

**The Trap of English as Universal Medium  
in Colonial and Postcolonial Discourse on India**

*A historical review of attitudes towards English in India*

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## ABSTRACT

### **The Trap of English as Universal Medium in Colonial and Postcolonial Discourse on English in India**

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This thesis examines the spread and promotion of English on a global level, from a historical perspective in particular 'Third World' contexts. The globalization of English as an exclusive language of power is considered to be a trap, when accompanied by an ideology aiming to universalize monolingual and monocultural norms and standards. World-wide English diffusion is related - not to any mystical effects of some *psycho-social mechanisms* or *transmuting alchemy* - but to a global rise of military, political, economic, communicational and cultural Euro-American hegemony. The fact that the English language has become perhaps the primary medium of social control and power has not been given a prominent place in the analyses of established social scientists or political planners. On the contrary, the positively idealized dominance of English as a universal medium has become part of a collection of myths seeking to deny the global reality of multilingualism. Not allowing for the existence of any power besides itself, the perpetuation of this hegemony of English *within* a multilingual scenario has become a contradiction in terms.

Centuries of colonialism, followed by neo-colonialism, are seen to have resulted in a world-wide consensus favouring centralization and homogenization of state and world economies, administrations, language, education and mass media systems, as prerequisites to local and global unity. The particular case of India as encountered by a colonizing Britain is used to illustrate the historical clash between differing language and educational traditions and cultures. It was on the strength of their own predominantly positive attitudes towards diversity - encoded in their promotion of complex social and religious philosophies, as well as varied economic and educational practices of *pluralism and hierarchy-without-imposition, unity in diversity*, etc. - that the people and their leaders finally achieved Indian independence from British colonialism. Contemporary Indian society, however, is still grappling with the legacy of a Eurocentric civilizational model - encoded in the neo-colonial system of English education - and in conflict with its own positively idealized and actively promoted traditions of pluralism.

On national and international levels, the destabilization and destruction of diversity continues to threaten more than the linguistic and cultural uniqueness of numerous communities and individuals. For those majorities and minorities who refuse to give up their 'differences', political, economic and physical survival is at stake. A paradoxical reality, seldom acknowledged, is that while for the politically and economically already powerful language groups, the enormous resources spent on formal (language) education have become a means to maintain their material and political capital, whereas for the majority of modern societies' marginalized members, powerful linguistic barriers to full economic or political participation remain firmly in place. The justifications for perpetuating exclusionary policies and sustaining structural inequality have come from monocultural ideological assumptions in education and language policies as one of the key mechanisms for state control of labour. This thesis concludes that the trap of an ideologically exclusive status for English *can* be avoided by theoretically positivizing and institutionally promoting existing multilingual and multicultural peoples' realities as an integral part of their human rights, in order to resist global Englishization.

*Dedicated to my family, my friends,  
my memories of people in Ireland and India*

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*Designing  
the trap*

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## INTRODUCTION

### 0 Theoretical Framework: The Trap of Global English

This thesis critically examines the spread and promotion of English on a global level, from its dominant perspective in particular ‘Third World’<sup>1</sup> contexts. The globalization of English as an exclusive language of power is considered to be a trap, when accompanied by a Eurocentric ideology (Amin 1989<sup>2</sup>), with its political and cultural system that aims to universalize its own monolingual and monocultural norms and standards. At this moment in history, the positively idealized dominance of English as a universal medium has become part of a collection of myths which seek to deny the global existence of multilingualism. These myths about the English language have been used in - *apparently ‘commonsensical’*, but *scientifically fallacious* - academic and popular arguments, that justify the continued use of this formerly colonial language, particularly in the postcolonial societies of Africa, Asia and the Pacific (Phillipson 1992: 8).

Centuries of colonialism, followed by neo-colonialism, have resulted in a world-wide consensus favouring the promotion of national and international centralization and homogenization of state and global economies, administrations, education systems, and the mass media - as prerequisites to local and global unity. Cultural and linguistic diversity have been seen to be largely characteristics of ‘underdeveloped’ countries, conducive to conflict,

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<sup>1</sup> See Dias (1997: 318), for example, for analysis of this term in Pädagogik: Dritte Welt. Unsere Betrachtung der ”Dritten Welt” versucht, in erster Linie die Perspektive der Menschen und Gesellschaften der sog. Dritten Welt als Ausgangspunkt unseres wissenschaftlichen Diskurses zu nehmen, um die im Norden vorherrschenden Vorstellungen mit einem dekonstruktivistischen Ansatz anzugehen und um die Bedingungen der international etablierten Hegemonialstrukturen und ihrer neo-kolonialen Redeweise im Sinne der postmodernistischen Kritik zu analysieren.

<sup>2</sup> Characterized as one of the most powerful and original ‘Third world’ thinkers, Amin is a social scientist, economist and political theorist. In his book Eurocentrism (1989) he defines this phenomena as constituting a specifically modern discourse, which presents the Western model as universally valid and the only solution to all challenges of our time.

poverty, segregation and mismanagement (Pattanayak 1987)<sup>3</sup>. This negative interpretation of multilingualism not only runs *contrary to what history tells us* (Alladina & Edwards 1991: 1), but also ignores the old and new languages existing side-by-side with and before English, in those very countries - such as Britain and the USA - which are today instrumental in spreading the myth of monolingualism. In Britain, for example, *it was found in the Language Census of 1987 that there were 172 different languages spoken by the children in Inner London Education Authority Schools* (Pattanayak 1991: vii). In the *English-speaking USA*, over 30 million inhabitants have mother tongues other than English (Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson 1989: 26).

Where multilingualism is not considered to be an asset, communities and individuals speaking officially invisible or marginalized ‘other’ languages are themselves blamed for their economically and politically underprivileged positions in society. In this way, the economic and political inequalities inherent in the structures of a state system, its (implicit or explicit) language planning and educational policy-decisions, can be freed from any responsibility. The development critic, Escobar (1992: 132, 134), however, has pointed out that planning techniques and practices, considered to be central to ‘development’, carried with them their European *ideological baggage*, inevitably requiring *the normalization and standardization of reality, which in turn entails injustice and the erasure of difference and diversity*. If *language policy* is seen as *one of the key mechanisms for state control of labour*, then monolingual ideological assumptions - with the help of language education - must take the responsibility for justifying *exclusionary policies and sustaining inequality* (Tollefson 1991: 10, 11).

The basis for *world-wide English popularity* does not lie in any mystical *psycho-social mechanisms* or in the effects of a *transmuting alchemy*, as some sociolinguists have hypothesized (Strevens 1981, Kachru 1985<sup>4</sup>).

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<sup>3</sup> See, for example, the articles in basic sociolinguistic readers, such as Fishman, Ferguson & Das Gupta’s (eds.) Language Problems in Developing Nations, published in 1968.

<sup>4</sup> See chapter 2 for a discussion on this issue.

Instead it is due to a global rise of military, political, economic, communicational and cultural Euro-American hegemony. Not allowing for the existence of any power besides itself, this hegemony makes the continued existence of *English as a global language* within a multilingual scenario - as envisioned by the linguist Crystal (1997) - a contradiction in terms. As long as monolingual English mother tongue speaker-minorities in central metropolises of power marginalize the multilingual realities of the people from and in the periphery, they will continue to be able to occupy the economically and politically advantageous positions in the centre, excluding the economically and politically powerless masses.

The expansion of English in Europeanized<sup>5</sup> and 'Third World' countries can be pragmatically and *inextricably linked up with the job market, social mobility and cultural superiority* (Joshi 1998: 250). In the name of functioning successfully not only within their country's national boundaries, but increasingly within the modern world economic system, people of differing language backgrounds are required to have competence in one particular language variety (Tollefson 1991: 6). Today, this language 'happens' to be primarily English. As Herriman & Burnaby (1996: 2) have formulated it:

*During the second half of this century, English has consolidated its power as the major lingua franca in the world at least for business, science, communications and technology ...*

For those who acquire this language as a mother tongue<sup>6</sup>, the economic, political, educational and cultural benefits are obvious, whereas for those

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<sup>5</sup> According to Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson (1989: 4) Europeanized countries are the countries which were colonised from Europe, to the complete or virtual extinction of the original population, countries like Australia, Canada, New Zealand, USA.

<sup>6</sup> A person's 'mother tongue' has variably been defined as his or her home, household, childhood or parents language. It has also been defined as a person's first or dominant language in terms of its 'importance' (see discussion in chapter 7 iii). Singh & Manoharan (1997: 8) define 'mother tongue' as a speech variety which is used for in-group communication by the members of community from the minimal unit of household or home to the maximal unit of endogamy at community level... For Singh & Manoharan (1997: 8) linguistic identity in terms of mother tongue is both a sociolinguistic reality and a product of the mythic consciousness of the people concerned. It is part of an individual's social and emotional identity within a speech community (Pattanayak 1981: 54) and relates to language loyalty rather than a speaker's realistic abilities to communicate in a particular code.

whose access depends on factors such as the availability of formal education, sufficient financial means or even the appropriateness of their social background, the system-inbuilt disadvantages seem insurmountable. Nevertheless, while *many modern and 'economically advanced' societies like the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and Japan operate very successfully using an international language like English (as a foreign language) while continuing to use their mother tongue*, the promotion of English even as an additional language in 'Third World' countries, on the basis of mother tongue maintenance in education and administration, is not seen as a viable possibility (Alladina & Edwards 1991: 2)<sup>7</sup>.

Although *language has become perhaps the primary medium of social control and power*, academic scholars (linguistic, educational, or social science) or political planners have failed to give this realization a prominent place in their analyses (Fairclough 1989: 3). It has, however, become a reality, that for language groups already holding political and economic power (such as, for example, speakers of Western European languages), but wishing to maintain or reproduce *their material and political capital*, formal (language) education has become the passport to more *wealth and power* (Skutnabb-Kangas 1995: 7). Still *the great linguistic paradox of our time* continues to be the fact that, for the vast majority of its marginalized members, modern societies have been *unable - or unwilling - to remove the powerful linguistic barriers to full economic or political participation*, despite increasingly enormous resources spent on language education (Tollefson (1991: 7).

The answer to universal problems of illiteracy (Le Page 1997: 1<sup>8</sup>) as well as *the failure of millions ... to speak the language varieties necessary for access to economic resources and political power* (Tollefson 1991: 7) cannot lie in

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<sup>7</sup> See extensive examples and discussion in chapter 1.

<sup>8</sup> At a World Conference on Education for All in March 1990, no fewer than twenty-two organizations, led by Unesco, the World Bank, UNICEF and UNDP; came together at Jomtien, Thailand, to stress one urgency above all...: this was the fact that nearly one-third of the adult population of the world (nearly 1,000 million people are illiterate; and literacy is inaccessible to more than 100 million children.

perpetuating existing power relations by including or excluding individuals and communities on the basis of their mother tongue and their knowledge or ignorance of English, or other national languages of power. Instead the main contradiction of the modern age can be related to the fact that, although cultural and linguistic diversity have been universal national and international realities of the past and present<sup>9</sup>, explicit and implicit language and education policies have favoured the support of monocultural and monolingual practices in educational and in administration systems, on the employment market and in the media.

