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Language Imperialism and its Impact in India

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Abstract:

In this world, among all the creatures, only humans have the gift of communicating through language. As people dominate others' languages too dominate over other languages is considered as Language imperialism. This paper deals with the Language imperialism which refers to the process by which a dominant language, often imposed by a colonial power, replaces and sidelines native languages leading to linguistic and cultural hegemony. This phenomenon is characterized by the spread of a dominant language through various means, such as education, media, government, and economic systems, resulting in the suppression of native languages and cultural identities. Language imperialism has been a tool of colonialism and imperialism throughout history with European languages like English, French, Spanish, and Portuguese being imposed on colonized peoples, leading to language shift, language loss, and cultural erasure. In contemporary times, language imperialism continues to manifest through globalization, with English emerging as a global language, often at the expense of local languages and cultures. This has significant implications for linguistic diversity, cultural heritage, and social justice, highlighting the need for language rights, linguistic preservation, and cultural revitalization. The

effects of linguistic imperialism are exploitation and monopolization of other languages and cultures creating language death, loss of identity and a superior-inferior division among people and languages. With the colonization of India by the British, English was given importance which has resulted in a language shift. English, along with Hindi, has become the state language of India. Unfortunately, it is very difficult to undo the extinction of a language and it is hard work to keep dying languages alive.

Keywords: Language Imperialism, colonialism, exploitation and monopolization, Language shift, Language death, Global language.

Introduction:

Individuals are the unique beings in this world who have the gift of communicating through language which is a way of connecting sound and meaning. It allows us to share our ideas, thoughts, and feelings with others in various situations. The importance of language is clear as it has assisted with smoothing social contacts, safeguarding our way of life and passing our thoughts on to people and individuals in society successfully. The World Atlas of Languages presents essential information on the current more than eight thousand languages spoken or sanctioned in the world being used and not being used. It also presents information regarding how about two thousand dialects are utilized in different areas at the national level. Though, there are thousands of languages spoken in the entire world, only a few languages have gained wide prominence over the years. As people dominate others, languages too dominate over other languages. This paper attempts to study imperialism with its diverse forms known as language imperialism and its impact in India. In particular, this paper will examine how colonialism affected the education and culture of India through its language changes. The United Nations

Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) is an international agreement that was adopted by the UN General Assembly on November 20, 1989 declared that the child is allowed to receive an education which shall be free and compulsory at least in the preliminary stages. It also provides that ethnic or religious minorities have the right to enjoy his own culture to profess and practice his religion, or to use his language.

The word ‘imperialism’ is derived from imperium, which means supreme power or sovereignty. The term colonialism was predominantly applied to Western and Japanese political and financial domination particularly in Asia and Africa in the nineteenth and twentieth century. It refers to the policy, practice or process through which a strong nation uses its military, political and economic power to expand its rule and extend its control over other distant political communities for economic advantage, military security, international prestige, and establishing its cultural domination. Since, it always involves the use of power, whether military or economic. Imperialism has often been considered morally reprehensible. There are many theories of imperialism. Conservative theories state that imperialism is necessary to preserve the existing social order in developed countries. It is necessary to secure trade markets, maintain employment and capital exports, and channel metropolitan populations’ energies and social conflicts into foreign countries. Liberal theorists hold that increasing the concentration of wealth within the richer countries leads to under-consumption for people. Therefore, overseas expansion is a way to reduce costs and secure new consumption. According to Marxist theories, since the state represents the capitalist interest, it is impossible to reduce under consumption effectively through liberal strategies. The strategies involve taking away money from the bourgeoisie and redistributing the same to the public. Ultimately, the world would be completely divided up, and the rich countries would then fight over the division of the world. Social-Psychological theories

view that imperialism is objectless expansion, a pattern learned from the behaviour of other nations and institutionalized into the domestic political processes of a state. The state will manufacture reasons to perpetuate its existence in this process, usually through manipulating crises.

