Linguistic Minorities and some of their Language-centric problems, as reflected in published literature

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Abstract

An analysis of the identification of the Linguistic Minorities' problems as reflected in the peer-reviewed, validly published literature has been done in this study reviewing the individual studies and methods of selected twenty five articles and / or papers. Three broad artificial categories namely - Linguistic Minority, socio-culture and identity crisis have been constructed for systematic addressing of the relevant problems identified by the researchers of those studies. Together, the propositions provide a schema for understanding and categorizing what is known and still needs to be known about the problems of the linguistic minorities, a framework for probing the significant theoretical and substantive issues underlying the findings that emerge from the various angles of study already performed. It has been found that culture is communicated and transmitted through the educator's approach to teaching and how learner experiences it. It can contribute either positively or negatively as far as ethics and linguistic minorities are concerned. The way that education involves culture can oppress a culture's potential for positive contribution to education. Educators then have a responsibility to consult local culture while being conscious of individual context and humanity in an effort to avoid oppression. Culture, cultural identity, acculturation are needed to be rigorously interpreted in order to understand the problems of Linguistic Minorities.

Keywords: Identification of the Linguistic Minorities' problems, published literature, review, theoretical and substantive issues, oppression.

Introduction

Culture plays a major role in the formation of one's identity and self-awareness. Culture is not consciously taught or learned. Cultural oppression is the imposition of conflicting values resulting in labelling one as inferior. Cultural oppression in pedagogy discourages the oppressed culture from being viewed internally and externally as responsible in education. Results of such oppression that are: loss of culture, loss of identity, disconnect between school and society, and claims on knowledge. The researcher seeks to form a clearer understanding and awareness of the culture's participation in educating linguistic minorities. Identity is not merely a result of socialization. Rather, identities are formed in social processes and relationships. Educators must understand student experiences and build on them. And because their experiences are different, their identities are produced differently. This understanding is essential if teachers are to provide students with the analytical tools to challenge negative experiences and deal with problems of unresolved identities.

What effect does this have on minority group children? This question is particularly significant in multilingual countries that have a large diversity of minority ethnocultural groups. Then, Educators have a responsibility to consult local culture while being conscious of individual context and humanity in an effort to avoid oppression of the linguistic minorities. So an urgent need for analysis of identity issues in the process of acculturation in the lives of linguistic minorities has been felt.

Methodology

The author mainly focussed on three areas pertaining to the problems of the Linguistic Minorities. Various related literature have been rigorously analysed while being primarily focused on the language-centric problems of the linguistic minorities. The results have been categorized on three main areas namely Linguistic Minority, socio-culture and identity crisis. The twenty-five research works under review covered wide geographical areas encompassing West Bengal, India and outside India.

Results

(A) Linguistic Minority

1. ***Urdu Linguistic Minorities and Education***
   Hasnain (2007) advocates for abolishing of Eighth schedule or inclusion of all languages in the Eighth Schedule. Access to Urdu must be made available to all Indian citizens irrespective of their ethnicity. The author opines for incorporating all tribal languages into mainstream education in order to remove the alienation of Urdu speakers or other linguistic groups. The author recommends that Mother-tongue teaching should be seriously conducted in order to maintain constitutional safeguards.

2. ***Linguistic Minorities in India : Problems and Safeguards***.
   Jacob (1972) attempts to identify problems of the linguistic minorities and discusses the constitutional administrative measures aimed at their solution. He finds that the problems of the linguistic minorities lie implementation of constitutional safeguards for linguistic minorities. It gives rise to dissent among the linguistic minority communities.The main problem in implementing the safeguards are (i) Lack of teachers for linguistic minority pupils, and (ii) shortage of textbooks in minority languages. The author opines that to overcome such difficulties : (i) the teachers proficient in minority language may be recruited. (ii) Separate training institutions for training minority language for teachers. (iii) Reservation of seats in the training institutions for minority language proficient teachers.

3. ***50TH Report of the Commissioner for Linguistic Minorities in India.***
   NCLM (2013) advised Government of West Bengal to implement the Three Language Formula up to class XII to enable the linguistic minority students to learn their languages as a subject at the Secondary stage of education and with a view to encouraging multilingualism and national integration. It also recommends not to make knowledge of Bengali as a prerequisite for recruitment to the State Services. The commission recommends that the state govt should ensure that a local MP belonging to a Linguistic minority group must represent in the state level Committee for linguistic minority groups. It is the duty of the government to make the people aware of the facility and safeguards available for linguistic minorities.

