

Ramanjaney K. Upadhyay

Heterogeneous Learning Environment and Languaging in L2

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to Khyati

(for getting me here)

Foreword

*Multilingualism, Languageing and Translanguageing:
Then & Now*

Inspired by Wilhelm von Humboldt's argument that "if one thinks of nation and language together, the latter has an original character which has fused with the character it acquired from the nation" (Humboldt, 1997: 56), the intrinsic connection between language and national identity dominated the ideological framework within language policy. Predicated on the Humboldtian principle, language-in-education policy treated language diversity as a problem, presenting a non-tariff barrier to mobility and interaction, and a constraint on the social engagement. It not only assumed that each citizen has one mother tongue, most commonly an official language of the state to which they belong, but also exercised, covertly (and sometimes overtly), the pecking order in the selection of an identifiable number of languages. Besides insensitivity to appreciate language as a ubiquitous and polymorphous phenomenon, one also finds a complete disregard to understand and even take full account of the complexities of multilingualism, which include the mobility, mixing, political dynamics and historical embeddedness that bring about rapid changes in the language profile of individuals and communities, especially in larger cities, uneven distribution of multilingualism, and the growing number of people with more than one first language. The nineteenth-century heritage inadvertently resulted in, large measures, creation of a monolingual ethos of language teaching, organized around a native speaker model of language learning. It marked both the discouragement and exclusion and forged links between language and power. Language learning, thus became a labour of Sisyphus, wherein there are some learners whom one may imagine to be happy, but many are also discouraged by the experience (*a la* Camus, 1942).

The ethical relationship between speaker and their language becomes fairly clear if we look at the position of English in higher education in private institutions. In professional institutions with a higher density of cultural and linguistic heterogeneity, aspirations and expectations for a better corporate communication renders both power and sacrament to English and places it at the intersection of society, political economy and even religion (if one were to avail the opportunities created by the "Goddess English". (<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-south-asia-12355740>).

It is against this background of heterogeneity and multilingualism that one finds it heartening to see a term *linguaging* prominently placed in a book of an Indian writer, for the South Asian readership and being published by Springer. Perhaps, it would not be politically incorrect to say that in the field of Applied Linguistics, particularly in the context of language pedagogy, *linguaging* is a matter of affirmative action. It accommodates linguistic variations of multilingual users and gives a sense of ownership to their repertoire without any bargain of linguistic hierarchy and compromise with self-esteem.

The monolithic view of “national language”, “common culture” and “national character” was not at all in keeping with the ways in which people in India used and identified with languages in the pre-colonial past. The conditions of social complexity and linguistic diversity, which Europeans encountered in their recent South Asian conquests, were too confounding and perplexing and were largely perceived as sinful humanity’s common heritage. It represented “a land of Babel brought to perpetual chaos by the sheer perversity of its natives” (Washbrook, 1991, p. 187). For the new masters, the wilderness of the South Asian multilingual society required taming which was effectively realized through the drive towards classification. While examining the growth of Telugu nationalism during the colonial and post-colonial eras, Mitchell (2009) points out that in pre-colonial southern India languages were regarded as features of the landscape with instrumental value, as opposed to comprising an aspect of individual or community identity. According to her, even the concept of “mother tongue”¹ and its valorization as an inalienable feature of personal identity signalling participation and belonging in a larger, linguistically defined collectivity “is not attested in any Indian language prior to the second half of the nineteenth-century.” (Mitchell, 2009: 2).

Sense of sharedness in languages and communication despite the linguistic complexity and the “perpetual chaos”. The multilingual natives could easily deploy their various languages in a linguistically heterogeneous region according to different social contexts and specific communicative needs without any invisible cultural power. Neither there were any established linguistic hierarchies nor any language used in some ways was given more value than others. These aspects of language disposition characterized the Asian sensibilities and values, which were beyond the comprehension of the Europeans. (Hasnain forthcoming) Mohanty et al. (1999) aptly capture this multilingual ethos in the following description:

¹Sriramulu’s death on December 15, 1952, followed by Sitaramaiah’s and Sant Fateh Singh and Master Tara Singh’s fast-unto-death for a separate Telugu and Punjabi-speaking state, respectively, and an international annual “Mother Language Day” commemorating death of four young men during language riots in the name of the Bengali language are “the dramatic forms of evidence of emotional commitments to one’s *maata bhaaSa*, *maatR bhaaSa*, or *taaymoLi*, literally ‘mother tongue’, [that] began to appear throughout the subcontinent during the middle decades of the twentieth century [and] [t]he past provides us no evidence of this type of committed devotion to language prior to the twentieth century.” (Mitchell, 2009: 2–3).

the fluidity of perceived boundaries between languages, smooth and complementary functional allocation of languages in different domains of use, multiplicity of linguistic identities and early multilingual socialisation.