The pervasiveness of such a ‘one nation, one language’ ideology - initiated in the American and French revolutions of the eighteenth century - has not been without its costs. In modern democratic countries, such as the USA, Britain, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, for example, due to such - largely unwritten - policies and practices *and the effect of English as the language of power*, most indigenous languages, many immigrant languages, and even some European languages have been marginalized or even become extinct (Herriman and Burnaby 1996: 5). This destabilization and destruction of diversity has threatened much more than the linguistic and cultural uniqueness of numerous communities and individuals: for those majorities who have refused to give up their ‘differences’, political, economic and physical survival is at stake.

The particular case of India as encountered by a colonizing Britain is used to illustrate the historical clash (not only) between differing language traditions and cultures. The predominantly positive attitudes of the peoples towards diversity, of their traditional and modern national leaders, and even of the (Indian) rulers<sup>10</sup> of the subcontinent, have been encoded in their promotion of social, linguistic, religious and educational philosophies and practices of *pluralism and hierarchy-without-imposition* (Srinivas 1971: 157). Even

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<sup>9</sup> See, for example, the writings of the sociolinguist Calvet or the educationalist Pattanayak in the bibliography.

<sup>10</sup> See, for example, policies of the emperors Ashoka or Akbar, who greatly promoted popular education and attitudes of religious tolerance (Bara 1998: 132, 133, 134).

before the independence movement, one of the most emancipatory movements of the Indian subcontinent was the Bhakti movement - including both Hindus and Muslims, as well as people from all castes<sup>11</sup>. The Bhakti movement consisted of different phases at widely varying points of history in northern and southern regions of India (Thapar 1966).

The last phase of the Bhakti movement took place between the fourteenth to the seventeenth centuries, largely in northern regions. The majority of the movement's teachers (men and women) came from lower caste artisan and peasantry backgrounds, from different regional and religious backgrounds, rejected the caste system, brahminical forms of worship and institutionalized religion (Bhokta 1998: 203). Firmly believing in mass contact to spread their message, the *preacher-poets* not only spoke and wrote in the languages (mother tongues) of the people, but actively propagated their use in literature, religious philosophy and education (Bhokta 1998: 204). Particularly in folk literature and folk mythology the influence of Bhakti poets, preachers, their songs, messages and literatures continues to be alive today.

In the twentieth century, leading thinkers on the Indian struggle for independence, such as the political activist and analyst, M. K. Gandhi, or his literary-educational counterpart R. Tagore, were inspired by the people and the philosophies of these emancipatory social, religious, cultural and educational movements. While in relation to the Bhakti movement, Gandhi (1953: 8) praised *the effect* of the Bhakti poet-preachers Chaitanya, Kabir and Nanak *on their own people*, Tagore (1996: 486, 566) emphasized *the*

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<sup>11</sup> According to Thapar (1966: 68, 188, 305), there were several historical and different subcontinental phases of the movement that came to be called the Bhakti movement. This social and religious reform movement lasted several centuries, once from the sixth to the fourth century B. C., another from the fourteenth to seventeenth century. Both phases were formulated and led by members of urban lower caste groups, men and women, coming from northern and southern Indian kingdoms, as well as from different religions. Whereas the earlier leaders had taken their inspiration from Bhuddism and Jainism, the medieval movement, Hindus and Muslims, were inspired by the Sufi teachings from Islam. Thapar (1966: 308) summed up the movement in the following sentence: Institutionalized religion and objects of worship were attacked, caste disregarded, women encouraged to join in the gatherings, and the teaching was entirely in the local vernacular language.

*Muhammadans' permanent and precious contribution* to these *great religious and democratic* movements, which occurred during the time of medieval Mughal rule. In their writings, Gandhi and Tagore also emphasized the importance of mass contact and the use of mother tongue languages in education, literature or administration.

Another fundamental concept regarding the heterogeneous, but unified philosophy of Indian society, i. e. the principle of *unity in diversity*, also gained currency among leaders of the independence movement, such as Nehru (1981), as well as anti-colonial interpreters of Indian history, such as Panikkar (1953), Thapar (1966, 1975, 1992), Chandra (1972, 1979), of culture, such as Das (1991, 1995), of language, such as Pattanayak (1988, 1989), Singh & Manoharan (1997), religion, such as Singer (1972) and of society, such as Srinivas (1971), and numerous others. In regard to the *unity and diversity of religious traditions in India*, for example, Singer (1972: 43) emphasized that *the multiplicity of sects and the absence of a single church organization within Hinduism has not prevented scholars from postulating an underlying unity and continuity*. On the linguistic level, Singh & Manoharan (1997: 16) stress the *linguistic affiliations of languages and the diffusion of traits among all the four major language families of India*. Their theories and analyses helped to counteract the powerful colonial construction of Indian history of colonial ideologues, such as Jones (1786) or Mill (1817), in which India's pluralist reality was conjured up as consisting of a series of unrelated and antagonistic religious, social and linguistic-cultural phases and divisive elements<sup>12</sup>.

The contrasting trends towards political and cultural centralization in early modern Europe culminated in eighteenth century reorganizations of European societies on nationally homogenous grounds (Anderson 1983, Szporluk 1988). Encoded in the concept of *unity in uniformity*, Western European *nation* formation took a destructive attitude towards diversity.

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<sup>12</sup> See chapter 0 ii for a more extensive discussion.

Their attitudes serve as opposing examples for a triumph of primarily negative views on heterogeneity (Calvet 1974<sup>13</sup>).

With the advent of the colonization of the Americas, Africa, Asia and the Pacific, the colonized were forcibly confronted with European models of civilization, that viewed its own solutions as universally and exclusively valid (Amin 1989). The aftermath of this encounter, i. e. the genocide of indigenous peoples, the physical destruction of their agricultural, economic and legal systems, their architecture, religion, literature and culture under colonialism cannot be underestimated (Carew 1992, Stannard 1992). Nevertheless, it is the mental colonization, the destruction of indigenous systems of knowledge and the marginalization of their own historical, social, educational, political and linguistic consciousness, that has proved itself to be even more pervasive and tenacious, and well able to survive the achievements of independence of the colonized people (Ngũgĩ 1981, 1986). In the case of India, subjected to the traditionally contrasting attitudes of the colonizer towards diversity, the people of the subcontinent have attempted to grapple living with the legacy of this Eurocentric civilizational model - encoded in the English language and English education - as well as their own positively idealized and actively promoted philosophy of pluralism.

By the middle of the nineteenth century, according to the subaltern social scientist Cohn (1985: 276), *the conquest of India* had become *a conquest of knowledge*. After the numerous militant revolts of the Indian population, colonial British administrators realized, that in order to perpetuate their rule over India, a control over *the mental universe of the colonised* (Ngũgĩ 1986: 16) had become necessary. For the European Christian missionaries in India this was not a new idea, since their arrival on the Indian subcontinent in the seventeenth century, they had already been attempting - relatively unsuccessfully - the 'moral upliftment' of the Indian people through Christian proselytization (Mahmood 1895, Sinha 1964). After 1835, the

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<sup>13</sup> I have read Calvet's Linguistique et colonialisme: petit traité de glottophagie in the original French, published in 1974, as well as in the German translation, Die Sprachenfresser: Ein Versuch über Linguistik und Kolonialismus, published in 1978.

British rulers' promotion of a uniform system of education throughout the Indian subcontinent, from a colonial construction of *Orientalist* education, was turned into a uniform system of English education by the Anglicist T. B. Macaulay (1862).

English education in India proved to be the most successful mode of transmitting the Eurocentric colonial ideology of 'divide and rule'. By offering educational privileges - and therefore administrative, economic and political advantages in the form of job opportunities - to minority groups of Indians, selected on the basis of caste, religion, language, region or financial means, the social, religious, political and economic hierarchization and divisions of Indian society was initiated. The Eurocentric content of English education perpetuated the Europeanization, centralization and homogenization of Indian thought and culture. The hierarchization of written channels of communication over orality, script languages over spoken, the idealization of classical languages over people's mother tongues and languages over dialects and vernaculars (Das 1991, 1995) - in a culture that had valued the written and the spoken, the classical and the folk (Nandy 1983) - succeeded in marginalizing precisely those Indian languages, literary mythologies and educational systems that had previously unified people in all their diversity<sup>14</sup>.

Whereas, on the one hand, the promotion of colonial education was intended to consolidate colonial British interests, ideology and power - on the other hand - it began to be 'misused', by those Indians who had been permitted to avail of it and who were benefiting from it, as perhaps the most important *terrain* for the *contestation* of that hegemony. If there was a certain ambivalence about the resistance of the English-educated class against the British during the nineteenth century, there was certainly little of it left in the radical approach of Gandhi or Tagore during the twentieth century. While Gandhi (1953: 9) characterized the entire British government in India as defective, he considered the state's system of English education to represent

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<sup>14</sup> For numerous articles on this topic see Bhattacharya (1998).

its *most defective part*. English education had *enslaved the nation* (Gandhi 1953: 5). For Tagore (1996: 559), the introduction of Western education into India *represented an artificial method of training, specially calculated to produce the carriers of the white man's burden*.

Widespread national revolts, trade union strikes, militant demonstrations and peasant uprisings succeeded in mobilizing all sections of the population against colonial rule and finally led to independence in 1947 (Chandra et al 1972: 185, 217, 218). Despite the Indian people's physical and mental refusal to be subjugated into colonial rule, the colonial encounter has had a lasting effect - particularly - on the ruling classes of Indian people and the type of government, administration and educational system they have been promoting, the languages and literatures they have chosen as nationally and 'authentically' representative (Sircar 1992). As traditionally colonial economic and political beneficiaries of English education, this class' marginalization of constitutionally established multilingual models of education has not only led to a consolidation of English-medium kindergartens, schools, universities and institutes, but also to gaining economic and political advantages and privileges in the contemporary global market economy (Sheth 1990).

The decisively multilingual establishment of fifteen (today seventeen) Indian languages as official, administrative and educational languages did not hinder the installation of English as an 'additional' postcolonial administrative, educational and judiciary language of 'authority' in the Indian Constitution (Sinha 1978: 133)<sup>15</sup>. Today, on the terrain of language and education, the struggle continues on two fronts: the 'internal' struggle against the colonially 'reordered' power structures of caste, class, religion and language, as well as the 'external' struggle against neo-colonial pressures of economic, political and linguistic homogenization and centralization from without (Bhattacharya 1998: 7).

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<sup>15</sup> See chapter 11 i for a lengthier discussion.