4. ***Language Policy, Politics, and Ideology in Mewat: Comparative Case Studies of Mewati in Two School Types.***
   Bakshi (2013) explores the status and role of Mewati, a dialect generally subsumed under Hindi in schools. While Mewati is spoken by most Meos as their first language, there are currently no studies that examine the use and role of Mewati in education in Mewat. This thesis addresses an important gap in understanding what roles are assigned (or not) to local dialects in education. A complex mix of inter-ethnic relations between these groups and the socio-historical and political structures greatly influenced language choice patterns and policy decisions. This study has important implications for

the role of mother tongue in education for policymakers, government officials, educationists, and teachers as the findings indicate a need for change in language policy and procedures.

5. *Language Policy and Linguistic Minority in India*

Benedikter (2009) opines that India not only was concerned with inevitable multilingualism but also with the rights of many millions of speakers of minority languages. As the political and cultural context privileges some major languages, linguistic minorities often feel discriminated against by the current language policy of the Union and the States. They experience on a daily basis that their mother tongues are deemed worthless dialects that have little utility in modern life. Many such languages have definitively disappeared, and several more are on the brink of extinction. Is this the inevitable price to be paid for economic modernization, cultural homogenisation and the multilingual fabric of India's society at large? This book is an effort to map India's linguistic minorities and to assess the language policy towards these communities.

6. *Minority Languages in the Linguistic Landscape*

Gorter (2012) argues that the Minority Languages in the Linguistic Landscape provides an innovative approach to the written displays of minority languages in public space. It explores minority language situations through the lens of linguistic landscape research. Based on very tangible data it explores the 'same old issues' of language contact and language conflict in new ways. It deepens our understanding of language policies, power relations, and ideologies. It covers a wide geographic area of Ireland , ranging from Sami in the far North to Basque, Catalan, and Corsican in the South of Ireland. From the town of Dingle on the West coast of Ireland to the cities of Kiev and Chisinau in the East of Europe, including the contrasting cases of Israel and Brunei. It combines theoretical approaches from various disciplines to provide a framework which connects real bottom-up data with more abstract research on minority languages.

7. *Cultural and Linguistic Minorities in the Russian Federation and the European Union*

Marten (2015) compares the sociolinguistic situations of minorities in Russia and Western Europe. As such, it provides insight into language policies, the ethnolinguistic vitality and the struggle for the reversal of language shift, language revitalization and empowerment of minorities in Russia and the European Union. The volume shows that even though largely unknown to a broader English-reading audience, the linguistic composition of Russia is by no means less diverse than multilingualism in the EU. It is, therefore, a valuable introduction into the historical backgrounds and current linguistic, social and legal affairs with regard to Russia's manifold ethnic and linguistic minorities, mirrored on the discussion of recent issues in a number of well-known Western European minority situations.

8. **Language in Education: Minorities and Multilingualism in India.**

Shridhar (1996) opines that the question of education in India cannot be properly discussed without referring to its socio-linguistic context. This paper provides background information on the linguistic profile of India. The term "minorities" in the Indian context is defined, and the protection offered to linguistic minorities in the Indian Constitution is examined. A discussion of language policy in Indian education follows in which the recommendations of the different education commissions are analysed. The important issues covered include the number of languages that are taught, the medium of instruction, and the educational policies regarding speakers of minority languages. The article also discusses different language movements and their impact on Indian education.

9. *Provision for Linguistic Diversity and Linguistic Minorities in India.*

Vanishree (2011) examines the provision of linguistic diversity and linguistic minorities in India by presenting an overview of the existing linguistic diversity in India and the historical background that has contributed to the present diversity. It also examines the National Language Policy and the States' re-organisations which have contributed to the political identification of majority-minority

linguistic groups. In addition to this, it also outlines the Constitutional rights and safeguards guaranteed by the Constitution. Furthermore, it also evaluates the difficulty in defining "a minority" in India and also the misrepresentation of the minority languages in the censuses. It also assesses the effectiveness of the Three Language Formula in education adopted by the Government in order to help people communicate through link languages. Finally, it looks at the representation of the linguistic minorities in the domains of Public Administration, Media and Information Technology.

