

Linguistic Integration in India: A Persistence of Hegemony

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India is a nation of tremendous cultural diversity and a potential pluriverse in itself. The layered issue of linguistic integration is a very relevant one in realizing this potential. In this paper, I explore how the propagation of Hindi as the lingua franca of India creates feelings of resentment among other language groups through a field study conducted in the village of Ranekpar in Gujarat in January 2020. While Hindi imposition has been met with stiff resistance from non- Hindi speaking communities, English seems to retain its popular status as a language of power and opportunity, despite being occasionally spurned as an oppressive colonial legacy. The paper seeks to highlight the various reasons behind the selective acceptance of English as a link language in India by examining existing literature on the complex language issue, and by comparing the subjective attitudes towards Hindi and English gathered during the localized study. I locate this work within the larger discourse of linguistic hegemony, which has been one of the major focal points of the existing repertoire of post-colonial studies in India.

Hegemonic imposition; plurality; linguistic integration; lingua franca

1. Introduction

Understanding Indian society with its large multitude of cultures and inherent complexities is a mandate that is as complicated and humongous as India herself. Tackling layered issues like Eurocentric paradigms embedded in public consciousness and internalized colonial mentality require a line of inquiry into the numerous factors that play a role in their emergence, pervasiveness and persistence. One of these factors is language and the way we communicate. Another is India's past as a British



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colony; the post-colonial nation must grapple simultaneously with its imperial legacies, including the perpetual adulation of all things ‘Western’.

While envisioning a world with many co-existing centres, one cannot help but be awed by the existing diversity in India and the potential to harness this staggering array of worldviews to create desirable futures. Today, the dangers of adverse linguistic reactions and agitations prove more worrisome when viewed from the perspective of a pluriverse.

There is a Hindi aphorism that depicts India’s linguistic diversity rather well: *Kos-kos par badle paani, chaar kos par baani* [The taste of water changes every mile, and every four miles, the spoken language]. While the states in India are organized along linguistic lines, the push for a common national language has, from time to time, flared up regionalism and fierce assertion of linguistic identity. Politicians, policy-makers and writers have argued for Hindi to be the language that represents India, as it is spoken by a large population. But do such efforts not undermine the ‘unity in diversity’ principle which the country takes pride in?

An intriguing insight which surfaced during the Pivot 2020 Conference was that many nations and their borders themselves are colonial constructs which throw in a diversity of people together without any consideration for the cultural implications. This complicates manifestations of nationalism. Dua (1993) suggests that “the case of Hindi as a national language may be considered as a prototype of the complex sociolinguistic issues involved in national identity” (p. 293). The presence of English further complicates the issue of national identity; while it is an imperial legacy that has proved profoundly useful and convenient for the diverse country, it is also a remainder and reminder of a long colonial past and a carrier of Eurocentric schemas.

1.1. Motivation and purpose of study

In January 2020, I witnessed a peculiar exchange in Hindi between a ten-year-old boy and a design college student, my batchmate, during our field work in Ranekpar village, in Gujarat.

“Aap boht buray ho. Poochho kyun?” [You are very bad. Ask me why?]

“Kyun?” [Why?]

“Hamein aapki bhaasha seekhni padti hai, par aap hamaari bhaasha nahi seekhte.”

[We learn your language Hindi, but you don’t learn ours.]

“Meri bhaasha Telugu hai, tum seekhoge?” [My language is Telugu; will you learn it?]

Here, the boy, whose mother tongue is Gujarati, expresses his mild resentment over the fact that he is required to “learn” (or rather, study) Hindi to a college girl from Ahmedabad, whom he assumes to be a native Hindi speaker. She tells him that her mother tongue is, in fact, Telugu.

While my batchmate, who belongs to Hyderabad, speaks Telugu at home and uses English for most purposes in college, the common language that most of us used to interact with the villagers was mainly Hindi. Even in the above scenario, it was the link language which facilitated communication between two individuals from vastly different regions of the country, both geographically and culturally. In spite of this, Hindi was not considered by either of them as their ‘own.’

