sanskrit and Kannada, Hindi and Kannada, English and Kannada, Kannada and Tulu, and so on and so forth. This linguistic phenomenon definitely reflects upon the pursuit of ideology. One significant and

theoretical understanding of linguistic ideology in Indian multilingualism is a very complex reality. India is not just multilingual nation but also a multicultural, multireligious, and multiethnic nation. Consequently, language ideology becomes a very complex reality in India. In the sense, beliefs and feelings about language and discourse that are possessed by speakers and their speech communities are part of their socialization alone. The socialization process, which is relying upon a particular language in which a child is exposed to that language in its early ages, is not common in India. It is very obvious; no socialization process takes place based on multilingual and multicultural realities. But, cross cultural socialization process is a later phase that always happens in a multilingual society. On the other hand, 'language ideologies' vary dramatically within and across native cultural groups. Many Indian native language communities, for example, have inherited traditions for using language that value the adoption of loanwords from dominant languages like Sanskrit and English despite the fact that many languages have a long history of regarding their languages as symbols of linguistic solidarity and group identity. Alongside, in few other speech communities, they do not regard their languages as symbolizing sociolinguistic identity, especially minorities and other small communities.

Why is the analysis of language ideologies necessary? This analysis is an essential and critical part of a complete analysis of a language in a speech community. The importance of language ideologies becomes one of the key factors in any analysis that would relate to the language and discourse of a speech community. These are also regarded as key aspects of a given speech community to envision the sociocultural worlds of their speakers. This mode of analysis would help us to view the structures of cultural sovereignty, which becomes a very important phenomenon of language ideologies. Thus, emphasis is given more on the socialization process that always depends upon 'collective' perspective of a speech community. The whole process devotes itself to understanding language ideologies and sociocultural transformations of a speech community through the socialization process. The socialization process also plays a vital role in the formation of group identity and linguistic solidarity. This persistent identity results in effects on language beliefs, practices, and struggles that are connected to language ideologies of a speech community in contemporary situations. This can be substantiated by Silervstein's definition on linguistic ideology: 'set of beliefs about language articulated by users as a rationalization or justification of perceived language structure and use' (1979:193). [7] The analysis so far justifies a community's consciousness that reflects upon both language ideologies and socialization of its community understands. The various modes of structural and functional analysis of language ideologies is a primary source of the quest for an understanding of what language ideologies are and how they function within and across speech communities.

Mediating factors in the process of socialization in each speech community are not common across India. For this reason, discursive and epistemic aspects of language ideology obviously differ from one another. It is also a difficult task to figure out the differences between implicit and explicit structures of a language ideology in multilingualism. This meta-pragmatic confusion is the underlying structure of linguistic ideology of Indian Multilingualism. That's why multilingualism appears to be a tricky entity that poses challenges to language and culture. As a result, language survival becomes a greatly difficult task; however, in the present scenario, language loss has become a common phenomenon across the world and India is no exception to this condition. Nevertheless, this confusion can normally persist. Sometime, it presumes to resolve this confusion only in the process of language death or language loss or language endangerment. To some extent, this argument can be substantiated with justifiable evidences in India and also elsewhere. The fact is any language shifting demonstrates the ideological shifting of their context to other that leads to demarcate between language loss and language survival.

A particular feature of language ideologies is embodied both in judgments and usage. Typology of language ideologies has been the focus of intensive study of syncretism of different beliefs. Language ideologies are thus not only interesting in themselves. For Silverstein, their importance lies in the fact that beliefs about language mediate between language use and social organization (Pillar: 2015).[8] In contrast, Kathryn Woolard referred to the concept as an intellectual bridge: 'The topic of language ideology is a much-needed bridge between linguistic and social theory, because it relates the microculture of communicative action to political and economic considerations of power and social inequality, confronting macrosocial constraints on language behavior'(1994, p. 72).[9]

II. Loss of Language and Cultural Conceptions: Language Politics and Ideologies

Sue Gal and Judith Irvine (1995)[10] have argued that our speech communities and the language associated with them are ideological constructs – ideological with respect to linguistic theory and more generally with respect to language and society (Penelope Eckert, 2004).[11]

Multilingual communities always confront issues such as unequal attitudes between education and language policy. While formulating language policies, we should keep in mind education and its implication. In order to resolve the linguistic crisis, we need to adopt certain measures. In this sense, protecting relationships among societal, economical, and linguistic aspirations should not be a political strategy. Rather, it should be a cultural responsibility. The questions of individual and collective rights are also tackled with this responsibility. These discussions provide a wide scope to elaborate the relationship between education and multilingualism by taking into consideration the following arguments:

1. If majorities' languages have instrumental value, minorities' languages have emotional value. Both of these are hindrance to the social mobility and prosperity of a society.

2. By learning majorities' languages, every speaker attains economic-social mobility.

3. It is true that by learning minorities' languages, we promote 'cultural mobilization', but individual mobility will be restricted because it creates sociocultural ghettoization.

4. If minorities' language speakers are sensible enough, they definitely shape their rational/ critical perspectives and modern attitudes from majorities' languages.

5. Any decision we take is obviously a social construction. However, the choices between majority or minority languages are based upon dichotomy or binary oppositions.

