LOCAL LANGUAGES - VARIOUS PERSPECTIVES AND CHALLENGES IN THE ERA OF GLOBALIZATION

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Abstract

The present paper provides a critical insight into the different perspectives of local languages, the challenges they are facing and the relevance of local languages in the era of Globalization. Language is a medium of communication, expression and storage of knowledge that can be passed from one generation to the next generation. Language also symbolizes the cultural identity of the people or region where it is spoken. As a well-known fact English has emerged as a global language over the past few decades which is providing abundant opportunities for growth not only on the international platforms but also in the local markets. English is becoming lingua franca with the emergence of new and advanced technologies of communication. It is feared that in the competition with the global language, local languages may disappear in the near future. While a global language facilitates communication in a multilingual country, it also poses challenges for the identity and prestige of local languages. This paper aims to focus on various aspects of local languages, their relation in terms of competition or coordination with the global language, its impact on literature and culture and more important the growth of its users. It also addresses the question whether speakers of any particular language need to keep themselves limited to the local boundaries or they should embrace the open sky full of opportunities making global language as a medium to spread the knowledge existing in the local languages to the entire world.

Keywords: *Local languages, Global language, perspectives, challenges, globalization, communication.*

Language is a distinct quality of humans. The first and foremost function of language has been to facilitate communication among people. When two or more people share a common language, they can easily communicate their thoughts and emotions to each other. Any common language spoken by a group of people or community mostly in a particular region forms the roots of their cultural identity, knowledge and a sense of belonging. When any such group or community comes in contact with other group or community, their own language gets the title of their mother tongue or their local language while the language of other community or region remains alien or foreign to both of them. So, whenever the movement of human beings increased from one place to other place in search of livelihood or due to their quest of knowledge, the need to learn other languages grew so that the knowledge existed in one language could be transmitted to other languages. This transmission of knowledge influenced the lives of people deeply especially in the fields of medicine, art, culture, economy and new discoveries. In the present age when new and faster means of transport eased the months and months long journeys into days and hours, the movement of people from one place to another place and from one country to another country, increased rapidly. With the rise of Globalization, the countries have become interdependent for trades, business, employment, education and development. Not only in economic

perspectives, culturally also the exchange of thoughts, ideas, ways of life, etc. has impacted life, literature and art everywhere. So, the need of a common language became rampant through which people could connect, communicate and comprehend with the larger world. In this scenario English has emerged as lingua franca providing a common medium to multilingual people to work at any platform without any hassles in communicating with each other. In the era of globalization communicative language teaching (CLT) [1] has emerged as the first and foremost purpose of language teaching and learning.

Literature Review

Most of the research in the field of language in India revolves around the question of the linguistic identity and threats to it sometimes from other languages and sometimes from digitalization and how languages are becoming extinct and what all attempts are required for the preservation of our local languages.

Objective

In the present paper, I discuss the role of local languages in the growth of its speakers, various challenges that the local languages are facing in the global era, interdependence of languages on each other, the interplay between the local and global languages and its impact on culture, literature and lives of people in a region or a country.

Research methods

The present study is based on an extensive reading over the years, minute observations of behavior of people, factual details and analysis based on various studies and research articles, multiple debates through online and offline platforms regarding languages. The present paper has been designed using qualitative and comprehensive approach and comparisons.

Discussion and Contribution

One's mother tongue plays a vital role in the learning approach, understanding, experience and development of an individual. It is not only the sound and signs of the mother tongue that an individual acquires but also inherits the patterns of meanings, concepts, a distinct perspective, various traditions and cultural roots which make them feel rooted in the very soil of belongingness as their own. So, it is believed that when education is imparted through mother tongue as the medium of instruction, learners learn the things without much difficulty because the language of their formal and informal education remain the same. It enhances the learning abilities and confidence of the learner. Ngugi wa Thiong'o advocates the need and importance of native languages in his book *'Decolonizing the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature'* [2]. He wrote that language carries culture and culture through oral traditions and literature carries the entire body of values by which people perceive to themselves and which determine their identity in the world. Regarding the pedagogy he opined that when the language of home and school is the same, it influences the learners in a positive way while learning through a second language as a medium of instruction affects the interest and learning abilities of learners otherwise. In connection to Kenya, Ngugi opined that

learning through one's local language, the learners do not feel divided, instead they feel confident and remain focused and eventually develop a deep understanding in the subject of their study and develop interest and curiosity to learn new things, enhances original thinking and independent approach.