Nevertheless, the fact that the majority of Indian people could remain rooted in their own philosophical and practical way of life, in the face of the economic, educational, linguistic, political and cultural colonization of their subcontinent, shows their resistance to the strategies and policies of the imperialist rulers. The cultural and linguistic survival of the Indian people may well relate to the immense complexity and magnitude of their pluralist structures (Singh & Manoharan 1997: 1), with which they have sustained their *creative autonomy* from centralizing authorities, as well as developed the self-sufficiency of their *popular genius* (Pattanayak 1981: xi, xii). In any case, it was on the strength of their own cultural and political traditions, their own social and economic practices, that the people and their leaders achieved Indian independence against British colonialism and its ideological construction of their history.

Today 97% of Indian people continue to use their mother tongues, while on average 66.4 per cent of the people of one community are (at least) bilingual - if not multilingual (Singh & Manoharan 1997: 21). ). To emphasize the unity in such diversity, Singh & Manoharan (1997: 23) have shown that of the 325 languages claimed by Indian people as mother tongues, only 96 languages are needed for intergroup communication. Even during the peak spread of colonial education those - constituting not more than 1% of the population - who availed of the English language, continued to use their mother tongues. Even educationalists, scholars or merchants, such as Rammohun Roy, who supported English education, refused to give up their active use and promotion of Indian languages (Ram 1983: 57, Laird 1972: 53

In order to arrest this powerful global trend and in order to evade or re-emerge out of this trap of universal English, more than just an acknowledgement of the existence of 'other' language communities or the culturally or ethnically 'interesting' phenomena of multilingualism seems to be required. As Skutnabb-Kangas & Cummins (1988: 3) have stressed: today, it is *the individual and collective voices of those at the wrong end of the power relationships* who need to be heard, so that they may play a role in

*the policies and programmes being developed to „meet their needs“.* The educational and administrative institutionalization of the multiplicity of marginalized languages, cultures, traditions and practices of the powerless majorities and marginalized minorities of people needs to be promoted as a basic human right. In 1987, such a Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights was formulated in Recife, Brazil, by a UNESCO agency, i. e. the Association Internationale pour le Developpement de la Communication Interculturelle (AIMAV). The Declaration showed itself concerned with widespread discrimination and inequity associated with language, and adopted a statement asserting the existence of universal language rights (Tollefson 1991: 171)<sup>16</sup>.

The formulation of more egalitarian language rights in education, administration and justice, as well as in other powerful domains of public life - in the mother tongue languages of the people - requires the participation of all members (individuals and communities) of a (pluralist) society. Such a formulation also requires the advantages and disadvantages, the theories and practices of pre-colonial, colonial and modern language planning (covert and overt) to be critically weighed against one another, in order to successfully develop policies that safeguard rather than marginalize the linguistic and educational rights of all members of a society, and guarantee them their right to full political and economic participation. This thesis concludes that the trap of an exclusive status for English, along with its monocultural ideology, *can* be avoided by theoretically positivizing and institutionally promoting existing multilingual and multicultural peoples' realities. The political, economic, administrative and educational inclusion, institutionalization and promotion of all the diverse languages of the communities and individuals that make up a society, as an integral part of their human rights, may well be the only answer to resisting global Englishization.

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<sup>16</sup> For a reprint of the complete declaration see Tollefson (1991: 171).

## 0 i      **Conceptual overview: Historical and structural perspectives**

The thesis is divided into five main parts, in addition to the Introduction and the Conclusion. Each part presents and discusses one or more of five central themes developed in specific relation to the Indian subcontinent. The five themes ‘demystification’, ‘language and ideology’, ‘unity in uniformity’ versus ‘unity in diversity’, ‘divide and rule’ and ‘creative autonomy’ can also be used as points of reference to analyse the role of English in other multilingual postcolonial countries. The propositions behind these themes are as follows:

- 1) ‘demystification’: the establishment of *multilingualism for all* in theory as well as in practice requires processes of ‘demystification’ to be set in motion, regarding the theories and practices perpetuating the hegemony of English and monolingual ideologies;
- 2) ‘language and ideology’: assumptions, conventions, theories and practices that negate or marginalize the reality of pluralism can be referred to as a monolingual ideology;
- 3) ‘unity in uniformity’ versus ‘unity in diversity’: systems of knowledge developed on the basis of ideals of ‘unity in uniformity’ negate and marginalize systems of knowledge based on and sustaining ideals of ‘unity in diversity’;
- 4) ‘divide and rule’: colonial and neo-colonial theories and practices have deliberately promoted divisions among pluralist communities in order to establish, uphold and perpetuate their power;
- 5) ‘creative autonomy’: the educational and administrative institutionalization of the language rights of all diverse communities and individuals forms the basis of a democratic society guaranteeing all members full participation as well as ‘creative autonomy’.

The first theme entitled ‘demystification’ discusses the colonial justifications and ‘pragmatic’ historical reasons for the spread of English. It shows the ideological, financial and infrastructural support the English language continues to receive – both on national and international levels – from its European homeland, Britain, as much as from its Europeanized countries, such as the USA, in which it has become the dominant language. The second theme of ‘language and ideology’ contrasts the development of India’s multilingual traditions to the growth of a monolingual ideology in early modern (Western) Europe. By describing the differing theoretical principles of ‘unity in diversity’ and ‘unity in uniformity’, the third theme of the thesis

is introduced. Under the title ‘divide and rule’ the fourth proposition is discussed, i. e. the formulation and implementation of colonial policies, which sought to promote differences on political, cultural, religious, and economic levels in the colonial society. In order to perpetuate colonial rule and suppress resistance from the local population the promotion of English as part of a centralizing language and educational policy was also instrumentalized. The resulting regionally and socially asymmetrical spread of English (and other Indian languages) in administration and education had enormous repercussions on all communities of Indian society: attitudes of social and religious tolerance weakened and the strength of diverse (but unifying) cultural and literary traditions faded. In addition, the constriction of the multiplicity of mother tongue languages in education and government curtailed peoples’ access to schools, colleges and universities and weakened communication channels between bureaucratic institutions and the Indian public. The fifth and last proposition emphasizes the importance of pluralism in promoting peoples’ ‘creative autonomy’ and their ‘popular genius’. It looks toward a more positive future in which pluralism is secured as part of an agenda recognizing, respecting and valuing the presence of every language and culture as a fundamental democratic human right.

The thesis begins with a presentation of the sociolinguistic myths which serve to promote and justify the spread of English (PART I; chapter 1). In order to ‘demystify’ the hegemony of English, the political and economic support factors (chapter 2) are described. The structure of this thesis is mainly historical. The attitudes of the Indian people and their colonizers towards multilingualism and the role of the English language in education and administration are presented in historical progression. As PART I outlines the colonial and postcolonial justifications for the colonial enterprise as presented by the colonials themselves, or their (neo-colonial) successors, the thesis can also be read in a circular manner starting with PART II and ending with PART I.

For the Indian subcontinent, five dates in the last two centuries, i. e. 1835, 1857, 1885, 1910 and 1947, mark the beginning and end of important political, economic or literary phases, also in terms of the status and level of spread of the English language<sup>17</sup>. The ideological triumph of Macaulay's pro-Anglicist stance over Orientalist policies<sup>18</sup>, in the year 1835, secured the 'high-level' administrative and educational status of the English language in India. The year of one of the first major Indian uprisings, 1857, also marked the beginning of a new phase in the establishment of higher English education in India: English universities were opened in the newly created metropolitan centres of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras. The Indian National Congress was founded in 1885, as a political movement it was to decisively form the history of the freedom struggle. For decades after independence in 1947, the Congress determined the course the Indian government was to take on issues such as constitutionally recognized Indian languages, minority and majority language and educational rights, the role of English as an 'additional' - and Hindi as an official - language in higher education, administration and justice. On the political arena, the year 1910, marked the end of the first phase of Indian peoples' organized revolutionary militancy. In the literary field, the same date marked the final triumph of printing and the end of the manuscript tradition in all the major language areas of India. All these particular historic events profoundly influenced the position of Indian languages versus English and the survival (or extinction) of their diverse educational, cultural, oral and literary traditions.

The INTRODUCTION comprises three parts. Chapter 0 presents the theoretical framework of the thesis. Chapter 0 i gives a conceptual overview of the thesis. Chapter 0 ii summarizes the scholars involved in constructing or deconstructing the colonial and postcolonial discourse on English.

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<sup>17</sup> See Das (1991: 18).

<sup>18</sup> The Orientalist faction was a British pressure group consisting of administrators from the East India Company (as well as people outside of the Company), who were in favour of promoting, what they referred to as India's 'classical' languages, such as Sanskrit, Persian, or Arabic. The Anglicists were in favour of promoting only English in education and administration.

PART I, Language, Ideology and Power: Promoting the Hegemony of English?, consists of two chapters, presenting the first theme, i. e. the ‘demystification’ of ‘language, ideology and power’. PART I shows that the dominance of English language and ideology within Indian society is not based on any ‘mystical’ or ‘mysterious’ attractions. Chapters 1 i and 1 ii review the attitudes of twentieth century language planners and sociolinguists. Chapter 1 describes the monolingual ideals generally present in sociolinguistic and educational theory. Chapter 1 i defines and discusses the seven myths promoted about English, which serve to justify the spread of monolingualism based on stereotypical ideals of neo-colonial ‘neutrality’, structural ‘superiority’ and Eurocentric assimilation. Chapter 1 ii discusses the negation of multilingualism, by defining it as a ‘burden’, an ‘inconvenience’ and a ‘curse’.

Chapter 2 i looks behind the spread and status of English, and points to the institutionalized political and economic support factors that keep it in place. Chapter 2 ii outlines the appropriation of universal creativity, productivity and intelligibility exclusively for English. The chapters show that while in many ‘Third World’ countries, English is historically rooted in pervasive colonial developments and elitist structures (the British transfer of an independent India primarily into the hands of an English-educated colonial Hindu elite<sup>19</sup>), its contemporary power relies on the increase of global Anglo-American dominance.