This incident prompted me to reflect on the pervasive ‘one nation one language’ paradigm in India. This ideology holds that India must draw her identity from a single ‘national’ language. As a design student striving to understand the complex context I operate in, as well as someone who was born into one linguistic group (Tamil), was educated in another (English) and socialized largely in yet another (Hindi), the issue of language and its intersections with identity was of immense interest to me. Being a part of

such overlapping linguistic circles enables me to comprehend many north Indian languages through my knowledge of Hindi and south Indian languages through Tamil, and greatly endears the subject of linguistics to me. The research also led me to reconsider some of my own assumptions, by grappling with the sheer scale of the Indian context one step at a time.

My line of inquiry was this: what goes behind the attitudes of perceiving a language as *'yours'* or *'mine'*? Can we have an *'our'* language? Would a common tongue serve to bridge our pluralities or undermine diverse worldviews?

These questions crystallized into the aim of bringing in subjective perspectives in order to understand why Hindi is considered hegemonic and English preferred by non-Hindi speakers, and what the implications of both these languages are for the plural worldviews in India. I attempt to understand the connotations of the linguistic integration paradigm from the perspective of a north Indian village, keeping in mind the dichotomy of the sustained but transforming role of English as a link language in post-colonial India.

2. Background

I place this inquiry against a backdrop of complex cultural, historical and political developments since the colonial period. The institutionalized study of English in India was introduced with the 1835 Macaulay Minute on Education with the “lofty purpose of making accessible to Indians the knowledge and learning of modern Europe. English education was intended to help the Indians to understand themselves better, to interpret themselves to the West and the West to themselves.” However, the “knowledge of English was confined to a small number of people, the country became divided into an English-speaking elite and the non-English-speaking masses, with hardly a bridge between them” (Gupta, 1995, p. 74). After 1947, it continued to flourish as the first language of the ruling classes and the state. However, being associated by some with colonial oppression and cultural invasiveness, “it came under increasing attack, especially by nationalists and cultural revivalists, intellectuals committed to post-colonial ideology, and politicians in search of populist vote- gathering slogans” (Gupta, 1995, p. 74).

During the framing of India’s constitution in 1950, the Government hoped to make Hindi the sole official language of the country. However, because of strong opposition from South India, it was decided that English would remain an associate official language until 1965, after which Hindi would become the sole national and official language. But 1965 saw widespread protests from non-Hindi regions, which brought about a major change in the nation’s language policy: the indefinite continuance of English as a co-official language. Each state would have the liberty to choose its own official language, and 22 such major languages were then officially recognized in the constitution. Why was Hindi so vehemently opposed? As Peggy Mohan (2000) points out, “Hindi was just another regional language in the new India; [...] by no means 'national'. The real (inherited) National Language, English, was in no sense a mass language” (p. 1672). Even so, English was the chosen target language of the states which opposed Hindi.

The Hindi movement in South India was started in the year 1918 by Mahatma Gandhi, who saw the need to unite the northern and southern states of the country in the interest of national integration.

As Hindi was spoken by the largest section of the people of India, institutions like the Dakshin Bharat Hindi Prachar Sabha were tasked with spreading Hindi in the South. The Three-language formula envisaged by Kothari Commission sought that, Hindi should be introduced in non-Hindi-speaking states from an early stage and the Hindi-speaking states should introduce a non-Hindi Indian language. However, while most non-Hindi speaking states did introduce Hindi, unfortunately, the Hindi-speaking

states bypassed the requirement to teach a non-Hindi language (preferably a South Indian language) by teaching Sanskrit, which uses the same script as Hindi. As recently as 2019, the Union Home Minister proposed to declare Hindi as the national language on the occasion of Hindi Diwas [Annual Hindi Day], claiming it “alone” could unite the country and it was the language which should become India’s identity globally.

The 2011 Census listed 1,369 rationalized mother tongues in the country. A total of 19,569 raw returns of mother tongues were subjected to thorough linguistic scrutiny, edit and rationalisation in order to assess the correlation between the mother tongue and designations of the census, and to present them in terms of their linguistic affiliation to actual languages and dialects. In this Census, 43.63% of Indians listed Hindi as their mother tongue. Taking this figure at face value, we can say that Hindi is the first language of less than half of our population. After we include those who list it as a ‘second’ or ‘third’ language, the figure only just about crosses the halfway mark. Besides this, there are 49 dialects and languages, some with grammar and syntax of their own, which are grouped under the term ‘Hindi’, including Haryanvi, Braj, Awadhi and Rajasthani. Though a Hindi speaker may easily understand some of these tongues, they each have an identity not wholly dependent on Hindi. As the official language that takes account of a large expanse of terrain with many different dialects, it proves that the actual figures are an exaggeration. This renders the argument of majority-speakers baseless. Even if it is spoken by a large number of people, this is not a majority, as “the 'Hindi belt' is not actually 'Hindi-speaking' [...]; It merely has Hindi language loyalty” (Mohan, 2000, p. 1673). However, as Groff (2016) demonstrates in her ethnographic study, even ‘loyalty’ might be an oversimplification of the ground realities.