The National Education Policy of India (2020) also emphasis the role of local languages in the formal education system and advocates the need to promote local languages as the medium of instruction especially for young learners so that they can feel at home while receiving formal education and that would make them more confident and expressive.

We all know that India is a multilingual country with diverse ethnic cultures and traditions. India has a diverse list of spoken languages among different groups of people which are further diversified in different states and regions of the country. So many languages are spoken in India and each language has its distinct identity with rich oral tradition and literature. It is rightly said that after every mile a variation in language is seen here. Since the beginning of the constitution, there has been a debate over the national language of India. However, the eighth schedule of the constitution of India recognizes 22 languages as the official languages of India [3]. Article 343 (1), of Indian Constitution states "The official language of the Union shall be Hindi in Devanagari script," [4]. Alongside Hindi it allows the use of English as an official language for center and for interstate communications where such states do not share any common official language recognized in the eighth schedule. Given below is the list of 22 recognized languages in Indian Constitution:

Table 1 - Recognized Languages in Indian Constitution

S.N.	Languages	Spoken in States/UT	Script used for writing
1.	Assamese	Assam, Arunachal Pradesh	Eastern Nagari (Assamese)
2.	Bengali	West Bengal, Tripura	Bengali Script
3.	Bodo	Assam	Devanagari
4.	Dogri	Jammu and Kashmir	Name Dogra Akkhar
5.	Gujarati	Gujarat, Daman and Diu, Dadra and Nagar Haveli	Gujrati
6.	Hindi	Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Uttarakhand, Bihar, Rajasthan, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Mizoram, Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh	Devanagari
7.	Kannada	Karnataka	Kannada
8.	Kashmiri	Jammu and Kashmir	Perso-Arabic, Devanagari
9.	Konkani	Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Maharashtra, Goa	Devanagari
10.	Maithili	Bihar, Jharkhand	Devanagari
11.	Malayalam	Kerala, Lakshadweep, Puducherry	Malayalam
12.	Manipuri	Manipur	Meitei
13.	Marathi	Maharashtra, Goa, Daman and Diu, Dadra and Nagar Haveli	Devanagari
14.	Nepali	Sikkim, West Bengal	Devanagari
15.	Odia (Oriya)	Orissa	Odia
16.	Punjabi	Punjab, Chandigarh, Delhi, Haryana	Gurmukhi

17.	Sanskrit	Uttarakhand	Brahmi, Devanagari
18.	Santali	Spoken by Santhal community in Jharkhand, Bihar, Assam, Chhattisgarh, Mizoram, West Bengal, Tripura	Ol Chiki script
19.	Sindhi	Gujrat, Maharashtra, Rajasthan	Devanagari
20.	Tamil	Tamil Nadu, Puducherry	Tamil
21.	Telugu	Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Puducherry	Telugu
22.	Urdu	Jammu and Kashmir, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal	Perso-Arabic

Of these languages, 14 languages were initially included in the constitution. Sindhi language was included in 1967, Konkani, Manipuri and Nepali were added in 1992 and Bodo, Dogri, Maithili and Santali languages were included in 2004. Besides this, six of the scheduled languages, Tamil, Sanskrit, Kannada, Telugu, Malayalam and Odia have been given the classical status in India. The Human Resource and Development Ministry provides certain benefits to promote the classical languages. Still more than 30 languages including Bhojpuri, are striving to get the status of the official language.