PART II, Clash of Language Traditions and Cultures, deals with the two themes, ‘language and ideology’ and ‘unity in diversity’. Language in

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<sup>19</sup> In the absence of a better term, the term ‘elite’ is used to denote particular groups with economic and political power: this is the way it has also been used here. Like other terminology in social sciences, such as ‘caste’, ‘class’, ‘race’, or even ‘Hindu’, for example, it does not always accurately or adequately define all members of a specified group (and their different particularities). But then, social phenomena cannot be described sociologically with mathematical precision. The term ‘elite’ partly overlaps with terms such as ‘class’, ‘status group’, or ‘interest group’. Though first used as an alternative to the Marxist concept of the ruling class, the term has not been used consistently in this way (see Britannica, Vol. 27, 1990). In contemporary British or Indian contexts, the term ‘elite’ is also used by established Marxist social scientists, such as Worsley (1970) or Shah (1990). Chapter 5 ii of this thesis specifically discusses who constitutes the (‘Anglicized’ or ‘Oriental’) elites in the Indian context.

written and / or spoken use is seen as belonging to a certain culture and to a particular speech community, and therefore being also accompanied by a particular ideology. Every language or language variety encompasses a different ideological system that is determined, influenced and developed by its language or cultural community, and based on numerous, constantly evolving, economic, cultural, political, social, and philosophical factors. As Smitherman<sup>20</sup> (1986: 196) puts it:

*Finally, a language reflects a people's culture and their world view, and thus each group's language is suited to the needs and habits of its users ... Since all languages change, all are modified and modifiable according to the dictates, customs, and habits of their users.*

According to Ngũgĩ<sup>21</sup> (1986: 13) language, any language, has a dual character: it is both a means of communication and a carrier of culture:

*Take English. It is spoken in Britain and in Sweden and Denmark. But for Swedish and Danish people English is only a means of communication with non-Scandinavians. It is not a carrier of their culture. For the British, and particularly the English, it is additionally, and inseparably from its use as a tool of communication, a carrier of their culture and history. Or take Swahili in East and Central Africa. It is widely used as a means of communication across many nationalities. But it is not the carrier of a culture and history of many of those nationalities. However in parts of Kenya and Tanzania, and particularly in Zanzibar, Swahili is inseparable both as a means of communication and a carrier of the culture of those people to whom it is a mother-tongue.*

The case of the English language variety brought to, promoted and evolved in India can be said to have been influenced by the following groups of people:

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<sup>20</sup> African-American linguist, educationalist and campaigner for the legitimacy of Black American speech

<sup>21</sup> One of the most important writers from the African continent, Ngũgĩ, previously a university professor of English, was detained without trial in Kenya during 1978, due to his political activities, which included a decision to switch from writing in English to his mother tongue Gikuyu and East Africa's lingua franca Swahili.

- a) Christian missionaries from Europe
- b) East India Company and British Crown officials
- c) colonial ideologues (educationalists, linguists, literary critics)
- d) privileged Indian classes subservient to the (neo-)colonial regime.

Together they formulated and defined the colonial and critical discourse on (and in) English in India, on which contemporary sociolinguistic and educational attitudes towards English continue to be based<sup>22</sup>.

PART II comprises three chapters. Chapter 3 presents the language traditions of ancient India - as seen by contemporary political thinkers, philosophers, social scientists and historians - based on ideals of 'unity in diversity'. Chapter 3 ii contrasts their analyses with the centralizing, monocultural and monolingual theories, which arose out of powerful trends towards 'unity in uniformity', in early modern Europe.

Chapters 3 i and 3 iii discuss how, for at least 2000 years, the people of the Indian subcontinent have succeeded in sustaining, as well as infinitely extending, the pluralism of their cultures, their languages and their religions. Neither their reality of sustaining, nor their reality of extending a culture adversely affected the other. Diverse communities, their languages or religions, however powerful they were, neither replaced each other, nor questioned the rights of others to continue to exist in their own ways<sup>23</sup>. At the same time, being linked by a common and a comprehensive mythology, view of the world and philosophy, the various communities of the subcontinent were deeply influenced by each other. This subcontinental unity of a shared sensibility, imagination and thought, they continued to express through a diversity of languages, religions, and cultures<sup>24</sup>.

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<sup>22</sup> See INTRODUCTION, 0 ii.

<sup>23</sup> Such as, for example, Sanskrit, Persian, Islam, etc.

<sup>24</sup> See S. K. Das (1995: 6) who has written the most comprehensive and detailed surveys of Indian comparative literary history.

Chapter 3 ii, as well as chapter 4 i, ii describe the role played by the monotheistic Christian church, European language philosophers and the missionaries. At least from the seventeenth century onwards, they were united by their fervour to find a universal ‘sacred’, ‘classical’ language of origin for the whole of humankind. They were equally preoccupied with negative Christian parables of ‘chaotic’ multilingual ‘Tower of Babel’ scenarios. Their far-reaching influence can be traced in to the ideology of eighteenth century French or American revolutionaries, who were at the forefront of promoting centralizing language and education theories. While denying other languages the right to exist, they spread monolingual education for multilingual people - in the name of liberty and equality<sup>25</sup>. A parallel may well be drawn between the monotheistic Christian ideology allowing for one God only, and European nationalist and colonial policies officially tolerating one language only per nation. In their efforts to Christianize colonized people via the Bible and/or ‘Western’ education, the missionaries who came to the Indian subcontinent developed mainly pragmatic attitudes towards the use of Indian languages and/or English.

Chapter 5 describes how, on the Indian side, the (enforced) contact with the European conquerors led to breaks in the pluralist traditions of the subcontinent. The European, primarily British colonizers of India were not interested in accommodating or extending the mental or material structures of the subcontinent, their primary goal was their own and the enrichment of their British motherland. For their own economic benefit, and in order to keep the resistance of the oppressed population at a minimum, they consciously initiated ideological divisions within India’s pluralist society. The spread of the Christian religion, the introduction of English education and administration, and the reinterpretation of Indian history, culture and vision of the world was instrumentalized in order to first secure and later justify the imperialists’ hold over the subcontinent.

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<sup>25</sup> See the analysis of the French sociolinguist/social scientist, Calvet (1974: 56, 95, 139).

Chapter 5 i, describes how the two options of ‘Orientalization’ or ‘Anglicization’ were offered to a colonially-formed class of middlemen, as a ‘remedy’ to ‘bridge’ divisions between the colonizers and colonized, as well as among the colonized themselves. While the Orientalists categorized particular languages (Indo-Aryan/Indo-European) and a particular culture (Hindu/Aryan) as ‘classical’ Indian, the Anglicists classified all Indian languages either as ‘non-modern’ or as ‘lower vernaculars’, and proceeded to curtail their functions and roles in ‘higher’, official spheres of public life. Chapter 5 ii discusses the development of an English education system turning out *armies of bilingual clerks* and *qualified candidates* to run the vast colonial machinery. Chapters 5 iii and 5 iv describe the imperial triumph of the ideologically exclusivist British English model, i. e. the official Anglicization of India, and the condition of ‘purdah-nashin’ (‘existing behind the curtain’) of a foreign language<sup>26</sup> for 99% of the Indian people.

Part III, Defining Colonial Boundaries in a Multilingual Landscape, comprises two chapters. Chapters 6 i and 6 iii specifically deal with the fourth theme of this thesis, the nineteenth century colonial strategy of ‘divide and rule’. During this period, in order to be able to further extend and secure their rule over India, Britain sought to increase their knowledge of the languages, social and economic systems of the colonized people. Here the superimposition of colonial boundaries and classification systems on the complex multicultural landscape of the Indian subcontinent began with full force.

Chapters 6 i, 6 ii, and 6 iii also describe how in the name of Sanskritization, language ‘purification’, and Anglicization pre-colonial patterns of Indian languages and language varieties were linguistically and ideologically reorganized by language surveyors and lexicographers from Britain. In chapter 7 i the sociolinguistic accommodation processes largely forced on Indian languages by the colonial situation are dealt with. Chapter 7 ii

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<sup>26</sup> Tagore (1996: 481).

contrasts the asymmetrical changes and accommodation processes affecting the colonial British and the contemporary Indian variety of English. Chapter 7 iii outlines the varieties of English in existence. Possibilities for the development and promotion of independent (language or variation) standards versus one global standard are discussed.

PART IV, Acceptance or Resistance? comprises two chapters. They review the attitudes of nineteenth and twentieth century Indian political activists, pressure groups, and educationalists towards the use of the English language in administration and in education. Chapter 8 i and 8 ii describe the range of attitudes of different Indian communities, in terms of pragmatic acceptance. Chapter 8 ii and chapter 9 discuss the development of popular and political resistance. As the differing reactions towards English education drive the Muslim and Hindu communities further apart, such deepening divisions mark a turning point in the historical relationship of numerous Indian communities<sup>27</sup>. As the struggle for independence gathers force, efforts to reinstall Hindu-Muslim unity influence the anti-colonial debate in favour of nation theories and the promotion of an official language.

PART V, Demystifying Colonial Myths? consists of two chapters. It reviews contemporary writers' and educationalists' attitudes towards the official role of English in modern Indian literature, education and administration. Chapter 10 traces the multilingual wealth and oral-plus-literate dissemination channels of pre-colonial Indian literature. Chapter 10 i questions whether English has become the only defining criteria of modern Indian literature. Chapter 10 ii discusses the continuum of attitudes to English presented by a micro-section of contemporary women writers using English. In chapter 11 and chapter 11 i, India's constitutional majority and minority language and educational rights are presented. Government commissions and policies are discussed and analysed.

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<sup>27</sup> It was not only the Muslims who reacted differently to British rule than the Hindus, in general the British treatment of Muslims was markedly 'more' discriminatory (Kochhar 1992).

The CONCLUSION, *Multilingualism for all: Promoting Popular Genius and Creative Autonomy*, presents the fifth theme and comprises one chapter. In Indian history, empowering diversity rather than suppressing it, has led to a more egalitarian representation, acknowledgement and presence of peoples' 'creative autonomy' and 'genius'. Given contemporary power structures, the English language may become a functional additional asset (for anyone wishing to avail of it), if the privileged classes relinquish their exclusive hold over it. In chapters 12 i and 12 ii multilingualism is discussed in relation to the 'popular genius' of peoples' languages and cultures, which constitute their 'creative autonomy'. In colonial and postcolonial India, the hegemony of English in education and administration has shown to exclude rather than include the vast majority of Indian people. Particularly the use of English as a medium of instruction for 'higher' or more 'expensive' education has proved detrimental to the re-establishment of multilingual mother tongue education systems (not only) in India. While the constitutional establishment of equal rights for cultural and linguistic minorities and majorities was a giant step forward, the practical, creative, technical and functional use of all Indian languages in education, administration, culture and justice can further strengthen endangered pan-Indian unity and defuse growing communal tensions, by securing the spread of equal economic, political, social and cultural benefits among all members of society.

In addition, critical discourses taking place in a - still untranslated - English, can only achieve multiple local and international relevance, if they are able to reformulate themselves in the context of the anti-colonial realities and practices of the majorities of the (Indian) people, who do not speak, use, read or write English. While they continue to be excluded by the 'other' marginalized (Indian) languages they still nurture, develop and use, multilingual, multicultural realities cannot come into power. While they continue to be excluded, Indian minorities (such as the Anglicized elite in neo-colonial countries) or majorities (such as the fundamentalist Hindu-plus-Hindi class in India) cannot be prevented from falling into the trap of

presenting themselves (on Eurocentric lines) as politically, linguistically, educationally, socially, and culturally the *only* choice for a traditionally so pluralist universe.

