

A Comparative Study of the Changes of the Language Policy From Colonised India to Independent India¹

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Abstract

Linguistic Imperialism¹ is considered very common as we can see nowadays some languages dominate other languages as is the case of the English Language. This paper is a comparative study that investigates the reasons that cause 'Linguistic Imperialism' as a phenomenon, the impact of the British Imperialism on Education in India, and how it affected the language used as a medium of instruction. It also introduced some historical background about the British Imperialism in India and the British practices to suppress the Hindi vernaculars and use English as an official language instead. Moreover, the research also studied some contemporary education policies to identify the phases of language decolonisation in the Indian educational system, and if they have succeeded in promoting their local vernaculars. At the end, the paper provided some recommendations and suggestions that might help educators and local governments instil the value of their local languages in the Indian society.

Keywords: Imperialism, Language Decolonisation, Multiculturalism, Policy

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1. Introduction

As is the case with the English Language, 'Linguistic Imperialism' is regarded as a widespread phenomenon given the dominance of some languages over others today. (Phillipson, 2018). There are many reasons that cause the previous phenomenon; one of them is 'colonization'. Many of the formerly colonized nations have already gained their political independence, yet the language 'decolonization' has not been completely achieved yet (Leglise & Migge, 2008). The conflict between political independence and linguistic decolonization has been affecting the Education System for so many years as the politically independent countries are still dangling between the must of using their national languages and the fear of losing their prestige when replacing the coloniser's language with their own (Leglise & Migge, 2008).

India is one of the nations that was colonised by Great Britain due to the Imperial Expansion for 116 years from 1858- 1947 (Woodward,1902). As a result of colonization, English had become the official language of the country. Even after declaring independent, the struggle to achieve linguistic independence is still running.

1.1. The Aim of the Study

This paper aims to shed the light on the impact of the British Imperialism on Education in India, especially, the language policy. It also tends to dig deeper to explore the changes that took place in the educational field, hence the language as a medium of instruction since declaring its independence in 1974. The paper also will try to examine the progress of language decolonisation in the Indian Educational system and the language (English) as a medium of instruction.

1.2. The Research Questions

This paper aims to answer the following questions:

1. How had the British Imperialism impacted the language policy in India?
2. How has the language policy changed after India's political independence?
3. How is India still suffering from 'linguistic Imperialism' and 'language decolonization'?

2. The Impact of the British Imperialism and English in Education (Literature Review)

English has become the global 'lingua franca' in the world nowadays as it is spoken by the majority of people around the world. Furthermore, it is made an official language in other countries whose mother tongue is not English. It has become the language of commerce, law and the medium of instruction in Education (Crystal, 2003).

2.1. The Deep Roots of English as a 'lingua franca' in India

In some countries such as India, English has not spread due to globalization or as an impact of using the internet worldwide. The roots of using English as an official language goes back to even before the British Colonisation with the establishment of 'the British East India Company' in 1600s. Consequently, one can say that English started to be spoken in India as a result of the commercial relationship between India and England (Crystal, 2003).

Later, the Brits had showed a remarkable interest in the Indian literature, laws, and religious scripts so much that they translated them to English. Many intermarriages took place later to strengthen the British-Indian relationship (Welch, 2011). I believe that translating the Indian manuscripts to English was the beginning of the Indian language/s withdrawal for English to prevail.

2.2. Conceptual Framework

As languages have become an indicator of certain social class, these classes tend to use a 'lingua franca' in their vernacular and in their schools. Doing this, they believe of becoming more superior and sophisticated than common people (McKenzie, 2008). This phenomenon takes place in most developing countries, especially, the previously colonised ones (Mastoi, Lohar & Shah, 2018).

Although most of the formerly colonised countries have become politically independent, these countries might still be colonised linguistically (Leglise & Migge, 2008). That is why this paper tends to explore two main concepts that are considered the main pillars in this study. These concepts are:

- 1- Language Imperialism
- 2- Language Decolonisation

2.2.1. Language Imperialism

It is undoubtedly that English is the 'global lingua franca' even after the withdrawal of the British Imperialism around the world. After the end of political Imperialism emerged another type of Imperialism which is the notion of 'globalization' (Crystal, 2003). Globalization, I believe, has more influence on the language worldwide. That is because colonized countries tend to fight the colonisers and its imposed culture and language, yet they welcome globalization and strive to be a part of the modern world with its culture and language (Taylor, 2002).

