



A Passive Mirror to Nation Building: The Hegemonic and Cultural Politics of English Language

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ABSTRACT

This paper tries to analyse the rise of new middle classes with the socio-cultural and political proficiency over the language English. This paper tries to centre Language, which primarily emits our existence as the biggest mode of manipulation and superimposition over a culture and community, also the paper tries to trace the historical evolution of language and the middle class. English language that was initially a British implementation, today regulates the entire ordinary lives across the globe. Further this paper evaluates the role of the middle class and language in respect to Globalisation and Economic liberalisation.

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The idea of stability, perpetuity and constant defines the perennial idea of existence yet the only idea of development is thrust upon change, the only motion that justifies existence in the motion of time. The contemporary designer of India in national and international forums illustrates a very distinct nature, the one clearly not envisioned by the maker constructor of Independent India. The present design challenge the fundamental idea of India as a Nation - the 'Secular', 'Democratic' and 'Republic'; and altering it with 'One Nation, One Religion, One Language' i.e. 'Hindi-Hindu-Hindustan'(see Sarkar, 1993). India is a country of 121 languages with over 19000 dialects, demonstrating the distinct culture with respect to language and dialect. History has experienced such a shift in multiple junctions, however a mega level



happened with Enlightenment, Industrialization, and most importantly with Colonialism in the eastern world. The anecdote of refabrication and the arisal of the new world lies in a single word - 'English' (signifying English men and the language English), arising a new socio-cultural and political pattern, modulated by the English world.

Even though the world might be free of colonies in the post Second World War period, the colonialism of the language English is very much vigilance and has been hegemonizing and homogenising the Globe for ages now particularly the eastern world. The social and cultural reformation that India experienced during the British raj is the genesis of the western manipulation via the English language. This paper will analyse the rising middle class and hegemonic politics in respect to Economic liberalisation and Hindu Nationalism. The epistemic debate of this paper centres around the evolutionary pattern of class, the linguistic domination, social and economic reform and politics, geared towards the new identity - a homogenised 'Modern' world.

What is Language?

Commonly-sensical understanding of Language is the use of words, syllables the generate a meaning, which every society and community adopt as per their distinct quality of life with the only intention is to express and experience life. As Ferdinand de Saussure in his *Course in General Linguistics*(1916) stated 'language' is the social phenomena that defines the structural system, as they are collective products of social interaction, the essential instruments through which human beings constitute and articulate their world. Saussure defined language as 'speech circuit' which represents an individual's psychological programming that makes an Individual conceptualises the world, diversifies the existence and functionalities of the culture of politics, most of all it demarcates the phenomena of reality. This 'reality' is very fluvial and is prone to radical change, almost on a regular basis. As Dell Hymes(1974) identified that the communicative capabilities contributes to the development of the social system, thus the idea of reality gets redefined with every conversation and communication. A phenomenon we experience in our everyday ordinary lives.

The aspect of English superimposition and the development of homogenic and hegemonic processes were all part of the civilizational process of the Europeans, that has almost inculcated into the genes of the Eastern world. The 1990s LPG(Liberalization, Privatization and Globalization) ignited a new form of colonialism, driving communities, societies as per the American definition of modernity, challenging



the diverse, multicultural, and multi-linguistic design of the globe (see Pattanayak, 1984). How this evolved will be seen in the following parts of the article.