English is frequently attacked for being a ‘foreign element’ by those who support Hindi. While it is a remnant of the colonial era, the role of English has changed over the past seven decades. While it was introduced by the British to help create a class of Indians to aid them in communicating with and governing the masses, it is now used as a common medium of communication between Indians from different linguistic communities. While it used to be a tool to convince the colonized masses that the West was the epitome of civilizational achievement, today it is an important international language that affords Indians access to the world at large, especially in the wake of the digital revolution.

The English versus Hindi debate persists to date, and manifests as minority language conflicts and issues pertaining to education and policy. (Mohan, 2010) (Sridhar, 1996) (Ramanathan, 1999) (Chandran, 2006) (Jussawalla, 1982).

2.1. Literature context

Hans R. Dua (1993) examines the dynamics of the Hindi-English conflict and compares them as the ‘national language’ and the ex-colonial language respectively.

Santosh Kumar Khare (2002) points out that the popular arguments for Hindi are the number of speakers, as well as its lineage from Sanskrit. He proposes a number of coping mechanisms against linguistic conflicts, including Hindi adopting a more liberal approach by integrating other languages, and changes in its educational and recruitment policies instead of its symbolic constitutional pedestal.

Krishna Sen (2009) assesses the dimensions of nationalism, globalism and nativism with respect to English in post-colonial India as a problematic identity paradigm, along with its connection to education, the Indian middle class, the indigenized Indian English, and to privilege.

R. K. Gupta (1995) discusses the transforming role of English in the Indian subcontinent from the colonial era to the current situation and analyses its shortcomings and merits. He also discusses the issues in English studies in the post-colonial situation, such as the disparity in proficiency among states and the problems posed by varying degrees of competence among students. He counters the usual arguments

used against English by nationalists, politicians and cultural revivalists, and reflects upon the many paradoxes of the language, the ambiguity in the policy regarding English and the wide disparity between profession and practice.

Anirudh Deshpande (2000) argues that English in India is pernicious, because it lives and grows at the expense of the other Indian languages, especially Hindi. He contextualizes the decline of Hindustani against the backdrop of communal politics and rising importance of English due to the westward-looking mentality of the Indian elite. He asserts that that "successful nation states cultivate their own languages even at the cost of historical legacies they might unfortunately inherit," and that "knowledge and philosophy of a society cannot be developed in languages the masses do not comprehend." However, the reality is that neither is Hindi a language that the masses comprehend. He bemoans how poorly Hindi has fared since Independence, and the precedence that English takes over Hindi as "the language of social status and power," but overlooks the way the propagation of Hindi prompted regional passions to flare up and blighted the cause of Hindi. The case of Ranekpar shows that the seemingly well-intentioned promotion efforts have only created a resentment among other linguistic groups, even as Hindi is touted as the most suitable language for the nation by its supporters.

Lakhan Gusain (2012) traces the evolution "before and after Indian independence in 1947 Constituent Assembly debates for making it a national language, anti-Hindi agitations in the southern states and compromises, federal efforts in promoting and propagating it as an official language, and finally, Hindi's emergence as a language of masses" (p. 44). However, in arguing for the effectiveness of and the need for Hindi as a national language, the perspectives of the masses are largely ignored. Hindi still has not quite "emerged" as a "language of the masses," though its propagation has evidently resulted in several linguistic communities perceiving it as a threat.

Cynthia Groff (2016) offers a local, minority-language perspective on national level language planning in the context of linguistic diversities through interviews and participant observation with Kumauni people of Uttarakhand. She asserts that "from an international perspective, India's language policies may be applauded as exceptionally multilingual. Indeed, India's acceptance and promotion of linguistic diversity contrasts with the policies of many nations that have promoted the status of a single national language" (p. 137). However, "much of the linguistic diversity in India remains hidden," as she shows through her study of the on-the-ground consequences experienced by Kumauni speakers in North India. I adopted a similar approach in order to weigh popular narratives championing Hindi, against local perspectives, which yielded qualitative insights.