There are various forms of Imperialism like Colonial, economic, political and socio-cultural imperialism. Language Imperialism is one of the forms which are important for Cultural dominion. Language imperialism is the exchange of a predominant language to others. The introduction and exchange of language are observed as an indication of power, normally, military and economic power in the progressive world. For example, in the Roman Kingdom, Latin initially the language of a limited area in vital Italy was forced first and later on pieces of Europe to a great extent uprooting nearby dialects. Similarly, English is considered an imperialistic language because of its dominance declared and maintained by the establishment and continuous reconstitution of structural and cultural inequalities between English and other languages. Though, many in India believe that Hindi Language is the only language of India's socio-political and linguistic unity, but, many others in the Southern states believe it is an imperialistic language imposed by the Central Government of India.

The pushing of a dominant language on speakers of other dialects is linguistic imperialism. The investigation of linguistic imperialism involves the policies by which dominant languages are nationally and internationally have been consolidated and the results of those consolidations for different dialects. The European dialects like English, French, Portuguese, Russian, and Spanish reflect language strategy as a critical component of colonial empires. English was advanced by the British and the Americans and it merged worldwide as a global language which had devastating results for different dialects. However, globalization has played

a role in spreading English as a global Lingua Franca that is widely accepted and used as a common means of communication among people from different countries, cultures, and languages. The Mandarin, the Chinese language is spoken by most of the people over the globe after English which shows the imperialistic tendency of the Chinese language. Similarly, active suppression of Kurdish languages in Turkey and Uyghur in China is seen as linguistic imperialism. Similar is the case of Hindi in India. Language policy plays an important role in language imperialism. When Hindi is forced on speakers of different languages in India it affects the cultural diversity that celebrates so much. The Tamils, the Kannadigas, the Bengalis in Bengal and people of other areas have resisted the imposition of Hindi. We can find Hindi imposition in non-Hindi speaking states and media. For example, our Prime Minister, all central government ministers address press conferences in Hindi only. Even government officials are giving press meet in Hindi language.

There are various reasons of Language Imperialism in the world. Today, one of the major world languages, English has become a world language because of its wide diffusion outside the British Islands to all countries. Political expediency may also lead to linguistic imperialism. An unfamiliar colonialist language could be taken on to handle the issue between at least two communities. For instance, in India, wherein excess of more than thousands of distinct dialects and vernaculars exist, English was taken on as an official language alongside Hindi in nineteen fifty era to keep away from debates among Hindi and non-Hindi speaking states. It remains one of the Official languages of India right up till the present time and is the method for correspondence between non-Hindi speakers and the government.

The underestimating of the local culture and the worship of the colonizers was vital to the accomplishment of any immigrant's policy. Education, the principal device for sending values

and methods of thought starting from one generation to the next was critical in effectively forcing the colonizer's way of life. British educational policies in India comprised the harming of native schooling. Conventional schooling in Sanskrit and Persian dialects was replaced by Anglo-centric curriculum, used English as a medium of instruction and taught English language.

Linguistic imperialism had some important advantages. The greatest benefit of imperialism is that countries get to partake in the innovation and skill of strong countries which can help in economic progression. According to Prof John Baugh, as noted by India Education Diary, "The imposition of the colonizers' language on the natives has been instrumental in the colonial process. Many empires put extra effort into teaching children the stately language and made it the official language in which all education occurred. This facilitated to foster generational divides, encouraging children to grow up speaking an imperial language and silencing their non-fluent parents." Not knowing a dominant language leaves the speakers of the native language at a clear disadvantage. It is because English is very well associated to modern economics and finance.

Multilingualism also leads to language imperialism. Multilingualism has its disadvantages such as one might struggle to get along in multilingual societies. Multilingualism is inconvenient for administration because the governments or the public agencies have to communicate in different languages. Today, information technology is also contributing to language imperialism. The language spoken in a country affects technological development and access to information. When the language spoken is comprehensive for experts in the nation and the world then sharing of thoughts is promoted which results in producing of technological solutions and development. In this way, the language verbally expressed in a nation speeds up technological growth.