## 0 ii **Introductory remarks: The colonial and postcolonial discourse on English**

Relocating early modern language philosophers, Christian missionaries and British administrators in contemporary sociolinguistic and educational attitudes towards English

Much has been written on the subject of the English language in India. The overwhelming portion is colonial literature, which constructs the role, position and status of English - embedded in its native (Anglo-American speech) communities, in its civilizational achievements, culture, literature or philosophy - as superior to the communities, languages, civilizational achievements, philosophies, literatures or political systems of the Indian subcontinent. In her book on Postcolonial Theory Leela Gandhi (1998: 144) argues, that Macaulay's *hierarchy of literary value establishes English literature as the normative embodiment of beauty, truth and morality, or, in other words, as a textual standard that enforces the marginality and inferiority of colonised cultures and their books*. This thesis traces the racist, Eurocentrist scholarly basis<sup>28</sup> by which the promotion of English was combined with a marginalization of Indian languages. In regard to the marginalized status, position and use of indigenous languages in other postcolonial countries - most of which have retained the colonial language under an official or semi-official status - the Indian situation is not an unusual one, even though constitutionally India has declared itself one nation with 17 official languages. According to the analysis of Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas (1989: 51)<sup>29</sup>, neo-colonial societies *have shifted from the brutal suppression of indigenous languages of colonial times to the more subtle forms of linguisticism of contemporary times*. Analysing such historical shifts in sociolinguistic attitudes and constitutional policies - ranging from overt to covert promotion of English, or overt to covert suppression of indigenous languages, forms the basis of this thesis. The colonial and

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<sup>28</sup> See, for example, a critique of racist, Eurocentric philological and social sciences discourse in Bernal (1987) Black Athena, or Amin (1989) Eurocentrism.

<sup>29</sup> For further references see Sktunabb-Kangas & Phillipson have written extensively on multilingual rights, linguistic imperialism and multilingual education.

postcolonial myths, formulated in order to - retrospectively - justify the colonial enterprise, can be seen as part of a *linguicist discourse*, defined as follows (Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas 1986: 45):

*We define LINGUIICISM as ideologies and structures which are used to legitimate, effectuate and reproduce an unequal division of power and resources (both material and non-material) between groups which are defined on the basis of language.*

By the middle of the eighteenth century, three centuries of rationalist and empirical inquiry, from the European Renaissance to the period of Enlightenment, had firmly entrenched a racist ideology in all branches of European (social science) theory (Amin 1989). During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries this discourse retrospectively sought to justify the Western Europeans' colonization of the Americas, the African continent, the Pacific region and Asia. In 1690, for example, the British empiricist John Locke in his Essay concerning Human Understanding argued that Africans' level of reason was comparable to that of animals. In 1753, the British philosopher David Hume, in his essay Of National Characters, laid down the scholarly foundations of a racist interpretation of world history, by classifying the white species to be naturally superior to all other races at any point in time<sup>30</sup>.

In the case of the Indian subcontinent, the colonial discourse justifying colonialism, was a mainly historical, religious and philological construction of its past (see Grewal 1975: 8). Filled with theoretical pre- and misconceptions about a subcontinent some of these scholars had never even visited, this literature was written primarily by British (or European) Christian missionaries, East India Company officials and their successors, the employees and colonial administrators of the Crown, some of whom

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<sup>30</sup> John Locke's (1690: 62, 606, 607) Essay concerning Human Understanding, considered to be the primary philosophical classic of systematic empiricism, argues that though Africans might be human they have a level of reason comparable to that of animals. The philosopher and empiricist David Hume (1753) in his essay Of National Characters, considered all species of men - but whites - at any point in history, to be uncivilized and naturally inferior.

never visited the Indian subcontinent<sup>31</sup>. According to Grewal<sup>32</sup> (1975: 4), early British interest in *the past of the 'modern' non-Christian peoples and countries ... was a backward projection of the interest in their present*. In his History of British India, published in London in 1817, James Mill, for example, who worked in an administrative capacity for the East India Company in London, first articulated and formulated what was to become an authoritative historical and philosophical basis for dominant European attitudes towards India. According to Mill's interpretation of global history, 'civilization' depended on the existence of rational legal and political institutions, 'mature' science and philosophy, liberty and a 'taste' in art and letters. Mill located the origin of anything worthy of being referred to as 'civilization' as having originated solely from ancient Greece. European 'civilization' had barely managed to survive the medieval period, but was flourishing in modern times. In places such as India 'civilization' was non-existent<sup>33</sup>. British missionary attitudes towards India were equally negative, as Bearce (1961: 80) sums up their vision in British Attitudes towards India 1784 – 1858:

*By this conception, India was in darkness and would need the era of light present in the Western world.*

There were a number of British missionaries, however, who took and developed a pragmatic - if equally constructed - 'Orientalist' approach to India. There was missionarizing work to be done in India, and by learning Indian languages in order to translate the Bible, they hoped to convert and 'enlighten' the 'natives'.

Samir Amin (1989: vii) has critically referred to such colonial interpretations as being part of a Eurocentric discourse, which he defines as *a specifically modern phenomenon* flourishing in the nineteenth century, and rooted in the Renaissance. Claiming universal validity, this Eurocentric discourse presents

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<sup>31</sup> According to Thapar (1966: 17), James Mill was never in India.

<sup>32</sup> Historian and professor from Guru Nanak University, Amritsar, India.

<sup>33</sup> See Mill (1826: vol. ii, 66, 70-72, 186-187). For a lengthier discussion on Mill's construction of India see Bearce (1961: 65-78).

the Western model as the only solution to all challenges of our time for all peoples (Amin 1989: vii, 89). In this model, ‘other’ discourses, ‘other’ models, ‘other’ contributions and ‘other’ solutions are absent. In reference to India and China, for example, Dias (1992: 3) points out their deliberate exclusion from the *world system*:

*... when it comes to intellectual – philosophical and scientific – discourse within the actual dimension of the world-system affairs and to critical reflections on the present day global problems and crises, then their (India’s and China’s) genuine intellectual presence and contribution ... is, conspicuously, absent from the mainstream of thinking and acting - not to say ignored or deliberately discarded as obsolete. Is it mindlessness, lack of information or a system-in-built question of power and relevance?*

Within this dominant scholarly Eurocentric discourse, the achievements of ‘Third World’ countries are seldom ascribed even local usefulness<sup>34</sup>. According to the development critic, Alvarez (1995: 13), it was within a certain *power context*, that *the histories, ideas and technological experience of non-Western societies could be written off or ignored: the latter, after all, were conquered peoples*. At the same time, European or Europeanized historical, technical, political, or cultural contributions are automatically granted international validity. From the colonial period onwards, the medium and / or the instrument for such universalist messages have been the Western European languages, ‘their’ sciences, ‘their’ economics, ‘their’ education systems, ‘their’ literatures and ‘their’ ideology. Out of these languages, English has emerged as the most powerful carrier of universalist messages.

Europe’s racist and colonialist ideology prohibited the classification of living African, Asian, Pacific or native American languages an equal means of communication<sup>35</sup>. In numerous cases, the existence of such parallel

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<sup>34</sup> For a more detailed study of Egyptian, Chinese, Indian and Arab contributions to mathematics, see, for example, Alan J. Bishop (Oct. - Dec.; 1990: 51 - 66) from the Department of Education, Cambridge University, England, and his article: Western mathematics: the secret weapon of cultural imperialism, in *Race & Class*, Vol. 32, No. 2.

<sup>35</sup> Particularly in the Indian context, living ‘inferior vernacular’ languages were contrasted to dead ‘superior classical’ languages.

visions of the world were either denied or completely suppressed (Calvet<sup>36</sup> 1978: 19, 27, 30). According to Bernal <sup>37</sup> (1987: 226), scholars of the Romantic period in Europe, primarily trained in philology and European classical languages, were centrally concerned with language, with the help of which they formulated their ideas on philosophy, history or society<sup>38</sup>. While Romanticist European philologists categorized each language as *peculiar* and *attached to a particular place and landscape*, they began to base their language classification system on methods of biology, and proposed the link between language and race. The *supposedly unique characters of peoples* were associated with *the characteristics of their languages*. Striving to have their field recognized as a ‘science’, linguistic scholars made this ‘theory’ – which included the opposition between Indo-European and Semitic languages – into one of the main dogmas of modern linguistics (Amin 1989: 95). According to Amin (1989: 95), in this way, *one of the best examples of the lucubrations required for the construction of Eurocentrism* was constituted.

The development of racist scholarship based on skin colour can be traced back to late seventeenth century England<sup>39</sup> (Bernal 1987: 27). The first ‘academic’ work on human racial classification putting ‘Whites’, now classified as ‘Caucasians’, at the head of the human hierarchy was published from the University of Göttingen, in Germany<sup>40</sup>. Its theories were also widely accepted in Britain. In fact, Faraclas (1995: 176) points out even up to the 1950s, most academicians (sociolinguists and anthropologists) in Europe and in the United States accepted such racist theories. Equating ‘superior’ language families with ‘whiter’ skin colour and with ‘higher’ levels of civilization, they regarded these analyses as the *highest summation*

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<sup>36</sup> Calvet is one among few contemporary social scientists, who has critically examined the links between linguistics and (French) colonialism. See bibliography for further references.

<sup>37</sup> Bernal’s *Black Athena* has challenged the whole basis of racist thinking on ancient Greece and the fabrication of Eurocentric historiography.

<sup>38</sup> In Germany, see, for example, Herder.

<sup>39</sup> Racist ideas pervaded the thought of Locke, Hume and other European thinkers, also deeply influencing the perceptions of European explorers of ‘other’ continents.

<sup>40</sup> In the 1770s, Johann Friedrich Blumenbach, a professor at Göttingen university, wrote this racist human ‘history’ (see Bernal 1987: 27, 28).

of linguistic, historical, and anthropological truth. Indo-European language families, whose skin colour was considered *white*, were judged as having a ‘high’ level of *civilization*. Various Semitic, Hamitic languages, whose speakers were classified as *off-white* or *brown*, had ‘medium’ levels of *civilization*. At the bottom of the line, Nigritic or Sudanic languages, whose speakers were categorized as *black*, were subjected to being labelled as the ‘lowest’ level of *civilization*.

In The Past and Prejudice, Thapar<sup>41</sup> (1975: 10) characterizes the philological equation based on linking one language to one race, to one nation, or even to one particular region, as representing a crucial theoretical misconception, which lead to numerous false equations:

*The error committed by the philologists was to equate language with race. It would seem that, since language played a significant role in the rise of European nationalism, it was regarded as a criterion of race as well, the distinction between nation and race being somewhat unclear at the time.*

According to Thapar (1975: 10) the colonial and contemporary spread of English around different regions of the world, provide a good example for the existence of language commonality among communities not linked on *ethnic* or *national* lines.

In the European interpretation of history, civilizational ‘development’ was and continues to be seen as linear and progressive<sup>42</sup>. The Greek and/or Roman periods of civilization were characterized as forming the basis of European superiority. In Unthinking Eurocentrism, Shohat and Stam<sup>43</sup> (1994: 2) have outlined the ideology behind linear thinking:

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<sup>41</sup> The Indian historian, Romila Thapar, deconstructed colonial British versions of early ancient Indian history. See bibliography for references.