3. Primary Research

3.1. Field context

Ranekpar is a village located in rural area of Morbi district of Gujarat; it is one of the 67 villages of Halvad Block of Morbi district. It has around 400 families. The language spoken here is Gujarati. According to Census 2011, Ranekpar's population is 2391. Out of this, 1201 are males whereas the females count 1190.

This village has 449 children in the age group of 0-6 years. Among them 223 are boys and 226 are girls. Literacy rate in Ranekpar is 56%. 1344 out of total 2391 population is literate here. In males the literacy rate is 67% as 807 males out of total 1201 are literate while female literacy rate is 45% as 537 out of total 1190 females are literate. They practice Hinduism, and the major castes are Bharwad, Babariya and Patel.

Their occupations range from agriculture to cattle-rearing and dairy-farming, shop-keeping and other businesses. There are five primary schools in the village for both boys and girls. The villagers were very forthcoming and warm towards us, and willingly offered their perspectives on the various issues we inquired about and participated actively in the discussions we initiated.



Figure 1 Map showing location of Ranekpar and satellite image of Ranekpar village in Gujarat

3.2 Methodology

The field study was facilitated by the National Institute of Design, Ahmedabad, as part of the course curriculum. I conducted this qualitative localized study over a 10-day period, during which I spent ten hours daily interacting with the locals. Through numerous informal and semi-formal interviews with the children, their parents and the elderly of Ranekpar, I raised questions about their perceptions of Hindi and English, beside their mother tongue, with the aim of gathering the local perspectives on the linguistic integration paradigm. The interactions took place in a hybrid common language which was a mixture of Hindi and the locally spoken dialect of Gujarati. Paralanguage was also taken into cognizance while interpreting the tone to draw inferences. Data was collected in the form of subjective perspectives through conversations. I attempt to paraphrase the conversations in English as literally as possible.

3.3 Data: Some local perspectives

- When the study began, one group of women was convinced that we had arrived at the village to learn Gujarati. My ice-break happened to be a long impromptu session with them during which we exchanged the words for various objects (blouse, clothes, earrings, dog, etc.) in our respective languages. For a community which had rare interactions with people from other

states, we were an intriguing novelty, as we were students who hailed from different states and spoke at least twelve different languages between us.

- One middle-aged woman retrieved a wedding invitation printed in Tamil, which her family had received in 2012, when she learnt that my mother tongue was Tamil. She said in a mixture of Hindi and Gujarati, “This had come from your country,” using the words *tamara des*, literally meaning “your country”. She told me that she had preserved it because it was in Tamil. That a language and a script so different from one’s own exists was a source of immense fascination and excitement to her. This brought out the beauty of the pluralism in India. A linguistic group so remote that it seems like a different country.
- “You are big people, you speak English,” observed a middle-aged man, referring to our batch of students. This attitude surfaced on multiple occasions, where the children, eager to impress, used as many English words as they knew when they conversed with us, switching swiftly to Gujarati while talking amongst themselves. Calling us “big people” seemed to indicate how English connotes prestige and invokes a certain grudging awe, and that it connotes the ‘urban’ and the ‘powerful.’ This complex is a major player in how identities are formed in Indian society. As the elite Indian aspired to climb the social ladder in the colonial era by learning English, so do today’s unempowered Indians, belonging to rural regions, lower classes, disadvantaged castes or tribes, aspire to improve their status by equipping themselves with the language that seems to open doors in the same country which was once culturally enslaved by it. Unfortunately, the realities of illiteracy, gatekeeping and quality of education prove that this is not an easy threshold to cross.
- “*ABCD padhte hain.*” [They study ABCD], a man said with pride, referring to his children studying in the village primary school. The alphabet as a synecdoche again demonstrated how English education was a status symbol and language of power and opportunity. It is a matter of pride for the villagers that their children are studying English at school. In the village, it is perceived as exotic and stylish. English is perceived as (and has indeed been, for a large part of India’s modern history) a status symbol.
- “She keeps listening to Hindi songs, she has no interest in our folk music... I don’t understand Hindi, I feel very helpless,” a middle-aged mother expressed her worries about her daughter, who preferred listening to mainstream Hindi music, from Bollywood movies and albums, over Gujarati music and the folk music of the village. This illustrates how a dominant culture overtaking the intangible living culture of the village is a matter of concern for the locals. The older generations were especially sceptical of these influences. An octogenarian woman recalled the days of her youth (in Gujarati), when she would sing traditional Gujarati folk songs with her sisters at weddings, whereas ‘today’s youth’ danced to loud Hindi music. While this may not directly be related to the integration paradigm, it showed how children were more open to the influence of Hindi, the educational exposure allowing them to explore these genres and gradually replacing the folk traditions passed down the generations.
- Another man in his mid-twenties said passionately, “*Hindi toh apne des ki hi hai. Agar aapke parivaar ka koi aapse aise bartaav karey toh kaisa lagta hai? Bhai jaisa haina Hindi toh. Bada bhai. Angrezi toh kya, baahar ki vastu hai.*”