Historical Evolution of Language

The authentic Indian identity established upon distinct linguistic practice, caste system, religion, ethnicity, becoming the prime characteristics, had grasped all the attention of the Orientalists and the Empiricists in the early 18th and 19th century. Over that India is being regarded as the oldest and the most highly developed civilization, demonstrated by the complexity of ancient Indian knowledge, culture and perfection in Sanskrit language, which aroused the anguishment to finding the origin and nature of Human civilization. This discovery soon shifted the gaze from the Greek and the Egyptian civilization as the ancient civilization, to in depth study of the socio-cultural structure of India to understand the origin of human civilization(see Upadhya, 2002). This intense scrutiny of Indian socio-cultural structure soon transformed into the Eupromen civilizational project - deconstructing, reconstructing and reformulating Indian states into the model of Modernity drafted by the Europeans. William Dalrymple(2019) located this to be the genesis of English superimposition and Hegemonization, as it is considered the language only of nobel, and possesses a distinct status and prestige, this let people subscribe to the English model of lifestyle. This generated the Bhadraklok nationalism, amalgamating western culture into India design demarcating a distinct shift in the Indian academic to cultural shift that Sumit Sarkar mentioned in his *Beyond the Nationalistic Frames*(2002). This amplifying the hegemonization and colonization process by developing the trajectory while introducing their distinct agency of Bureaucrats i.e. the Indian, educated in the western factory model education system serving the crowing while carrying on the hegemonization project on the behalf of the British on their own people (see Fernandes and Heller, 2006).

The entire and the rise of the modern state is believed to be the reciprocatory behaviour to Enlightenment, Industrial revolution and Capitalism in the Western World. Thinkers like Karl Marx, Max Weber identified this to be a new degree of degradation of society. For Marx(1844) it was more of a Commodity Production and for Weber it was more of Rationalization of the world, acknowledging the transforming the entire nature of social power into democratic state polity, declination of community and religion and the rise of individual social conduct with the securitization of ethics and commodifying the world into a much concrete economic base(see Kaviraj, 2000). The hegemonic politics in the colonies was pretty different, it was much to mitigate the traditionalism and to subjugate the new wester



economic policies - Language, culture, ethnicity, the whole of authenticity became a subject of reformation in the name of what Viswanathan called the 'Colonial Subjectivity' through English Language proficiency (as cited in Scrase and Scrase, 2009). The refabrication was put much in:

“ ... India in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinion, in morals, and in intellect”

-by Ruchira Ganguly-Scrase and Timothy J. Scrase (2009)

Realising the density of language is one but realising the manipulating over language is another, exquisitely changing all our lives, with the post-colonial pedagogy. One of the prime and interesting arenas of studying a third world, communal wealth country is the question of - 'should we' or 'should we not' adopt, this is exactly what Scrases¹ has been discussed. The controversy over the adoption, and the advantages and disadvantages of English language, designing not only our ordinary lives but also the future course of revolution in and across the globe.

Hegemonization and Middle class

India has been the greatest colony to Great Britain in the whole of south Asia, and a further extension of the English economy. The justification that the Orientalist and the Colonisers presented was modernising the traditionalist, by making intellectually and morally rationalised with English language, which Antonio Gramsci, an Italian Marxist, identifies as the apt way of declaring supremacy - manipulation of the common sense through language is the victorious approach to the cultural hegemony (see Anderson, 1983; Riley, 2011; Ransome, 2010). The rise of bhadralok babu's in the Indian discourse, the other name of the new bilingual Bengali elite in the 19th century just not to carry forward the British Hegemonic project but to uproot the white rule from the Indian mainland. Therefore, the emergence of static, cultural and political usages of English started to get prominent in the versatility, resulting in demarcating the boundaries, commodifying the new middle class as the means to hegemony and creating the socio-cultural inequality in the identity and authenticity of India (see Scrase and Scrase, 2009). In this entire process, the British unknowingly sow the seeds of its own destruction. With the knowledge of English language and culture arose the first generation of Indian nationalist demanding

¹ I call Ruchira Ganguly-Scrase and Timothy J. Scrase, the Scrases a short form designation both for an easy hold on.



their 'swaraj'. This eventually percolated to a full fledged freedom struggle movement with English language becoming their golden weapon.