10. *Linguistic Minorities in Democratic Context.*

Williams (2013) discusses the role of language minorities in politics with a detailed understanding of applied language policy in a variety of contexts ranging from Quebec, the Basque Country and Wales to Gaelic Scotland and Northern Ireland. Colin Williams discusses the controversial and contemporary issues of minority rights and language protection, the policies of the state in privileging powerful majorities, the new opportunities and challenges ushered in by regional-level devolution in Europe and the influence which globalization has on language competition and survival. He argues that after centuries of discrimination, well placed linguistic minorities are in positions of power and influence and must devise new strategies and justification to cope with the demands of responsible government. His analysis provides a fresh interpretation of the role of minorities within states and poses difficult questions for the framers of policies which seek to promote unity in diversity in both Europe and North America.

(B) Socio-culture

1. *Assessment of Acculturation: Issues and Overview of Measures*

Celenk & Vijver (2011) study how to measure and assess acculturation. The authors provided Guidelines for developing acculturation instruments. Moreover, acculturation orientations are often ignored. The currently applied instrument of acculturation mostly emphasizes on single groups and short measures. Instead, we need a broader and holistic view of the acculturation process in most studies. The authors considered three aspects of acculturation measures namely scale descriptors, psychometric properties and conceptual and theoretical issues. They opine that Instrument Measuring orientation to acculturation conditions, conceptual background (bidimensional vs. unidimensional) of the acculturation, potential domain specificity (private and public) and Good internal consistencies are important factors in develop in an acculturation instrument.

2. *The Impact of Cultural Milieu in Developing Second Language awareness: Towards an Intercultural Shelter of Mind.*

Bandopadhyay (2010) has shown the importance of culture in developing second language awareness. Students' identification and maintenance of their native language and culture can have a positive influence on learning a second language. The process of acquiring a second language is the process of transcreating one culture into another. Culture, a vibrant resource, presents a hidden curriculum in second language teaching. The article explores that language and culture are inseparable that constitutes a single universe we experience.

3. *Language and Symbolic Power.*

Bourdieu (1992) explores the relations between language, power, and politics. Bourdieu develops a forceful critique of traditional approaches to language, including the linguistic theories of Saussure and Chomsky and the theory of speech–acts elaborated by Austin and others. He argues that language should be viewed not only as a means of communication but also as a medium of power through which individuals pursue their interests and display their practical competence. Drawing on

the concepts which are part of his distinctive theoretical approach, Bourdieu maintains that linguistic utterances or expressions can be understood as the product of the relation between a ′linguistic market′ and a ′linguistic habitus′. When individuals produce linguistic expressions, they deploy accumulated resources and they implicitly adapt their expressions to the demands of the social field or market. Hence every linguistic interaction, however, personal and insignificant they may seem, bears the traces of the social structure that it both expresses and helps to reproduce. Bourdieu′s account sheds fresh light on the ways in which linguistic usage varies according to considerations such as class and gender. It also opens up a new approach to the ways in which language is used in the domain of politics. For politics is, among other things, the site par excellence in which words are deeds and the symbolic character of power is at stake. This volume, by one of the leading social thinkers in the world today, represents a major contribution to the study of language and power. It will be of interest to students throughout the social sciences and humanities, especially in sociology, politics, anthropology, linguistics, and literature.

4. *Acculturation: Advances in Theory, Measurement, and Applied Research.*

Chun, Organista, Marin (2003) give a comprehensive review of *Acculturation* and the most up-to-date analysis of theoretical and applied developments available in the measurement and use of acculturation. Readers will find a wonderfully diverse and interdisciplinary approach to the topic that includes theory and data relevant to the four major ethnic minority groups: African Americans, Asian Americans, American Indians, and Hispanics/Latinos. Specifically, this volume looks at recent developments in the theoretical analysis of acculturation as a culture-learning process—its relationship with other constructs (such as ethnic identification) and with cultural values and more. Also, recent developments in measuring acculturation and its application to understanding changes in family relations, health status, addictions, and mental health are included, making this a one-of-a-kind volume an essential reference to those working with ethnic minority groups and to those researchers working in the field.