With the rise of English as a global language, it has become a common perception that local languages are losing their power and prestige and the day is not far when local languages would eventually disappear from the scene. Some people foresee English as a threat for the existence and identity of the local languages. They also fear the loss of cultural identity along with the decreasing use of local language. They are of the opinion that our education system, schools and institutions are responsible for this loss.

The biggest challenge that I see, Indian languages are facing is in the form of scripts. Devanagari script which is the base of many Indian languages is becoming endangered and if it remains continue one day many Indian scripts will become extinct. The future generations probably won't be able to read and write anything in Devanagari and other Indian scripts. Since the instant messaging platforms became popular it is seen as a common tendency among the users to write messages using Roman script for their local language. This tendency of people will make all our Indian languages void and hollow. It will build up a monster made up of different languages, abnormal from all sides just wearing the skin of Roman script.

Many people blame mobile phone, and technology for the rise of this tendency that may be true to some extent but what is more responsible for this tendency is the psychology of people that compels them to think that Roman script is easy in comparison to Devanagari and other Indian scripts and further the blame is shifted to schools which made English a compulsory language while Hindi or any other language has been secondary. But the fact is that the same mindset which has accepted English as a superior language is responsible for the replacement of scripts.

Probably, the major concern arises when besides the medium of communication, English is used as the parameter to decide various other things related to the lives of people, for example a matter to show off, to nurture the false notion of superiority, the benchmark of being rich or of high status and class or to measure people's standard of schooling and high education even sometimes to decide people's caste, religion and region they belong to. For example, just stop for a moment when parents are waiting to pick their children at the bus stop, most of the conversation you will hear, would be in English because every parent wants

to prove others that they have a class as they can talk in English. Even some people totally avoid speaking their mother tongue in the presence of their children, least the children should not learn it. Starting from the ingredients found in the kitchen to the channels subscribed for television, everything is mentioned in English only. And this is all done by parents not by schools. You can hear many parents taking pride in that their child is very poor at Hindi and very proficient and fluent in English. It means they themselves think that being poor in the local language is not a major concern at all. In fact, for some people it is a matter of proud and sign of a child's progress.

Another big challenge is the continuous degradation seen in the quality of language especially the local languages. Its recent examples are our web series which seem in a competition that who will win the award of being the most vulgar in the matter of language and it is their topmost duty to train people in the school of abusive words. Social media and the culture of forwarding messages without considering the merit and the quality of the language of the message is also responsible for the loss of quality of words. Sometimes the connection between the words of the message and the meaning they convey is lost. This happens due to various reasons like the excessive use of acronyms, short forms, incorrect spellings, and words taken from three- four languages at a time.

One more point that is about the pronunciation of names. Like we all know that this is Ram not Rama still it is pronounced Rama. Same is the case with Mahabharata, Shiva, Shrivastava, Ramayana, and Hanuman as Hanumana. I didn't get this point that what is the need to pronounce the names like Mahabharata otherwise when we know its correct pronunciation. If I don't know the correct pronunciation of Indian names then neither English nor any other language is responsible for it. Look at the 'varn vichhchhed' of the words ending with 'a' sound. All consonants are used with 'halant' and they are dependent on vowels for sound. When these words are spelled in English, they may carry an 'a' at the end of the word but why this ending 'aa' sound is used for the words ending otherwise with normal 'a' sound is really surprising and mispronunciation of Indian names by Indians themselves is ironical.

The question of inferiority and superiority is more prominent for the people whose mother tongue is Hindi in comparison to those whose mother tongue is Bengali, Malayalam or Punjabi. In a city like Delhi where people come from every corner of the country, people coming from West Bengal speak in Bengali among themselves and people coming from Kerala speak in Malayalam among themselves while the people coming from the Hindi speaking belt switch to English more often.

All the above examples I have mentioned, are from our day-to-day life. They are not from any school, institution, medical college or IIT. So, the biggest challenge in front of us is our approach towards Indian languages. It depends on us whether we accept English as a global language with its primary function which is the medium of communication to interact with the rest of the world in the global marketplace or we make it a symbol of superiority.