There are various positive and negative effects of Language Imperialism in the country. Language is considered to be a dominant weapon of imperialism. Language has often been used as a fundamental tool for acquiring and denying power in the period of imperialism. In imperialism, an empire defeats another society, turns it into a society and exploits it for economic benefit. However, people do not want to be colonized. Linguistic colony likewise had practical advantages. Therefore, numerous countries invested additional work into showing youngsters the imperial language and made it the official language of all schooling. This helped in cultivating a generational divide empowering kids to grow up communicating in an imperial language and silencing their unfamiliar parents and guardians. This strategy, normal in places like British India, additionally guaranteed that the rich could accomplish political influence in the state. Those too poor to even think about getting to English mentors could not have an opportunity to finish their schooling and would never participate in India's colonial government. The consequence was a linguistic grading that reflected real power. Those communicating imperial language had power, while those who communicated in local dialects were underestimated.

The use of language can become a major factor in creating unequal societies in the multilingual context. Disparity and controlled language use in education, administration, and mass communication regulates access to rank, status, and wealth in society and helps elite formation. Such elitism develops its vested interest. English language in India has been beneficial mostly for the upper classes. However, many poor people cannot afford enough education to be fully capable in English. Language imperialism often leads to language shifts means language replacement, or assimilation. Language shift to social scientists means switching from traditional language to the non-traditional language. It is the process whereby the

community's speech shifts to a different language, usually over an extended period. Generally, languages supposed as lower status are shifted to a language considered of higher status so, languages perceived as higher status spread at the expense of other languages. For example, people of India speaking their mother tongue switch to English. Bilinguals gradually shift their commitment to a higher status language. This process is known as assimilation. Language imperialism not only leads to language shift but also language death. Linguistic imperialism exploits and monopolizes other languages and cultures creating language death, loss of identity and a superior-inferior division among people and languages. According to David Crystal, language death is a dreadful damage to all who come into contact with it. Facing the loss of language or culture involves the same stages of grief that one experiences in death and dying. This is indeed an intellectual and social tragedy. When a language dies, so much is lost. Language is the repository of the history of a people and their identity, once lost, it can never be recaptured.

Regal languages have become the global languages giving special status, priority in business, education and government over native languages. English as a universal language has prompted linguistic imperialism bringing about the predominance of English over different languages and societies. This results in linguistic identity loss, superior-inferior gap among people and languages. The spread of English as the global language has sped up the vanishing of minority dialects by making them needless for correspondence. According to Okombo, language is like a reservoir of culture and most of the cultural wealth of a community is stored in its language then it may be their philosophy of life, their stories, and their medicinal practices. Therefore, the death of a language is like burning a library. Whatever may be the reasons for the imperial languages to continue even after the empire is dissolved, imperialism results in cultural

reduction, language loss, lack of creativity and innovativeness in education due to the misuse of language and obstruction of communication.

Conclusion:

Thus, Language imperialism refers to the process by which a dominant language, often imposed by a colonial power, replaces and sidelines native languages leading to linguistic and cultural hegemony. This phenomenon is characterized by the spread of a dominant language through various means, such as education, media, government, and economic systems, resulting in the suppression of native languages and cultural identities. Language imperialism has been a tool of colonialism and imperialism throughout history with European languages like English, French, Spanish, and Portuguese being imposed on colonized peoples, leading to language shift, language loss, and cultural erasure. In contemporary times, language imperialism continues to manifest through globalization, with English emerging as a global language, often at the expense of local languages and cultures. This has significant implications for linguistic diversity, cultural heritage, and social justice, highlighting the need for language rights, linguistic preservation, and cultural revitalization. The effects of linguistic imperialism are exploitation and monopolization of other languages and cultures creating language death, loss of identity and a superior-inferior division among people and languages. Unfortunately, it is very difficult to undo the extinction of a language and it is hard work to keep dying languages alive.

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