<sup>42</sup> Before the dominance of Eurocentrist colonial interpretations of history, there were other prevalent historical theories of time and development. The British historian Toynbee (1975), for example, outlines the cyclic view prevalent in the cultures of Hindus, pre-Christian Greeks, Chinese, or Aztecs. Though this view has reappeared in modern Western society, the Christian religion sees time as a one-way flow and not as a cyclic one (Britannica, Vol. 28, 1990: 654).

<sup>43</sup> US American social and media scientists.

*Eurocentric discourse projects a linear historical trajectory leading from classical Greece (constructed as "pure", "Western", and "democratic") to imperial Rome and then to the metropolitan capitals of Europe and the US. It renders history as a sequence of empires: Pax Romana, Pax Hispanica, Pax Britannica, Pax Americana. In all cases, Europe, alone and unaided, is seen as the "motor" for progressive historical change: it invents class society, feudalism, capitalism, the industrial revolution.*

On the basis of such Eurocentric theories, Indian languages, cultures and economies, submerged under colonial rule, were rearranged, reclassified and restandardized. The subcontinent, its peoples and their visions were reformulated, reproduced, represented and redefined through a British/European system of knowledge and through English and/or other European languages. Employed in the administration system of the East India Company, Jones, Colebrooke and Wilson<sup>44</sup> were educated in classical European, philological traditions, in time becoming leading 'experts' of Indology. When dealing with India, such scholars directed their 'specialized' interest towards traditional Indian law, politics, society and religion, but being philologists they did this primarily and inevitably through the study of the Sanskrit and Persian languages and literatures (Thapar 1992: 2):

*Investigation into the Indian past began with the work of the Orientalists or Indologists – mainly European scholars who had made India, and particularly Indian languages, their area of study.*

From then onwards, what became popular and academic knowledge about Indian history, society or culture (in India and outside) was based on Anglo-European constructions and projections.

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<sup>44</sup> William Jones was a key figure in the development of both the Oriental studies and the British policies of the eighteenth century. He founded the Asiatick Society of Bengal, which for the first time made an organized effort to study the history, society and culture of India. He also developed a theory of law and government for the British Raj in Bengal (Mukherjee 1968: 2, 3). In regard to his speech for the Asiatick Society, in 1786, where he put forward the theory of the close relationship between the Sanskrit language, Greek and Latin, the linguist, Römer (1985: 49) writes: Auf dieses Ereignis wird zumeist der Beginn der modernen vergleichenden Sprachwissenschaft datiert. H. Colebrooke was a lawyer, an 'Orientalist' and a member of the 'Asiatick Society' (Mukherjee 1968: 90). H. H. Wilson, also an 'Orientalist', wrote A Glossary of Judicial and Revenue Terms (1855).

On the other side of the coin, at least for a particular class of Indians, knowledge about Europe was channelled through English education, English language and English literature. Indians were taught English in order that they might internalize the fundamental concepts of Western civilization. According to Joshi<sup>45</sup> (1991: 1, 2), in their history of over a hundred-and-fifty years in India, the English language and its literature stand out as specific entities situated within the history of colonialism. Together literature and language present *an active agency in the re-formation of the colonial society and culture*. Up to today, they continue *to inform, indeed constitute, elite culture and literature* on the subcontinent. Though the English language, its colonial promoters and its colonially-educated speakers, encountered Indian society at a particularly exclusive, elite level, the altered educational, commercial, political, cultural and social system it generated dramatically affected the lives of large sections of the Indian people.

Despite Indian independence, memories of British conquest pervades Indian scientific and non-scientific fields of academic analysis. In higher education, central administration and in the established media, British or European models are still predominant. Current English usage – or even usage in other Indian languages – is regulated by archaic British (also missionary) standards<sup>46</sup>. In the field of language and (higher) educational planning, European nation theories, including the idealization of monoculturalism and monolingualism, continue to influence the policies of Indian governments.

In sum, contemporary academic, sociolinguistic and educational discourses on English are shown to be based on East India Company, missionary and British Raj documents and attitudes, who in turn depended on the writings and analyses of nineteenth century colonial ideologues. Such colonial and postcolonial discourses failed to include those Indian scholars with a critical

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<sup>45</sup> The literary critic, Joshi, edited a recent compilation of critical essays on English in university education, in publishing and as a literary medium in India, called Rethinking English (1991).

<sup>46</sup> See chapter 4 ii, on the missionary influences on Indian languages.

eye to Eurocentric reformulations of the subcontinent's history. For a full, complex, creative, and balanced account of the role of English in education, literature and administration in India, however, the acknowledgement and study of the theories and analyses of numerous Indian scholars is decisive<sup>47</sup>. Sociological and historical analyses of the role of Indian languages in their (pre-colonial) multilingual environment, by members of their own communities, contradict and resist the accounts and classifications of European language surveyors, educationalists, policy planners and historians. These analyses of India's socio-historical, socio-linguistic and socio-cultural complexities have gone beyond Eurocentric, abstract and purist presentations and views (focussing on Sanskrit culture, language, civilization and literature) to more generally relevant, useful, pan-Indian visions and issues.

A thorough re-examination of the fundamental and crucial misconceptions about India's rich linguistic, literary and educational landscape depends on an analysis of India's past, prior to and in relation to the dominance of English ideology. According to Thapar (1975: 21, 22), realistically assessing the past is *of more than just historical value*, if it includes the questioning of current stereotypes on the basis of whether *they are factually correct or reflections of the needs of recent times*. In this analysis, new approaches do not simply lie *in turning old stereotypes upside down or in replacing them with new ones*. Instead what is necessary is *a logical analysis utilising the most recent evidence, and, where it is of help, recent methodology*. In an analysis of the position of English in India, this points to an investigation into the forces that have shaped, and continue to shape this globally powerful language. At the same time, in its turn, the forces English has shaped and sustained are equally relevant (Joshi 1991: 28).

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<sup>47</sup> There are numerous important sociological, descriptive or critical accounts of Indian languages – besides Sanskrit - prior to and during British rule, written by speakers of the languages themselves. Das (1991: 138) has given three examples of such accounts, the Assamese intellectual, A. D. Phukan's work, the Bengali writer, B. Mukhopadhyay's writings, and the Konkan linguist, Dr. J. G. de Cunha's analysis.

The historian, Panikkar (1953: 479) has referred to *the period of European control of the States of Asia as dividing line in their history*, a period which *radically transformed their ancient societies*, and *modified their outlook* to such an extent that it *involved a qualitative break with the past*. The intervention of English - along with the particular Eurocentric, 'nation-state' ideology of its colonial and postcolonial promoters - has deeply affected the pluralist system of the subcontinent. According to Amin (1990: 43, 44), even in the Europe of the nineteenth century, *the linguistic dimension* had acquired *an exceptional force* in the European nation-states, *constituting the essence of the national factor as a new social factor*:

*Education and modern democracy turn the national language into an instrument that in the end defines the nation itself, its frontiers, its mass culture; it is attributed a mysterious power of transmitting 'national culture'.*

In the case of India, representing a *pluri-national* state (Amin 1990: 58), 17 constitutionally recognized Indian languages *define the (Indian) nation*, while on the international or national level, English appears to supersede them all. *Political imperatives* still govern *the formation and continuance of English studies in India* (Joshi 1991: 4). While before, the English language was used in ideologically *diverse and interactive ways* by British colonial officers, as well as the colonial Indian intelligentsia, today *in the interests of class, empire and nation*, it continues to be availed of by the contemporary English-educated elite (Joshi 1991: 4). These *intersecting interests* have produced their own cultural formations, their own structures of power, their own relations of dominance and subordination, centrality and marginality, and have failed to address or include the participation of the large majority of thereby disenfranchised Indian people.

In this interdisciplinary thesis, the scholarly attitudes discussed and contrasted, are examined and analysed according to the positions they take<sup>48</sup>:

a) for or against English in non-native contexts,

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<sup>48</sup> Irrespective of their privileged positions or otherwise within the dominant international academic discourse. See Dias (1992: 2) quoted further down the page.

- b) for or against English as national or international language
- c) for or against multilingualism in educational policy and practices.

The historical basis of the discussion on colonial attitudes towards language(s) in general, and English in particular, was first formulated by British missionaries, East India Company or Crown officials, historians or educationalists<sup>49</sup>. Their views are contrasted with the critical historical and social science theories that have deconstructed the British version of Indian history and society<sup>50</sup>. The attitudes of the leaders of the Indian independence movement<sup>51</sup> or educational philosophers<sup>52</sup> are also presented and discussed<sup>53</sup>.

Historical British and Indian attitudes towards English as an educational and civilizational tool for the ‘development’ of the peoples of the Indian subcontinent are compared to the contemporary discourse on the role and status of English in governmental and educational systems of ‘Third World’ countries, such as India. The analyses of Anglo-American or South Asian sociolinguists<sup>54</sup>, sociologists<sup>55</sup>, literary critics<sup>56</sup> and educationalists<sup>57</sup> more or less in favour of a global spread of English, are contrasted with the theories of social scientists<sup>58</sup>, educationalists<sup>59</sup>, literary critics<sup>60</sup> and sociolinguists<sup>61</sup> in favour of multicultural/multilingual/mother tongue language rights in education and administration<sup>62</sup>.

This thesis highlights predominant Eurocentric theories on language, ‘unity and nation’ versus ‘diversity and multilingualism’. National monolingual

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<sup>49</sup> See, for example, Jones, Mills, Wilson, Trevelyan, Macaulay.

<sup>50</sup> See, for example, the historians Thapar, Datta, Chandra, Majumdar. Or the social scientists Srinivas, Chatterji, Chatterjee.

<sup>51</sup> Such as, for example, Gandhi, Nehru or Ambedkar.

<sup>52</sup> See Mahmood, Tagore, Gandhi.

<sup>53</sup> See bibliography for titles of relevant works.

<sup>54</sup> Crystal, Kachru, Quirk, Kandiah.

<sup>55</sup> See, for example, Fishman.

<sup>56</sup> See Rushdie or Naipaul.

<sup>57</sup> See, for example, Sridhar.

<sup>58</sup> Such as Bourdieu, Srinivas or Cohn.

<sup>59</sup> Such as Skutnabb-Kangas, Pattanayak, Jouhy, Panikkar, Acharya, Sinha, Ram, Kumar, Herriman & Burnaby, Spolsky.

<sup>60</sup> Ngûgî, Das, Joshi, Devy.

<sup>61</sup> Calvet, Khubchandani, Pattanayak, Mazrui, Phillipson.

<sup>62</sup> See bibliography for titles of relevant works.

education is contrasted with national multilingual education. The critical discourse formulated by sociolinguists, literary critics and educationalists<sup>63</sup> on the subject of the globalization of the English language, is set against the views of prolific sociolinguists or sociologists, who seldom integrate such analyses into their writings<sup>64</sup>. Kachru (1986, 1996), for example, fails to contextualize or specify the rights, uses, or creativity of the languages of 97% of the Indian people, if English and its 3% users are to ‘unproblematically’ take over or adequately service all important domains of public life in India. In his presentation of the global role of English, Crystal (1997) pays lip-service to the universal existence of multilingualism, without suggesting how the functions, roles or ingenuity of other languages can be sustained, against the widespread professionalized, technicalized and politicized Anglo-American hegemony of English.