5. *Minority Languages and Cultural Diversity in Europe: Gaelic and Sorbian Perspectives.*
Glaser (2007) engages critically with debates about linguistic continuity and cultural survival in relation to Europe's autochthonous minorities. Focusing on Scotland's Gaels and Lusatia's Sorbs Wends, it analyses and evaluates competing assumptions, rationales, and ideologies which have shaped previous and present language revitalization initiatives and that continue to pose dilemmas to language planners and politicians in the UK, Germany and beyond.

6. *Kashrut, Caste and Kabbalah — The Religious Life of the Jews of Cochin.*
Katz and Goldberg (2006) discussed the physical environment of the Jews since their advent in India. They discussed the emotional, religious and psychological aspects of the Jews of Cochin in their interaction with the Hindu social and religious reality. The book has been divided into nine chapters and each addresses a different aspect of the topic under discussion.

7. *Language Conflicts in Social Arenas: Reflections for the Business World.*

Kumar & Jain (2012) argue that our understanding of the issues related to language conflicts inside business organizations would be enriched by a close analysis of the conflicts that take place in the larger arena of the social sphere, of which the business organizations are a part. Taking clues from earlier studies, the paper argues that the prime reason behind linguistic conflicts is the fear of loss of linguistic identity by the linguistic minorities. It is further debated that the same factors related to the loss of linguistic identity would play a role in the business arena as well where the official language

of the workplace puts its native speakers in an undue advantageous position with respect to other members who have learned the official language as their second language.

8. *The Cambridge Handbook of Acculturation Psychology*

Sam & Berry (2006) provide a comprehensive overview of key theories, concepts, and methods, and highlights the unique experience of varied groups coming into cultural contact across a wide range of circumstances. This Handbook marks a major landmark in the development of acculturation studies and provides a comprehensive, authoritative and cutting-edge review of what is now a multifaceted subject. This volume will be an indispensable resource.

(C) Identity Crisis

1. *Comparative Study of Identity Crisis in Students based on Age, Sex, and Level of Education*
   Gholamrezaei (2016) has found that age, level of education, and sex could influence people's identity crisis. The study was conducted on the students of Lorestan University in the educational year of 2014-2015. 196 students were selected as sample of the study among which 100 men were male and 96 were female. The scale of Ahmadi Personal Identity Questionnaire (1996) was used as a research tool. To see the difference in an identity crisis of male and female students ANOVA test and Tukey's posthoc test were used. The study found a significant difference in an identity crisis between male and female students. To study the correlation between identity crisis and age, Pearson Correlation test was used. The study found that identity crisis decreased by increasing the age.

2. *Identity Styles, Mental Health and Socio-economic Status of Iranian Late Adolescents*
   Ghorbani, Abdullah & Jomenia (2012) have conducted a study which shows a significant negative correlation between confusing identity style and economic-social status. The study found that late adolescents belonging to higher economic and social status, experiences less confusing identity style. Socio-economic status Questionnaire of Aghazadeh (1999) & Husseinbor (2001) was utilized in the study. Berzonsky's (1990) Identity Style Questionnaire and Ahmadi's (1994) Identity Crisis Questionnaire were also used in the study.

3. *Movement of Gorkhas for Constitutional Status in India.*
   Newar and Singh (2017) examined the problems of Gorkha tribes in India. Gorkhas have been facing a unique identity crisis with regard to their Indian citizenship, minority status, and constitutional status. According to the authors, Gorkhas have been not been able to locate themselves at par with the dominant section of the society. For this purpose, the Gorkha people advocates for constitutional safeguards in the likes of SC, ST, preservation of the linguistic and cultural heritage of Nepali as indispensable. cultivation and conservation of Nepali language and culture. The author opines that very awareness of their rights led to the political unification of Gorkha people and subsequent separate statehood demand.