To solidify its position for English as the global 'lingua franca', one of the conditions to get a good job nowadays is to get a proper score in either IELTS or TOEFL. This made all students and jobseekers all over the world endeavour to learn English to have better life opportunities (Michaud & Colpitts, 2015). This made English as important as life itself for a large party in the globe.

However, the situation in India is slightly different as Indians learn English, not only because they aim for better opportunities, but also because English is an official language in India (Mastoi, Lohar & Shah, 2018). A further reason for the Indians' determination to learn and speak English is to avoid stigmatisation as a low social class. (Mastoi, Lohar & Shah, 2018). The previous facts make one believes that English as a language is the new coloniser in the modern world ruled by the paradigm of 'the survival of the strongest'. By far English language is the one.

2.2.2. Language Decolonisation

Decolonization means: "*the release of one country or territory from political control by another country*" ("Decolonization", 2022). Decolonisation is when countries gain liberty

after being politically, economically, and militarily occupied, yet sometimes, these nations take a longer time to linguistically set free from the coloniser's influence.

Because colonisation tempts to make the colonised nation feel inferior, they attempt to find themselves some ways to fit in the context of the coloniser. One way to do so is to learn and use the coloniser's language especially in the educational system (Mastoi, Lohar & Shah, 2018). That is why, even though they are politically independent, the formerly colonised countries keep implementing the coloniser's educational system and using the coloniser's language and language policies (Leglise & Migge, 2008). This creates new generations who have never encountered the colonisers but are still colonised by the colonisers' languages (Sharma, Jha & Kumar, 2015).

Assimilating the conqueror's language into the conquered country results in the birth of diglossia which is the coexistence of two languages in the society: an official or a formal language, mainly the colonisers', and the spoken language, the language of the natives (Garcia, Flores & Spotti, 2017). This is so clear in the Indian textbooks as students still study the British literature, and they are more exposed to the 'British heritage' rather than the Indian culture and heritage. Consequently, it will not be surprising that Indian students know about the British history more than their own (Elder, 1971).

2.3. Literature Review

Many studies introduced the theory of 'post-colonialism' and the 'multiculturalism' model which is considered a direct result of the existence of imperialism in countries. These two perspectives have influenced many aspects such as: economy, ethnography, politics, and education. There is a debate running about education in the postcolonial era; the first argument is that the education system should be liberated from perspectives of the colonisers and that people should not live in the shadows of a gone-by system (Hudson, 2003). On the other hand, Willinsky (1998) argues that the legacy of the colonizers is inherent in the educational system, and it is difficult to change that.

In the Australian model, the government has designed a specific educational policy to address the aspects of the multicultural society that emerged after decolonization (Hudson, 2003). Some Ethnic groups in Australia such as 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander', claiming their rights as 'indigenous' and a part of the Australian culture, have resented the way they were treated as minority. As a result, three types of schools have emerged in Australia: schools for privileged indigenous students, schools for mixed ethnicities, and schools for privileged descendants of European colonisers (Hudson, 2003).

However, the previous schooling system had created many social disturbances in relation to superiority and inferiority which led the 'Queensland State Department of Education' to start designing new policies that address all ethnic groups in Australia (Hudson, 2003). The policy manual included some educational aspects, but none of them addressed the language. That is because during colonization, English had become and still is the 'de facto language' and the official language, and all other languages seemed to have gone into oblivion (Hudson, 2003).

The Chinese and Japanese models were different than the Australian one as they tried to get completely decolonized in the educational system. They gradually changed their educational policies to serve the grand base of the society. In the Japanese model, they used their mother

tongues as mediums of instruction and introduced and supported their culture in their books (Shukla, 1996).

There are many other studies and models about education postcolonialism in many parts of the world, yet the comparative studies that have critiqued the educational policies during and postcolonialism are very rare, especially that the educational policies of many formerly colonized countries are missing or not published for researchers to access and review.

3. Methodology

This paper aims to study the impact of both Imperialism and political independence in India on Education policies reflected in the language policies. The paper aims to use the qualitative approach to investigate the influence of both political statuses. Due to the nature of the research, I could only use the ‘document analysis approach’ to get some answers for the research questions.

The documents that the researcher intends to study are the English policies in Indian schools during and post the British colonization of India. Because the British colonization in India goes back to the seventeenth century, it was nearly impossible for me to get any official documentation of the English policies during the era of colonization. Consequently, I have decided to get some data from old studies that go back to the nineteenth century.

The paper will also study the development of the language policies in Indian national schools from 1961-2020.