All these arguments affirm that developing an argument is a difficult task. We may have differences of opinions about these positions. Nevertheless, the sociocultural advantages that are available to majority languages cannot be denied. These understandings always obtain social consent and acceptance. No doubt, these are useful to few people or very few communities. It is necessary to evaluate carefully the implications and threats of these understandings. Such language imposition explicates the hidden agenda and interests of a state. Such an imposed language becomes a sociocultural resource; be it in education or employment or in any other such domains, a language that gets its own place is always being supported by the state.

Every language that is being supported by the state has its own aims and objectives. As a result, its benefits and advantages are confined to only very few communities or classes. Obviously, minority and other language speakers never obtain any sort of socio-economic benefits from the state-supported language. These privileges and benefits are immediately available to linguistically and culturally dominant language speakers alone. This is because the language they speak is located in such a hegemonic location. These language speakers control power and also dominate education, politics, employment, administration, and other domains. Naturally, every one chooses such a hegemonic language in every functional domain. Consequently, the uses of their mother tongues are confined to only family and private domains. To make it clear, all these languages are under pressure to assimilate into a hegemonic language. Language policies like 'Kannada compulsory' are always supportive to linguistic assimilation. Every language speaker is longing for economic prosperity and social mobility. This is also very necessary. Those who raise questions regarding Kannada progress and pro-Kannada activists must be very careful to ensure that Kannada does not become 'anti-people'. People from other language speaking communities can avail political and economic benefits if they can speak Kannada; no doubt, this strategy is an undemocratic principle. The 'Kannada compulsory' policy should extend to capitalists and industrialists; if not, it is always questionable.

One should not consider the speakers of other languages or minorities' language as second citizens in multilingual or multicultural communities; such wisdom and principles are very important in multilingual/multicultural communities. There is a lot of difference between practicing Kannada from one's own interest and learning Kannada as an imposition. Insulting and humiliating non-Kannada speakers (for example blackening their faces) are not only anti-Kannada/antisocial but also anti-human. This sort of mindset always indicates an anti-people attitude. If we examine the philosophical relations between culture and equality, we understand linguistic hegemony and its imposition, and this process creates cultural threats which are very much visible. It is necessary to publicize throughout the world the faith that language policy has moral, political, and legal importance. In order to continue their cultural identities as is, minority language speakers, without considering the advantages and disadvantages of their languages, are longing for mother-tongue-based education. These attitudes appear to hegemonic language speakers as 'anti-community'. It is significant to note that minorities speak a language in their private domains that will not make any impact on others, even though there are very strong arguments stating that this impact hinders their economic prosperity and social mobility. It is very rigorously discussed that those who stick on to their languages alone long to live at socio-economical margins only. They willingly choose this way of life. This acceptance is nothing but slavery. This sort of mindset is regarded as 'happy slave'. It is also said that speakers of a particular language are responsible for this attitude. Therefore, it is very well argued that it is not appropriate to accuse other language speakers for such linguistic developments. At the outset, this argument seems to be right, but it is wrong to accept such decisions. Thus, it is important to examine the reasons behind this mindset. Besides such rejections, this is a very populist model and pedagogically driven thought. It is wrong to say that this model is not based upon cause and effect. This is because in India, for the majorities, literacy is a nonpolitical action and the possibility of intellectual advancement has gone on without their notice. Consequently, they will not acquire any rationalism and wisdom for the upliftment of their communities and for exercising their rights. The irony is that throughout history, education has become a private asset of a few classes and religions to protect their moral system. Further, the culture of these communities is alone being projected as national culture. Education is exploited to inculcate a common consent among various communities regarding their culture and to validate this mindset among all social groups irrespective of their caste, creed, and community.

The reasons behind the attitudes as to why minorities are stick on to their language is that minorities are not aware of the dominant language, and this creates socio-economic threats. Further, they are interested in strengthening the roots of linguistic and cultural identities. Another important linguistic problem that confronts minorities in India is that the dominant language always

induces socio-political unification. These coercions reiterate fundamentalism and communalist re-presentation. These coercions are a curse for the communities that are sociologically and economically backward. Further, these are the root causes of all sorts of discriminations. Thus, minorities' affiliation of their mother tongues become stronger and affirmed. Over centuries, Dalits and tribal and backward communities who have been using Kannada are still at margins and stagnant. It is an irony that Kannada is a language of power, but it has not become an advantageous language for all these communities. When a language is used as weapon in any given situation, 'linguistic intolerance' will increase. The language that is dynamic in all its functional domain is a dominant language. Consequently, language rights and choices will be buried. This is obvious; undoubtedly, the death of freedom of rights and choices also systematically takes place in democratic nations.

The experience and education we acquire through the mother tongue is very effective. If it transforms to the second language, there is a lot of difference in the effect. Due to the elite bilingualism, this difference further increases. This is because upper-class linguistic positions can cause significant risks. Kannada-Sanskrit, Kannada-English, Kannada-Hindi, etc., are the examples of elite bilingualism. Ironically, this type of bilingualism is more acceptable. It also insists on the denial of bilingual/multilingualism of the subaltern classes. Kannada-underprivileged languages, Kannada-tribal languages, Kannada-minorities languages, etc. are recognized as examples of subaltern bilingualism/multilingualism. This kind of linguistic situation widens the horizons of experience more than any sorts of risks even though minorities will not have opportunities to save their languages in such a social atmosphere. Multilingualism is a very complex phenomenon, particularly in India. It is also argued that multilingualism hinders national integration. The intent of these arguments is that the political restraint will be prevented. This argument substantiates how nonlinguistic realities are determinants of the existence and identity of a language. But we fail to realize the fact that multilingualism is the signifier of multiculturalism.

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