[Hindi is from the same land, of Indian soil; if someone from your own family suppresses you and treats you like an inferior, how does it feel? As Indian languages, aren't these equal to Hindi? Why is Hindi a dominating bigger brother? English is a foreign object, I agree...]

This intriguing analogy the man gave compared 'Indian languages' to family members and English to a '*baaharwala*' or an 'outsider'; Hindi is seen as born of 'Indian soil', thus ideally an equal to every other native language. This perspective holds that English deserves the tag of being better because it is an import. If Hindi is imposed in the same hegemonic way as English was by the colonizers, it argues, how can it be considered any better?

This analogy for insider versus outsider also brought up the issue of internalized colonial mentality, which holds the English language to be better because it was 'brought from outside.'

4. Inferences

The broad inferences drawn from the study regarding the selective acceptance of English saw the emergence of the following themes.

- **Language as a status symbol:** English is a language that has been associated with aspirations and upward mobility for generations. These ambitions are shared by businessmen, intellectuals and academics alike and almost everyone prominent manages to send his or her children abroad on one pretext or another. This push towards the west, and the wide-spread social admiration and envy it provokes in the case of people who 'make it', has shattered the self-confidence of the Indian middle class (Deshpande, 2000). It was a rather glaring insight that while the urban middle class develops a westward-looking tendency, the rural areas aspire to become more urban by studying English. Beyond its functional aspect, English also carries a sense of power with it, that other Indian languages do not.
- **Colonial mentality:** English is perceived as intrinsically better precisely for the same reason it is occasionally spurned by nativists: that it is an "imported" language. This mentality finds an echo in how things, ideas and people from 'beyond' India, particularly the West, are viewed and looked up to. Here, a '*na tera na mera*' (neither yours nor mine) attitude was prevalent: a willingness to embrace the 'neutral outsider' rather than settle for the other's mother tongue.
- **Religious and regional neutrality:** While Hindi is natively spoken (and spoken for) in the Hindi belt by 43% of Indians (Census 2011), English is largely a target language for most Indians. The insight from the study is that another reason for the preference is the perception of Hindi as being monopolized by certain regions, whereas English is more universal. The perception of its neutrality in terms of region makes it more favourable. Even in publishing, N. Kamala (2000) points out, the "Hindi vision and appropriation of Indian literary culture is replaced by a contemporary novel production staking a claim to pan-Indianism in English—a language that is not inherent to any hegemonic region in India [...] English is the language [used] to counter Hindi hegemony when attempting to address the whole of India. English is used as the vehicle of unity" (p. 251) The various indigenized ways of speaking it mean there is no right or wrong English; each region in India has its unique version of the lingua franca. It has not become '*yours*' or '*mine*', unlike Hindi.

Moreover, Hindi has communal connotations in being a Sanskritized version of Hindustani, a composite language spoken in North India, which was gradually but consciously purged of its Urdu components “by provincial language puritans” (Deshpande, 2000, p. 1240), to make a language for Hindus, while the Persianized Urdu component would be for Muslims. English has escaped this communalization by remaining an “outsider,” a value-neutral option devoid of religious undertones.