3.1. The Qualitative Approach

The qualitative approach is suitable for the nature of this research as it allows to collect and analyse data by studying documents related to the topic of the study (Creswell, 2014). It also tends to analyse data inductively to structure reason using the ‘bottom-up’ approach to support or negate the research hypothesis (Creswell, 2014).

Moreover, it tends to study social phenomena and interpret them in relation to internal and/or external causes that shape these phenomena in an attempt to understand and unpack them (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Consequently, this paper tries to observe the changes in reality which is influenced by the social structure that is presented by the existence of the British entity in colonised India and the withdrawal of this entity after independence.

3.1.1. Content Analysis

Documents are the pillars up on which this research is built. Studying the Educational policies of Colonized and independent India will provide the data that can be useful to understand how language was taught in the country, and if it was the main medium of instruction back at the time of colonization up till now (Hancock, Ockleford & Windridge, 2009).

The document analysis strategy will allow to understand the sociological structure of the society (Tracy, 2013) and how far they accepted to teach their children somebody else’s culture. This can be concluded by comparing the data collected about the educational policies implemented in colonized India to the policies implemented after Independence and how far these policies have changed due to the nation’s change of status. To be able to complete the

content analysis, the researcher intends to critique the educational policies using the critical theory the ‘Critical Theory.’

3.1.2 The Critical Theory (Historical Realism)

As this paper attempts to examine the changes that occurred to the Educational Policies, including language policies, over some variant eras in the Indian history, I believe the ‘*Critical Theory*’ is convenient to relate to. The ‘Critical Theory’ or ‘Historical Realism’ is concerned with the reality that is caused by social, political, and other aspects that can forge that reality over a period of time (Mayring, 2014).

The ‘Critical Theory’ is a kind of ‘social criticism’ that includes judging and evaluating social activities (Thompson, 2017). It also provides an insight of the impacts on social phenomena (Harney, 2015). What makes this theory suitable for this research is that it draws on critiquing policies to construct knowledge in relation to other events in the country (Thompson, 2017). That is why the knowledge extracted by critiquing data tends to be more comprehensive as it links social phenomena to social and/or political events and suggests some alternatives and recommendations for better future interpretations and confrontation (Harney, 2015).

In this case, the paper will use this theory to study and analyse the educational and language policies in India against two political variables: imperialism and independence.

4. Findings and discussions

India is a big nation that represents multi-linguicism and multiculturalism. English has become the official language in India as a direct impact of the British colonization. India had been colonized by Great Britain for about two centuries in which a lot of changes in economy, politics, policies, and education had occurred. This paper attempts to introduce some of the changes in the educational systems during imperialism and post independence by trying to find answers for the following questions:

1. How had the British Imperialism impacted the language policy in India?
2. How has the language policy changed after India’s political independence?
3. How is India still suffering from ‘linguistic Imperialism’ and ‘language decolonization’?

4.1. Findings and discussions

It was difficult to find a clear-cut answer for the first question due to many reasons. One of these reasons is that it was very long ago when India was colonised, so it was nearly impossible to find people from that era who are still alive to get some answers. Another reason is that almost all educational policy documents are missing, or at least not published to study and review. That is why I have decided to get some knowledge from different studies and historical documents.

4.1.1. The Educational Policy in the Colonized India

As mentioned before, all the findings in this part are extracted from literature, old and new studies and historical documents. It is well known that in the 17th century, the Great Britain

was small in area but big in economy (Mastoi, Lohar & Shah, 2018). That was when it decided to invade other countries to exploit their fortunes and add to its own.

When they invaded India, they aimed to create an Indian citizen with '*Indian color but with English taste*' (Mastoi, Lohar & Shah, 2018). One way to do that was by '*Britishising*' the educational system. Lord Hastings, the Governor General back then, started the native education that was endorsed by Britain and introduced to the society as the 'vernacular' schools (Woodward, 1902).

The vernacular schools started in 1840s when the 'General Committee of Public Instruction' reviewed the educational policy and sent the recommendations of 'Governor General' that took place on 24th November 1839 to all local committees. The recommendations were to translate the English books to the local vernacular (Tanwar, 2017).

I believe that the previous point is worthy of attention. That is because the British Colonisers used all the ways possible to achieve their dream which is to get to the Indians. They translated Indian cultural books and holy manuscripts to English to be able to assimilate into the Indian society and understand how they think and behave in different aspects of life. On the other hand, they translated important English books to Indian vernaculars to enforce their culture and language and to penetrate the Indian culture and invade, not just the Indian's lands, but also their minds and consciousness (Tanwar, 2017).