In modern society, according to the sociolinguist Fairclough (1989: 2), *the exercise of power ... is increasingly achieved through ideology, and more particularly through the ideological workings of language*. Those interested in relationships of power in modern society, cannot afford to ignore that language has become *the primary medium of social control and power* (Fairclough 1989: 3). A current ideological assumption is *that languages which are truly the mother tongues of living communities will be maintained without official intervention* (Tollefson 1991: 68). The survival of marginalized languages, however, according to Tollefson (1991: 75), has less to do with the *internal vitality of minority groups*, and much more with *the strength of the dominant group and the historical consequences of hegemony*. Languages or language variations do not continue to exist if there are no communities using them (Calvet 1978: 130), nor do they continue to develop in academic or scientific domains, in which they are suppressed, considered unnecessary, useless, or incompetent.

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<sup>63</sup> See, for example, Pattanayak (1986), Ngûgî (1986), Mazrui (1998), or Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson (1989).

<sup>64</sup> See, for example, Fishman, Ferguson 1962, Ferguson & Greenbaum in Baumgartner 1996, Kachru 1986, Sridhar 1977, Kandiah 1991, Crystal 1997, etc.

Though explicitly favouring linguistic decolonization of (newly) independent countries, even critics of colonialism and neo-colonialism, at times fail to emphasize the importance of putting the official promotion of indigenous languages – those that have survived colonialism - on the top of the agenda in the struggle to achieve more egalitarian, truly post- and anti-colonial societies<sup>65</sup>. If most sociolinguists agree, that all languages, spoken natively by a group of people, have equal worth, are logical, cognitively complex and capable of expressing any thoughts, the opposing convictions - i. e. that some languages ‘should’ have more rights than others, that a single medium of instruction at all stages of education ensures better ‘objective achievement’<sup>66</sup>, or that ‘modern progressive development’ is based on the existence of a limited amount of official or national languages<sup>67</sup> - are still too prevalent (Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson 1989, Pattanayak 1986: 6, 1987: 20). A part of the struggle involves making visible and avoiding the overt or covert traps of uniformization and centralization, which have become part-and-parcel of the hegemony, the ideology behind the globalism<sup>68</sup> of English.

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<sup>65</sup> See for example Mazrui (1995).

<sup>66</sup> See, for example, Fishman (1968, 1981) or Ferguson (1962) for such views. monolingual theories are discussed in detail in PART I, chapter 1, 1 i and 1 ii of the thesis.

<sup>67</sup> See, for example, Kloss (1968, 1979), Neustupny (1968), Williams (1970). In his introduction (Some Preliminaries and Prospects) to *Language and Poverty*, which he edited, Williams (1970: 9) sums up the crucial question: Whether the goal of economic opportunity for all carries with it the price of a monocultural society.

<sup>68</sup> The term ‘globalism’ instead of ‘globalization’ is used by *Race and Class*, Vol. 40, No. 2/3, 1998/99, to emphasize the ideological forces behind the notions of seemingly ‘organic’ processes of globalization, rather than a systematic attempt by those in power seeking to inflict one economic system on the entire world, i. e. the market economy.

## **PART I      Language, Ideology and Power: Promoting the Hegemony of English?**

Review of Attitudes of Twentieth Century Sociolinguists and Language Planners

*Making*

*the trap visible*

### **1      Monolingual ideals in sociolinguistic and educational theory**

*Mainstream linguistics is an asocial way of studying language, which has nothing to say about relations between language and power and ideology*<sup>69</sup>.

In the introduction to his book on Language and Power, Fairclough (1989: 6, 7) has criticised established linguistic and sociolinguistic theories and methods for their abstract and a historical approach to the study of language. According to Tollefson (1991: 17), *the study of decontextualized language ignores the inherent dynamic relationship between language diversity and human social organization*. Fairclough (1989: 1) argues in favour of a *critical language study*, which, on a theoretical level, corrects the *widespread underestimation of the significance of language in the production, maintenance, and change of social relations of power*. In regard to the practical level of language study, Fairclough (1989: 1) has emphasized the necessity for an *increase in the consciousness of how language contributes to the domination of some people over others*. *Critical language study or the social study of language can be viewed as first step towards emancipation* (Fairclough 1989: 1, 13). For Tollefson (1991: 17) *it is important to examine language problems in their historical context, and to discuss possibilities for individual and group action within concrete social and political systems*. The following analysis of contemporary attitudes towards language - particularly towards the English language in India - in linguistic, sociolinguistic and applied linguistic discourse, is aimed at increasing such a consciousness of how ideas about language contribute to perpetuating established relations of power and domination.

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<sup>69</sup> Fairclough (1989: 7).

It has been argued that colonial discussions on language were largely functional, based on particular political aims. The main purpose of such racist or elitist arguments was to construct justifications for the promotion of *glottophagia*<sup>70</sup> - i. e. the intentional negativization, marginalization or destruction of local languages - and their assumed replacement by one other language and culture (Calvet 1974: 129, 130):

*... le discours colonial sur la langue n'est pas seulement raciste, ou méprisant ... Il est avant tout et tout profondément fonctionnel, tout tendu vers un but, la justification de la glottophagie et de la politique qui l'englobe. Car l'ablation des cultures locales, des langues locales, à quoi tend ce discours colonial, présuppose une culture et une langue de remplacement: c'est le mythe de l'assimilation, maintes fois ressorti sous des formes diverses.*

In regard to their encounter with so many *exotic* continents, cultures and languages, twentieth century European philologists took their cue from Christian missionaries and colonial British administrators, although their intentions and aims towards the colonized societies were marginally different. They considered it to be their task - not to hold up in any way the processes of the destruction of indigenous communities set in motion by their fellow country-people - but to act as 'objective' collectors and recorders of 'scientific' information about cultures and languages on the point of becoming extinct<sup>71</sup>. European scholars continued the missionary process of naming, classifying, categorizing, and hierarchizing every (speech) community they came across. Le Page (1997: 5) characterized the work of structural linguists in the following way, for example:

*We thought we knew how to describe 'a language'. Kenneth Pike had produced his Phonemics: A Technique for Reducing Languages to Writing, and Eugene Nida his companion volume Morphology ... We all knew, under F. G. Cassidy's direction, how to produce a dictionary. Similar initiatives were emerging from the School of Oriental and*

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<sup>70</sup> Calvet defines his coinage (1974: 6, 9) of glottophagia, as (European-colonial) linguists' complete negativization of the languages of 'other' peoples, resulting in the death of these languages.

<sup>71</sup> Here the link between structural linguistics and anthropology must also be mentioned, the American scholar, L. Bloomfield, for example, came from this combined academic tradition.

*African Studies in London under J. R. Firth; they were still busy at that time training colonial civil servants and studying and teaching the African and Asian vernaculars they would encounter.*

Surveyors focused on the task of defining and dividing languages (which they, at times, understood only through translations) on the basis of their etymology or their grammatical and structural aspects. In the case of the Indian subcontinent, they showed little interest in the trans-social, trans-literary, trans-linguistic or trans-cultural patterns of Indian communities and their languages as integral parts of a whole, thereby failing to perceive or understand the whole linguistic mosaic of a subcontinental way of life and world view.

According to Calvet (1978: 7), rather than objectively studying them, sociolinguists primarily succeeded in negating the languages belonging to communities they labelled as ‘exotic tribes’. Fairclough (1989: 7, 8) has also criticized the *positivist orientation* of sociolinguistics - which sees sociolinguistic variation in a particular society *in terms of sets of facts to be observed and described* using the methods of natural sciences - as well as *the general insensitivity of sociolinguistics towards its own relationship to the sociolinguistic orders it seeks to describe:*

*For instance, sociolinguistics has often described sociolinguistic conventions in terms of what are the ‘appropriate’ linguistic forms for a given social situation; whatever the intention, this terminology is likely to lend legitimacy to ‘the facts’ and their underlying power relations.*

Once spread by Christian missionaries or imperial administrators, colonial myths propagating the ‘uselessness’, ‘limited use’ or ‘minor use’ of ‘Third World’ languages continue to be popular even today. In his book on Linguistic Imperialism, Phillipson (1991: 271) argues that such myths are articulated in the form of arguments *in academic and political discourse*, and *interact with popular sentiment*, so that they become part-and-parcel of *the ‘common sense’ that typifies hegemonic beliefs and practices*. Put forward on a *professional platform*, such statements which legitimate English in a

*wider context ... exemplify applied linguists entering the wider political arena* (Phillipson 1991: 271). The postcolonial discussion on language, particularly in relation to the arguments which have been used *to justify the continued use of the former colonial languages*, has been described as *being based on beliefs which reflect the dominant ideology* (Phillipson 1991: 1, 8). Phillipson (1991: 8) argues that not only were many of the *apparently 'commonsensical' ... tenets adhered to in educational language planning at the end of the colonial era ... scientifically fallacious*, but similarly today, *the arguments used to promote English internationally* are classifiable as *suspect*.

Current sociolinguistic arguments which favour the use of English as an official language or a medium of education in 'Third World' countries, often simultaneously oppose the promotion of local languages. Such arguments can be divided into several categories, I have outlined seven categories of myths<sup>72</sup>. Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson (1989: 6) have collected six myths on which *linguist* arguments are based. According to Phillipson (1988: 339) *the structures and ideologies of linguistic imperialism can best be identified and documented by placing them within an explicit theory of linguistic imperialism*:

*Linguistic imperialism is seen as an essential constituent of imperialism as a global phenomenon involving structural relations between rich and poor countries in a world characterized by inequality and injustice.*

The first two myths relate to Europe and Europeanized countries (i. e. the Americas, the Pacific region, etc.) and promote the idea that linguistic human rights are established in such parts of the world, that class conflicts, racism and most other forms of discrimination are about to disappear, and that multiple identities, intercultural education and intercultural harmony have become the norm. The third and fourth myths that have also gained currency, relate to the rest of the world, i. e. Africa, Asia, the Pacific, and, to some extent, South America. Particularly in relation to these continents the

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<sup>72</sup> See also Pattanayak (1981: 129).

myth that *too* many languages are nationally, politically, culturally and socially divisive has become current. The fourth myth is linked to the idea that multilingualism either causes or is somehow related to underdevelopment and poverty (Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson 1989: 6). As Pattanayak (1987: 20, 21) states:

*Supporting a statement of (the US American linguist) Charles Ferguson that countries which are economically backward are also linguistically backward, (the US American linguist) Fishman puts forward the argument that in countries where the GNP is low, the languages are diverse and the countries are underdeveloped.*

The fifth and sixth myths that Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson (1989) have described are myths that are also found in Eurocentric economic, political, and cultural development theory, which contrast the ‘developed’ world to the ‘underdeveloped’ world. These last two theories propose that European ideals of monolingualism, or bilingual / diglossic models including a (dominant) European language, are the only means to a *nation’s* achievement of success, democracy and affluence.