South Asian multilingual ethos in the past has neither been a double monolingualism type nor the de facto multilingualism is structured as a series of separate strands, which Heller refers to as “parallel multilingualism” (1999: 139). In fact, it was fluidity that characterized the language and society in pre-colonial India, which was in contrast to the colonial propensity for hierarchy. As Canagarajah points out:

We do have evidence that translanguaging has been practiced in pre-colonial communities and in rural contexts. In South Asia, Africa and South America, rural life has featured considerable heterogeneity and multilingualism. (2011: 3)

“The edifice of linguistic plurality in Indian subcontinent, according to Khubchandani, is traditionally based upon the *complementary* use of more than one language and more than one writing system for the same language in one space.” (1997: 95–96; emphasis in original) In fact, *Pedda Baala Shiksha* ‘Expanded Child’s Primer’ presents early printed textbooks in multiple scripts. (Mitchell, 2009).

Languaging or ‘doing language’ was also part of individual poetic compositions of the medieval and early-modern period. Amir Khusrau (1253–1325), one of the most celebrated poets of medieval India, writing in Persian, the courtly language of Muslims of the Sultanate *period*, was ‘doing language’ by combining words from Sanskrit and Arabic, Persian and Turkish with those from the vernaculars around Delhi with tremendous felicity.² For example, the following poem written in Persian and Braj Bhaasha where the first line in the first verse is in Persian and the second in Braj Bhaasha, the third in Persian again, and the fourth in Braj Bhaasha:

*Zehaal-e-miskeen makun taGHaaful,
Duraaye nainaa banaaye batiyaan.*

‘Do not overlook my misery,
by blandishing your eyes and weaving tales’.

*Ke taab-e-hijran nadaaram ay jaan,
Na leho kaahe lagaaye chatiyaan.*

‘My patience has over-brimmed, O sweetheart!
why do you not take me to your bosom’.

²Chatterji (1960:203) goes to the extent of saying that a writer like Khusrau “essaying in the Indian vernacular in literature was an exception” for his time.

While Khusrau composed the poetry in two languages, Ahmed Raza Khan ‘Ala-Hazrat’ (1856–1921) an Islamic scholar, jurist, theologian, ascetic and Sufi Urdu poet used four languages simultaneously. These languages are Arabic, Persian, Urdu and Bhojpuri/Hindi³:

*Al bahro ‘ala wal maujo taGHaa,
man bekas toofaan hosh rubaa,
manjdhaar me hun bigDi hai hawaa,
morii nayya paar lagaa jaanaa.*

‘I got trapped between waves and I am completely nervous (please) take me out sailing on the shore.’

In the pre-colonial context of Southern India, vibrancy in *translanguaging* practices has been found in abundance in much of the literary production, pedagogy, government business and everyday communication. (Mitchell, 2009) In fact, all these could happen because of the integrated nature of multilingual competence and communication with no tendency to adopt binary and hierarchical orientations to language and where languages were seen as tools to accomplish particular tasks and not as attributes of persons.⁴

In modern societies language use is fast changing and so is communication. The notion of separate languages bounded by specific linguistic features is not sufficiently adequate to analyze these concerns, which are constantly reflected in language in use and language in action. In fact, sociolinguistic literature dealing with the study of multilingualism is replete with terms⁵ such as ‘flexible bilingualism’ (Reese and Blackledge, 2010), ‘code meshing’ (Canagarajah, 2011), ‘polylingual languaging’ (Jorgensen, 2010), ‘metrolingualism’ (Otsuji and Pennycook, 2011), ‘translingual practice (Canagarajah, 2013), ‘multilinguality’ (Agnihotri, 2009) and ‘translanguaging’ (Garcia, 2009).

All these varied terminologies revolving around the term *translanguaging* verge on the proposition that language is not a separate bounded-entities but “a social resource without clear boundaries, which places the speaker at the heart of the interaction.” (Blackledge and Creese, 2014, p. 2). In fact, they have not only

³This genre in Urdu poetry is called *Talmi*. Here different languages are used in a couplet or in one line of a stanza. This genre dates back to Amir Khusrau, who generally composed in two different languages but Ahmad Raza Khan employed four languages simultaneously. (I am indebted to Zuhair Ahmad for this information.)

⁴This situation where individual languages typically took on specialized roles as one was not expected to be able to do everything in every language in order to claim competency, can, perhaps, be likened with Ancient Greek. As Haugen (1966) has pointed out in the context of ambiguity associated with the terms ‘language’ and ‘dialect’, in Ancient Greece, Greek language was usually a group of distinct local varieties: Ionic, Doric and Attic. They descended by divergence from a common spoken source with each variety having its own literary tradition and use—Ionic for history, Doric for choral and Attic for tragedy.