Moreover, they developed seminaries that used English as a medium of instruction, but they failed to attract students who preferred Persian over English. To support those English seminaries, they added Persian classes to attract students and encourage them to join. Later, they added native vernaculars like Urdu to those Seminaries (Tanwar, 2017). When they noticed how active those schools were after adding the Hindi departments, they discontinued them to go further with the original plan of '*Britishising*' Education (Tanwar, 2017).

The English departments in the previously mentioned schools used to teach the Hindi students English literature and culture (Tanwar, 2017). On the other hand, Education was not believed to be for everyone. It was meant for the upper class and some of the middle-class students ("NCERT Notes: Indian Education System During British Rule [Modern Indian History For UPSC]", 2022).

I think that the Indians resisted their coloniser's language as a part of their social resistance, so they did not attend the English seminaries, and preferred other languages such as Persian. On the other hand, to be able to have a good grip over the country, the Brits opened English schools for the upper classes which in my viewpoint was clever as they encouraged segregation 'divide to conquer'. This affected the Indians socially as it instilled the notion of superiority and inferiority in the same society.

4.1.2. The Changes in Educational Policies After Independence

I have managed to find the Educational Policies of years: 1961-1962, 1970, 2011, 2019 and 2020. These policies give a thorough idea about the changes in education policies over the last 60 years after India had gained independence in 1947. This paper intends to review these policies vertically as the paper will review the educational policies holistically and focus on the part in the policy that is concerned with the language (English) as a medium of instruction and/or a school subject.

The Educational Policy of year 1961-1962: This policy introduced some reformation in the Indian Educational system in regard to spreading elementary education, providing teachers with appropriate training, raising salary ranges, developing tertiary and physical education, providing welfare of 'handicapped students', and fostering UNESCO programmes in India and research and training (Ministry of Education, 1961).

The previous policy included new measures regarding language:

- 1- Funding new programmes to promote the development of the Hindi languages.
- 2- Encouraging 'children books' competition written in the modern Hindi languages.
- 3- Setting up institutions to teach English as a foreign language and had a role to train teachers who taught English at schools.
- 4- Funding new programmes that help promote the Hindi languages such as supplying the school libraries with Hindi books and translating other books into Hindi languages.
- 5- Facilitating scholarships to study different languages including Arabic, Japanese, Swahili and others.
- 6- Writing books using Braille technique in Hindi languages.

The policy seemed to foster the Hindi languages by designing a lot of programmes and setting up many competitions with good prizes for books written in or translated to the Hindi languages (Ministry of Education, India, 1961).

The Language Policies and Programmes 1970: This report presents some changes in some consecutive years starting from 1964 to 1969. Same as in 1961 policy, the educational policy in 1964 promotes the use of local Hindi languages and studying foreign languages such as English simultaneously, yet these foreign languages will be introduced in the curricula of higher education (Pattanayak, 1970). This policy admitted that there was an emerging need for having one official language that can be spoken in India with its multilinguistic nature. English was taught in institutions of higher education as it was important for the Indians to have good opportunities internationally as mentioned in the policy: '*English is our major link with the outside world, and it is likely to continue to be so for many years to come*' (Pattanayak, 1970).

In 1970, the 'Central Institute of Indian Languages' was established to help change the medium of instruction from English to the regional Hindi languages. Some procedures were mentioned in the policy to achieve this goal such as:

- To listen to lectures about common social issues in the mother tongue.
- To paraphrase what students had heard using local languages.
- To read books in English and summarize them in the mother tongues (Pattanayak, 1970).

The reformation declared in the policy seemed to be incremental as they started to move to the local and regional languages, but they could not subside the role of English in the Educational firm as they believed in the significant role of this 'lingua franca' in the Indian society and in the educational system.

The National Educational Policy 2011: Although English was previously perceived as a medium of instruction in higher education and the language of the elite, in 2011, it became compulsory to study English as a second language in public schools (Meganathan, 2022).

In the policy, one can sense the covert resistance to English and the urge to replace it as a medium of instruction with local or regional Indian vernaculars. Doing this, I believe that they were trying to marginalize the English language and limit its role in some private schools of the elite class.

Language Policy 2019: It included many aspects such as inclusive education, teachers' continuous development programmes, and language policy. The language policy in 2019 included (Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2019):

- Years 3-8 learn numbers and alphabets in their mother tongues and other languages.
- If students are taught with a different language (regional language), volunteers with the students' mother tongue can help students catch up.