In the present scenario when the world is transformed into a global unit, English language seems playing a prominent role in the perspectives of growth and development of people. English opens the doors of multiple opportunities for career options. In the competitive world, English gives a flight to the aspirations of people who set higher goals for themselves and in order to fulfil their dreams who want to pursue education from foreign universities and also to the professionals skilled in their fields. It strengthens the people economically by introducing them to a larger world of opportunities. Not only English but French, Spanish, German and many other foreign languages are taking a lead in the race which seems promising candidates their dream jobs. Writers writing in Hindi or any other Indian languages measured on the parameters of their writings being translated in English or other foreign languages. Recently, Indian writer Geetanjali Shree won the prestigious Booker Prize for her novel 'Ret Samadhi' translated into English as 'Tomb of Sand'. In the early 20th century Ravindra Nath Tagore won the Nobel Prize for literature for his book 'Geetanjali' originally written in Bengali and translated into English. English language provides an outreach to Indian literature, art, cinema, industries and businesses to reach to the entire world. Apart from the aspirations of people, practically also is it possible to provide employment to the entire population where lakhs and lakhs of people are going abroad still the unemployment rate is very high.

Here, I would like to focus on two points, first Indian languages are always presented in a clash with English, which is a wrong notion in itself. Any language thrives for its wide usage and acceptability among people and the day it starts losing its utility among people it stops thriving. Many Indian languages like Punjabi, Telugu, Bengali, have seen a rise in the number of their speakers globally because people living abroad continue using their local language as a medium of conversation with in their community there. The second point is, English is gaining wider acceptance because of its utilitarian value not due to any superiority. English as a globally accepted language opens the doors to the expanding universe of knowledge. It introduces people to comparative and reasonable approach toward life and such platforms where collective efforts are made for the betterment of life as people from different nations, communities and cultures can work at one place without any barriers in communication.

English being opted as a medium of instruction is also not a hindrance to the upliftment of Indian languages. As per the Times of India editorial "English &Indian: Promoting global language does not harm development of local languages" [5]. Various studies on school children show that English medium enrolment is growing fast. There are certain reasons for parents choosing English medium over local languages. One of them is the acute shortage of study material available in local languages. Another reason is career perspective. While local languages are limited to a particular region for job opportunities, English opens up multiple career options on the national and international platforms. Also, most of the discoveries, advanced research and technology get their vocabulary from English language for which many words do not exist in local languages so in translation also these words go with their English titles only.

The debate of local verses global is not new, it was always there in different-different forms. Sometimes it came up rural verses urban, man power verses technology, regional verses national, coarse verses polished, folk verses pop, national verses global and so on. For their survival local languages, literature, art, business, industries, markets are going through a tough competition. In the roots remain the main reason whether people should keep themselves limited to the local boundaries or they should look upward and fly into the open sky of opportunities for their growth and recognition.

India has its own beauty of being diverse when it comes to the culture, literature, language and various other art forms. Its national identity is combined as a whole assimilating all local spirits and identities and cultures together. Individual choice, consciousness and decision making for one's growth cannot be neglected. Also, it is important that how much space and inclusion local identities get in the mainstream without any kind of bias. In the race of survival and growth when one sibling is assigned the role of big brother then it is obvious that all those who have been relegated to the back seat, will question the intentions as is the case of Hindi verses other Indian languages.

Conclusion – So, instead of always putting Indian languages into a binary, opposing to each other it is needed to view language as a medium of communication and expression. Efforts are to be made in the direction to improve the quality of languages as they are the medium of the storage of knowledge that could be passed from one generation to next generations and from one language to another language. Life is dynamic and so are the other concepts like identity, language, literature, and knowledge which are contributory to the progress and betterment of human life. Instead of the approach of rejection, a balanced approach to embrace the global language without compromising with the quality, pride, prestige, identity of Indian languages, literature and culture is the need of time.

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