4. *Linguistic Policies and the Survival of Regional Languages in France and Britain.*
   Judge (2007) explores the various dimensions of ethnic problems.It was traditionally assumed that having a single official language was a necessary condition for the well-being of the state, particularly in France and Britain. This assumption is now questioned, and the regional languages are making, in some cases, an impressive comeback. It is the story of their decline, their survival and, more recently their efforts to re-establish themselves as effective tools of normal communication which is tackled in this book. Each language is analyzed in terms of its

development from the earliest times, through its period of decline to present-day efforts at regeneration.

5. *Religion and language variation in a convergence area: The view from the border town of Kupwar post-linguistic reorganisation of Indian states.*

Kulkarni-Joshi (2015) have focussed on the contemporary ethnolinguistic situation in Kupwar at the Maharashtra-Karnataka border. Gumperz and Wilson (1971)'s classic study of language contact in this village predicted that multilingualism would be maintained as long as the ethnic (i.e. religious) separateness of home life remained important in the contact situation. This paper examines the influence of religion and regional identity on language choices, especially among the newly created linguistic minority communities. The paper suggests that Kupwar is characterised today by both accentuated religious differentiation and growing linguistic assimilation. Present-day patterns of language choice are interpreted in the light of the changed ethno-social context and the perceived role of religious identity in the region.

6. *Language, Emotion, and Politics in South India: The making of a Mother Tongue.*

Mitchell (2009) show how the specific history of Telugu-language politics can shed new light on general questions of importance to researchers in a variety of fields who are concerned to understand 'the processes that have led speakers of particular languages to see themselves as having a separate history, literature, politics, and identity. What makes someone willing to die, not for a nation, but for a language? In the mid-20th century, southern India saw a wave of dramatic suicides in the name of language. Lisa Mitchell traces the colonial-era changes in knowledge and practice linked to the Telugu language that lay behind some of these events. As identities based on language came to appear natural, the road was paved for the political reorganization of the Indian state along linguistic lines after independence.

7. *Language and National Identity in Asia.*

Simpson (2007) offers a fascinating overview of the emergence of national language (s) in the countries of South, East and Southeast Asia. *Language and National Identity in Asia* is a comprehensive introduction to the role of language in the construction and development of nations and national identities in Asia. Leading scholars from all over the world investigate the role languages have played and now play in the formation of the national and social identity in countries throughout South, East, and Southeast Asia. They consider the relation of the regions' languages to national, ethnic, and cultural identity, and examine the status of and interactions between the majority, official, and minority languages.

Major Observations

The review of the related literature helped in arriving at the following observations:

❖ Implementation of constitutional safeguards for linguistic minorities across the world as well as in India is extremely needed. It is the duty of the government to make the people aware of the facility and safeguards available for linguistic minorities.

❖ Tribal languages should be incorporated into mainstream education in order to remove the alienation of linguistic groups.

❖ There is a dire need for change in language policy and procedures and the role of mother tongue in education must be prioritized.

❖ Govt of India must ensure minority language protection in all regions. The innovative approach may be taken like written display in minority languages in public space. Representation of the linguistic

minorities in the domains of Public Administration, Media and Information Technology must be taken into consideration.

❖ There is a need for reversal of language shift, language revitalization, and empowerment of minorities in Russia and the European Union.

❖ Acculturation orientations are often ignored. Broader and holistic view of the acculturation process was found to be needed.

❖ The prime reason behind linguistic conflicts is the fear of loss of linguistic identity by the linguistic minorities.

❖ Age, Level of education, and Sex could influence people's identity crisis. Significant negative correlation between confusion identity style and economic-social status have been found.

❖ Gorkhas, Nepali Linguistic Minority of West Bengal, have not been able to locate themselves at par with dominant section of the society. Identities based on language paved the way for the political reorganization of the Indian state along linguistic lines after independence as far as the Telugu language is concerned.

Conclusion

Linguistic minorities often feel discriminated against by the current language policy. They experience on a daily basis that their mother tongues are deemed worthless dialects that have little utility in modern life. The prime reason behind linguistic conflicts is the fear of loss of linguistic identity by the linguistic minorities. True language integration cannot be accomplished by denying the minority language users a sense of pride and dignity in their own language and by treating the minority and/or indigenous mother tongues with neglect and lack of respect. Multiculturalism cannot be sustained without an active policy of multilingualism and, at least for some, the multilingual policy is ineffective unless it is built into the educational system as well.

Acknowledgment

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