- **Assertion of identity:** For the locals of Ranekpar, loyalty to one’s language and the aversion to another is essentially a matter of assertion of identity. In a country where every language is as good as any other in principle, and unity lies in diversity, voices at the grassroots level go largely unheard when policy makers push the integration paradigm. They wanted the liberty to learn the language of their choice.
- **The fascination with plurality:** For the villagers it was a source of amusement and fascination that we were from different parts of India and did not speak Gujarati. The need to act out certain dialogues and communicate through exaggerated performances was a novel experience for us all. Reflecting upon those experiences reassures me that the lack of a common language does not necessarily hinder the ability to communicate, or connect; what makes us human is the most primal strategy of looking for our commonalities and connecting over them; we are social beings. Some of us have remained in touch over phone calls even during the lockdown, and despite differences in mother tongues/ a lack of an ‘our’ language. However, this fascination did not extend to Hindi, even though they considered it an outsider, because it was taught at schools.
- **Inter-generational differences:** An interesting pattern that emerged during the study was that children were more accepting of languages other than their mother tongue, whether English or Hindi, accepting it as a part of their education. However, the interesting thing to note was the remarkable insight which emerged from a ten-year-old child, who could sense that Hindi seemed to be spreading its tendrils into his linguistic community. The older generations were more worried about the way “Hindi culture” and the mainstream Bollywood influence was signalling a shift in values. Teachers in the village adopted a dual role by teaching in the target languages but communicating in the mother tongue.

The oldest generation saw English as something exotic and foreign, while the middle-aged viewed it as a symbol of urbanization. The youngest, Internet-savvy generation with exposure to smartphones and TV, spoke a mixed tongue, interspersing Gujarati and Hindi with several English words.

5. Conclusions

One could argue that Hindi is not substituting the mother tongue at educational level; studying this link language would only benefit the villagers. I concede that we do need a common tongue that facilitates communication across regions; but it need not be a singular, identity-lending one which subsumes the significance of the others. Besides, who decides what this common language will be? Where do the voices of those on the ground figure in the decision?

In a bid to forge a pan-Indian identity, these diverse perspectives are often ignored by policy-makers. This is why pushing the integration paradigm without taking the true masses into consideration proves

counter-productive. Regionalism and a distaste for insistent hegemonic narratives develop as a response to these efforts, and in turn shape the perceptions of languages at the ground-level, as highlighted by the primary research.

How might we address hegemony?

Perhaps the first step would be to acknowledge that it exists. Our colonial history carries many examples of subjugation and the reactions it triggers. We have convinced ourselves that we must attack everything that is a remnant of this past, and in this ongoing decolonization, we often target some things that we consider “foreign.” The irony is that we tend to substitute them with other things in the same way. In targeting English for being an imperial legacy, we have thrust Hindi upon populations without recognizing their views and desires. Language is intrinsically tied to culture, and as anthropologist Wade Davis (2003) puts it, “It is not change or technology that threatens culture; it is power, the crude face of domination.” This power, once exercised by our colonizers, now lies with us. How could we harness it to design better systems for communication without jeopardizing plural identities? How could we utilize it effectively to make our ‘unity in diversity’ principle more of a reality?

Committing ourselves to acknowledging diverse voices and becoming aware of our own biases and assumptions would go a long way in realizing India’s inherent potential to create a reality where pluralities co-exist, thrive and enrich each other. The design community has an important part to play in vocalizing these perspectives and amplifying these voices; it must provoke people to reconsider their assumptions and question their privilege. While conscious efforts to disrupt hegemony must be made at the systemic and societal levels, designers working at the community level could make an effort, within their capacity, to learn the local language.

As Anderson (1991) says, the nation is an imagined community. The intrigue felt by the locals upon encountering multiple new ‘Indian’ languages was hardly surprising. India, for them, is an abstract concept, and the plurality they had to deal with during our field study made them pause and marvel. During my presentation in the Pivot Conference, a participant from Pakistan remarked that they could relate to the issue very well; as such, even our borders are the outcome of colonialism, dividing and throwing together people with no real regard for plural or overlapping identities. With states organized along linguistic lines, but not even one completely unilingual state, can we have an ‘our’ language?

The primary research only made it clearer that making broad generalizations for a country as plural as India would be a huge blunder. The findings from studying a Hindi-speaking village, or a Tamil, or Bengali or Punjabi-speaking village would no doubt be quite different. Thus, these are not generalizations for all of India, but an example of how a hegemonic paradigm affects even the grassroots level.

Once we recognize these unique contexts as resources which can help us understand and navigate this ambiguous territory of linguistic politics and power dynamics, we can begin to imagine new pluriversal worlds and inclusive futures through conversations not just in one, but many languages.

India is richer for the multiple worlds that exist within her, and for them to coexist would take more than a single answer in a single language.

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