⁵Some of these terms have been coined with the intent to postdate the *translanguaging* practices and valorize them as postmodern and urban. For instance, *metrolinguistics*, a term coined by Pennycook (2010) to capture the fluid and hybrid language practices of youth in the city gives a misleading impression as it “hides the vibrancy in other places and times.” (Canagarajah, 2011: 3).

emerged with a clear aim to “describe and analyze linguistic practices in which meaning is made using signs flexibly.” (Blackledge and Creese, 2014, p. 2) but also to advance our understanding of multilingual communication in a heterogeneous learning environment. Translanguaging helps us adopt orientations specific to multilinguals and appreciate their competence in their own terms.

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Preface

*sarasvati namastubhyaṃ varade kāmārūpiṇi /
vidyārambhaṃ kariṣyāmi siddhirbhavatu me sadā // //*

This book is an adapted version of my Doctoral thesis, and that is one reason, among many others, that this book means a great deal to me. My interest in Socio-pragmatics and Indian English took me to a very interesting and intriguing domain of doing-language. The book revolves around the languaging (refers to doing-language in the book), with reference to BICS and CALP, by the students of Engineering in a Heterogenous Learning-Environment. A substantial part of the book also presents a vivid account of English Language in the Indian context.

This book should be useful for those who are interested in analysing and looking at the languaging ability of a group of people. The very inherent and intrinsic nature of heterogeneous Indian society, makes it a very curious place for such a study wherein there is a lot of resource in the form of untapped and unannotated data. Such works, I am confident, would also contribute in developing people's understanding towards native and non-native (language) dichotomy. I sincerely hope and believe that this book makes a useful resource to those who are dealing with any aspect of languaging and heterogeneity. It, as a resource, should also be useful for those interested in looking at the contrastive outlook of oriental and western world with respect to language and language learning.

There are many who have been instrumental in making this book happen. This book wouldn't have been possible without the unconditional, constant support and love of my family: *Baabujee- Ram Chandra Upadhyay* and *Mummy- Uma Upadhyay*; wife- *Khyāti* and son- *Porco (Chaitanya Vāṇmāya)*, (also, actually, a heartfelt thanks to you both for allowing me to take *this* up); *Bhaiyā- Shivanjaney*, not to forget, My sisters and sisters in law, brother and brothers-in-Law.

I am grateful to Prof. S. I. Hasnain for all his guidance, encouragement and love, and for being what he has been to me- a constant source of energy and motivation and also for agreeing to write the Foreword of this book. I wish we had many more like of him in the Indian academia. I would also like to sincerely thank Prof. Rajesh Kumar and Dr. RamKumar Penchalia (IIT Madras) for all the help, all this while.

I thank Praveen Singh (IIT Madras) too for his selfless friendship and support of more than a decade. I wish I had better words to thank you, Praveen.

I must also thank the people in management & administration of GLA University, Mathura- Prof. Anoop Gupta, Mr. Neeraj Agrawal and Mr. Ashok Kumar Singh for their true generosity. I have always found them phenomenally rich in the understanding of human psyche.

Chennai, India
Vasant Panchami, 2020

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Chapter 1

Linguistic Heterogeneity and English Language in India



Abstract This chapter examines the intricacies of multilingualism with respect of scheduled/non-scheduled languages in India. It also briefly touches upon the tradition of language study in the country, other than taking a sneak-peak into the compositionality of the current Indian population and how it came about in the existence and current form & structure. The final section of the chapter looks at the role English language, among many other popular native languages, plays in varied contexts.

Keywords Linguistic heterogeneity · Indian English · Multilingualism

India is a country of languages, cultures and religions. Annamalai (2004: 151) calls it an “expanding network of languages”. Though there is not a great clarity on how many languages does India speak but one can very evidently see the heterogenous character of Indian society. In the context, Pattanayak (2014: 20) says, “India is a multilingual country with 1652 mother tongues, 200–700 languages belonging to four language families, and ten major writing systems including Roman and Perso-Arabic and a host of minor ones”.

2011 census talks about 22 scheduled and 99 non-scheduled languages in India, however the data of mother tongues in India is not quite clear. “There are total 270 identifiable mother tongues which have returned 10,000 or more speakers each at the all-India level, comprising 123 mother tongues grouped under the Scheduled Languages (Part A) and 147 mother tongues grouped under the Non-Scheduled languages (Part B). Those mother tongues which have returned less than 10,000 speakers each and which have been classified under a particular language, are included in “Others” under that language.” Retrieved from—<http://censusindia.gov.in/2011Census/Language-2011/General%20Note.pdf>. Although Grierson documented 179 languages and 544 dialects in India, the MEA website, with reference of PSLI documentation, notes, “there are more than 780 languages and 66 different scripts. This indicates that one state is not confined with just one language but there are as many as 50 different languages in many Indian states” <https://www.mea.gov.in/articles-in-foreign-media.htm?dtl/21996/India+a+linguistically+rich+nation+with+780+languages+in+its+Kitty>.

India, in truest sense of the term, has been a multicultural, multi-ethnic, multiracial and multilingual country. “[M]ultilingualism... is one of the most distinguishing