The resentful attitude towards English is obvious in the policy as mentioned in many parts that English as a language is not more expressive than Indian ones. Consequently, it is more logical for Indian students to learn in their mother tongues and then learn English as a second language. The policy also encouraged writers and publishers to write math and science textbooks as good as the ones written in English (Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2019).

Moreover, there were other inquiries in the policy about the persistence of some parties in the society to learn and speak English as a mother tongue. However, they gave some justifications for that phenomenon as it was the elite class who kept holding on to English even after independence as a sign of superiority. They also mentioned that people pursued English as it became a 'prerequisite' for many jobs (Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2019).

The policy also emphasized on the importance of learning English as a language, yet the medium of instruction and literature and arts should be taught in the mother tongues. However, students in grade 10 upwards can study and discuss science in a Hindi language and/or English (Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2019). Although the government promoted local and regional languages over English, they gave students the choice to pursue their education or at least a part of it using English as a medium of instruction. This makes one wonders if they really wanted the Indian vernaculars to prevail.

The Language Policy 2020: Same as the policy of 2019, the educational policy 2020 set up some rules and regulations regarding many educational aspects like early childhood, curriculum and pedagogy, using ICT, and the continuous professional development of teachers, languages and many more (Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2020).

This policy continued in promoting the Indian vernaculars as mediums of instruction. It was also more comprehensive than policy (2019) with more explanation and elaboration on the importance of multilingualism in the Indian society. Unlike language policy (2019), policy (2020) stated clearly that all math and science books will be bilingual, and students can study both of them in Hindi and English (Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2020).

One more interesting point mentioned in this policy was that India was behind in translating books printed in foreign languages to Hindi due to its pursuit to keep the dignity of the Hindi languages (Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2020).

I believe it is very important to keep the national languages' dignity, but the dignity could have been well preserved if they did not allow students in national schools to choose Hindi or English to study math and science. They could have made it obligatory to study in Hindi vernaculars till graduating grade 12, just like many other formerly colonized countries in the world.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1. Conclusion

Studying language policies of the Indian subcontinent, one can see the fluctuating attitude towards using English as a medium of instruction or a school subject in National schools. It is undoubtedly that imperialism enforces its language and culture on the conquered countries in an attempt to erase their culture and substitute it with the new culture. The British coloniser tried to do so in India, but it was not easy there.

The British translated the important Hindi books to English to be able to understand the new culture/s they had colonised and maybe to attract more Indians to approve the British existence in India. The next step was to marginalize the Indian culture and language/s by enforcing English and translating the English books to local vernaculars to have Hindi people with '*English taste*'.

Nowadays, the country seemed to have a conflict between following the new concept of globalization and the notion of a global language, and the urge to be linguistically decolonised. This could be seen clearly in the language sections in the latest educational policies. Although they promoted using the Hindi vernaculars as mediums of instruction, they gave students the option to study math and science in English.

Finally, it is true that India has been politically independent since 1947, yet it is suffering from the new imperialism which is the language colonisation. This can be due to many reasons such as: they want to avoid being stigmatised globally as a poor country whose people cannot speak English, so they are not eligible for good life opportunities. Another reason is that some social classes in Indian like to feel better and more sophisticated than the other Hindi people. They achieve that by learning in schools in which English is the medium of instruction and speak English as a mother tongue.

5.2. Recommendations

It is undoubtedly that more research and comparative studies are needed to help India and other countries which share its same history move forward and get rid of the new language imperialism which is caused by globalization. Consequently, the paper suggests the following:

- Using Hindi vernaculars as obligatory mediums of instruction in national schools till the end of the secondary education.

- Promoting the Hindi vernaculars by printing more interesting textbooks for all grade levels.
- Providing teachers with continuous professional development programmes to help them use the local vernaculars in more sufficient and appealing ways.
- Promoting the Hindi vernaculars in the national media and prohibiting programmes that use other foreign languages in the national radio and TV channels.
- Encouraging the translation movement from Hindi to other foreign languages to promote their culture and attract people to learn Hindi languages.

5.3. Limitations

There were many limitations that have been faced while writing this paper. One of them was that the difficulty to achieve triangulation due to many reasons:

- It was difficult to meet people who lived during the British colonization of India.
- It was nearly impossible to implement any ways of collecting data other than document analysis.
- No sufficient number of documents were published to review and critique.

That is why I have tried to study the available studies and documents to develop a viewpoint regarding education and language decolonization in India. Finally, it is undoubtedly that it is a very rich topic for other researchers to study it with different perspectives and in different aspects.

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