Post-Independence period the chauvinism of English language diminished a bit, particularly because of the economical struggle and the pressure of building a concrete National state. However, around the 1990s, LPG reform India once again was blown by Western English language and cultural dominance, which were additional byproducts of Economic liberalization and Globalization, flooding the Indian market with western goods, demarcating them as a pathway to lead a modern and advanced lifestyle. India being with a fairly large population has always been beneficial for marketing, the foremost reason for the British to rule us for over 200 years. The hegemonization of politics as Gramsci said developed passively, with the idea of powerless consent to the power holders slowing evolving our lives to a monogamous manner that the government desired, therefore making the middle class the only class to distribute the politics (see Hyug Baeg Im, 1991; Fernandes and Heller, 2006). The bourgeois of India never really achieved hegemonic status, because of the economic and cultural elitism of the English culture, and the working class beyond ever desiring such lifestyle - they were considered too weak and fragmented for such a status. The Indian middle, the salary workers - the administrative officials, clerks and complaint civil servants, playing the role both of the dominating fraction of classes and also as the forge to the internal unity within the hugely diverse fragment of Indian authenticity, which Bourdieu calls classification struggle(see Heller and Fernandes, 2006). In this process the colonists gained their desired profit while sucking every bit of resources that India has.

Contemporary Challenges and Globalization

The position of India today in the global forum demonstrates another distinct shift in the socio-cultural and nationalistic construction is the entire effort to distance itself from the colonial past. Which is particularly impossible, colonial history and other invasions became a trajectory to our contemporary existence. This the language war, that in the post-independence era even became the core reason for state boundaries reformation. The parliamentary adoption of three language policy i.e. Hindi, English and respective regional language in the official preceding of the government in 1968. Thus, the English language became an integral part of Indian distinct identity. Again with the establishment of International administrative organisations like the United Nation and the rising need for diplomatic relations made English the unofficially official language of the clobale.



The state of West Bengal in this national and international development played their own politics over the English language and their colonial hangover limited Bengal growth. The 30 years long Communist rule and their idea of social justice i.e. mass literacy, political empowerment, elimination of women operation and improvement of health status, astonishingly places Bengal politics on a different pedestal while stagnants Bengal's growth. For them the significance of one's mother tongue was more important, English was abolished from the primary school courses along with advanced technological fortification. India is already among the list of third world countries, cutting down the one element that demarcates the contemporary status quo was the biggest backless to all the Bengalis who grew around this period. The middle-class is considered to be the class that forged in the intersection of the liberalisation and political context, organising and reorganising the political challenges and changes, and changing Bengal politics once again in the year 1999. Another conspicuous middle class politics is rising Hindu Nationalism in Indian politics - the consecutive uprising of the Bharatiya Janata Party(BJP) in the centre with the courting of Hindu Nationalistic Ideology cannot be configured without the support of the hegemonized class, the middle class. But one needs to agree it was the middle class and the English language implementation into academia that opened the Indian markets to the modern economy, also providing successful employment nationally and globally, brought the globe under the common umbrella.

Conclusion

The emergence of Globalization and Economic liberalisation in the socio-political and economic discourse, was mostly to extend the western superimposition and juxtaposition of west over east in a passive consensual manner. English language became the international language and the medium of manipulating to the most public-private dichotomy of life set the standard of what is called Modernity, transmitted the New Indian Middle classes as a subject of colonial domination to a subject of negotiating to the Globalisation (see Scrase and Scrase, 2009). The cultural politics of English education is indeed an important component for International professional employment, it is one of the prime reasons for India to get an International stand in the Global market. But everything comes with some repercussions, the very authenticity and versatility of India is on the verge of falling apart. A popular quiet in Scrase and Scrase(2009) says: “ we witness the slow devaluation of local, mother tongue language ...”, today the contemporary challenge is to reconcile them. Over that the English Language proficiency is helping



but also rejuvenating Modern poverty as well as increasing the sense of insecurity and alienation more and more among the common man. Among all, it intensifies the phenomena of brain-drain. The contemporary time is much like one's boundaries are constantly being defined and tested with every step we put forward.

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