Linguicist myths about Western European languages in general (Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson 1989) come to a head in current discussions on the role of English as a global language, particularly in relation to languages of ‘Third World’ countries. In this context, Phillipson (1988: 340) has referred to the English language as *the imperialist language par excellence of the past two centuries*. Arguments in favour of global English have, however, become increasingly subtle over the last decades. They are combined with arguments paying lip-service to any other theories that may be current or ‘politically correct’ at the time of writing. The sociolinguist Crystal (1997: viii), for example, believes in the *fundamental value of multilingualism*, which offers *a more profound understanding of the nature of the human mind and spirit*, as much as he believes in the *fundamental value of a common language*, which he associates with giving us *possibilities for mutual understanding and opportunities for international co-operation*. Crystal does not elaborate how the former is to withstand the might of the

latter. Throughout the book, Crystal (1997) explains, step by step, why, how, and against what odds English is to be promoted. He does not make explicit, however, why, how, and against what odds multilingualism can be supported. In relation to the survival of multilingualism, or to combating linguistic death, Crystal (1997: 18) simply favours the *conservation of languages*. He does not mention the active promotion of *endangered languages* in schools, in administration, in literature or in the judicial courts in order to ensure their practical survival. Neither does he see any links between the *emergence* of imperial languages and the suppression of linguistic diversity:

*The conservation of languages is arguably also a priority, and it is good to see in the 1990's a number of international organizations being formed with the declared aim of recording for posterity as many endangered languages as possible. However, the emergence of any one language as global has little to do with this unhappy state of affairs.*

In fact, Crystal's political agenda is primarily and exclusively to promote *the globalization of the English language*. This becomes clear from several views he considers to be widespread, such as, for example, *that it makes sense to try to reduce the numbers of languages involved in world bodies, if only to cut down on the vast amount of translation and clerical work required* (Crystal 1997: 10). Crystal does not elaborate on how the numbers of communities happening to speak the languages that need to be cut down are to be reduced. As Pattanayak has already countered this argument (1988: 381), *the economy has to be planned to suit people, and not people manipulated in pursuance of economic efficiency*. In their outline of arguments favouring the spread of English, Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson (1986: 8) have pointed out the use of explicit or implicit threats, to justify such a promotion. In order to promote global English, Crystal (1997: 22, 23) is ready for the *many linguistic battles still to be fought*, as he advises those still unconvinced of the *general world trend*, that *priorities have to be made*, as *linguistic boats cannot be missed, as there may be no others*. English, it seems, is the only way to a global medium, a boat no one can afford 'to miss'.

On the basis of such arguments, existing power constellations are turned into universally accepted laws of nature (Calvet 1978: 39). Today primarily English (as opposed to other *national* Western European languages) is mythologized in seven distinguishable, but interrelated myths that aim to justify the global promotion of ‘one language, one power, and one ideology’. These myths perceive English as having certain properties or being linked to certain qualities. English is perceived as:

- (1) the structurally and functionally superior language,
- (2) the modern, progressive intellectual, scientific language,
- (3) the language with globally the highest mutual intelligibility rate,
- (4) the voluntarily popular standard language,
- (5) the only internationally, politically, nationally, socially and culturally neutral language,
- (6) the language owned by everybody in general, as well as
- (7) the unifying language<sup>73</sup>.

Invariably, the labels used in linguistic and educational academic discourse to describe English are positive, while - *by implication* - Asian, African, South American, Pacific languages are automatically negatively perceived as lacking all the properties English possesses: they are considered structurally inferior, inherently backward, insular, parochial, divisive, unpopular, biased or even useless ‘vernaculars’<sup>74</sup>.

Such neatly oppositional views presenting Europe - here represented by the English language - as the positive, and ‘the Orient’ - in this case represented by India - as the negative, are not only based on a divisive (Anglicist) colonial ideology, but dangerously polarize both sides. In reference to the ideological construction of a mythical ‘Orient’ contrasted with the ‘Occident’, Amin (1989: 101) emphasizes that *the image of this ‘opposite’ is an essential element of Eurocentricism*. Shohat and Stam (1994: 15) point out that both the *myth of the West* and the *myth of the East* form the two sides of the same colonial coin:

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<sup>73</sup> These seven myths about English are discussed and analysed in detail in chapter 1 i.

<sup>74</sup> See Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas (1986: 2) or Calvet (1974: 15, 45).

*If Edward Said in Orientalism points to the Eurocentric construction of the East within Western writing, others, such as Martin Bernal in Black Athena, point to the complementary Eurocentric construction of the West via the "writing out" of the East (and Africa).*

According to Joshi (1991: 3, 4), not only are reactionary and fundamentalist tendencies reinforced in both (seemingly oppositional and exclusive cultures), but other important *differences and contradictions of class, caste, gender, region and religion* within both societies/entities/worlds remain concealed, as do the links between them. In relation to the discussion on the position of English in India, the argument would not run in favour of removing English, in order to replace it with Hindi. A more fruitful approach would be to distribute a fair share of the educational and administrative power of English and Hindi among all Indian languages, regardless of the number of their speakers, or their place in the postcolonial hierarchy of languages. Nandy (1983: 99) complementarily argues against the same such 'neat' oppositions in favour of *an inclusive whole, androgyny, timelessness, rationality*:

*... the true antonyms are always the exclusive part versus the inclusive whole - not masculinity versus femininity but either of them versus androgyny, not the past versus the present but either of them versus the timelessness in which the past is the present and the present is the past, not the oppressor versus the oppressed but both of them versus the rationality which turns them in co-victims.*

According to Nandy's line of thinking, the issue in regard to English would not be English vs. Hindi, or one language replaced by another, but all of them vs. an egalitarian inclusive multilingualism.

## 1 i Seven myths idealizing neo-colonial ‘neutrality’, structural ‘superiority’ and Eurocentric ‘assimilation’

The seven myths idealizing the English language presented here must be seen in the context of the general discussion on Eurocentrism. According to Amin (1989: vii, viii) Eurocentrism cannot be reduced to representing *the sum of Westerners’ preconceptions, mistakes, and blunders with respect to other people*, but must be seen as a systematic and important *distortion*, from which *the majority of dominant social theories and ideologies suffer*. The Eurocentric vision can be summarized as a broad consensus of a set of common ideas and opinions that sees the West as *the best of the worlds that have been known up until this time*, and therefore perceives the progression of all other societies as only being based on *the extent that they are able to imitate the West* (Amin 1989: 107):

*The European West is not only the world of material wealth and power, including military might; it is also the site of the triumph of the scientific spirit, rationality, and practical efficiency, just as it is the world of tolerance, diversity of opinions, respect for human rights and democracy, concern for equality – at least the equality of rights and opportunities – and social justice.*

The first myth (1) about the English language believes in its unique *intrinsic structural superiority*, it perceives English to be a structurally and functionally superior language in comparison to all other languages. This myth runs contrary to established linguistic theories on language universals, such as those laid down by Chomsky (1980: 232)<sup>75</sup>, concerning the universal principles, framework and structures on which all *human languages* are based:

*Given the richness and complexity of the system of grammar for a human language and the uniformity of its acquisition on the basis of limited and often degenerate evidence, there can*

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<sup>75</sup> Chomsky’s contributions to the study of language have been considered fundamental, innovative and revolutionary in the field of linguistics (see for example Crystal 1971: 110, 111, 112, or Sakie 1990).

*be little doubt that highly restrictive universal principles must exist determining the general framework of each human language and perhaps much of its specific structure as well.*

According to Shohat and Stam (1994: 191), although in abstract, languages have no hierarchical value, in reality, living languages *operate within hierarchies of power*:

*Inscribed within the play of power, language becomes caught up in the cultural hierarchies typical of Eurocentrism. English, especially, has often served as the linguistic vehicle for the projection of Anglo-American power, technology, and finance.*

Nevertheless, some scholars insist on relating the spread of English, not to the globally powerful position of its native speakers, but to the internal structure of the language. According to such sociolinguists, English language structures are universally easy to acquire, independent of the linguistic background of the speaker. The ELT specialist, MacCallen<sup>76</sup> (1989: 23, 24), for example, without mentioning the native speaker, has characterized English as *relatively easy to pronounce*, as it does not have *the tongue knotting consonant clusters of a language such as Russian, or the subtle tone shifting requirements of Chinese*. According to Chomsky (1959: 44), however, for any child the matter of any language acquisition is simple, *given an input of observed Chinese sentences a child produces the 'rules' of Chinese grammar, and given an input of observed English sentences, it produces the rules of English grammar*. Nevertheless, MacCallen (1989: 23, 24) still argues that the basic syntax of English is *fairly straightforward*, as *the informal vocation and gender systems that most other languages such as French and German possess and that many students find confusing have been dispensed with*. The Roman alphabet which English uses is *also considered to be more efficient and economical than the Arabic equivalent; and English is easier to learn than the ideography of Chinese*. Speakers of Chinese or Arabic therefore feel uncomfortable with the *complicated, biased and archaic patterns of usage* of their own *less versatile* languages (Sridhar

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<sup>76</sup> MacCallen is an ELT specialist, whose book *English: A World Commodity* (The International Market for Training in English as a Foreign Language), was written for the Economist Intelligence Unit in London.

1982: 151). Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson (1986b: 3) have categorized this type of argument legitimating English, as an *English "is"*, an English-intrinsic type of argument, that locates the power of English in its *innate* qualities.

Added to the myth of what English *"is"*, is another myth that argues in favour of *the structural power* of English, i. e. what English *"does"* (Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson 1986b: 3, 6). This myth of the functionally superior quality of English argues its ability to *cope with* any type (meaning *race*, or *ethnicity*) of speaker, as well as in any geographical, social or political situation. As one sociolinguist puts it, English is capable of doing *so many things*, taking on so many roles, in *so many situations* and at *such remote geographical and cultural places* (Mehrotra 1982: 153). For Svartvik (1985: 34) the number of lexical innovations that have developed in the history of English demonstrate the flexibility of the language and add to the richness of its total lexical resources. In fact, all languages are capable of exactly the same *feats* of displacement or infinite creativity, though they continue to be categorized as *intrinsically universal superlanguages*, or as *intrinsically inferior dialects*. Again, Chomsky's (1972: 100) widely accepted views on the universal qualities of all languages would deny the existence of 'superior' or 'inferior' languages:

*The normal use of language is, in this sense, a creative activity. ... It is important to bear in mind that the creation of linguistic expressions that are novel but appropriate is the normal mode of language use.*

The second myth (2) argues that English is a modern, technical, progressive, intellectual, scientific and educational language, and, by implication, that there are other languages that cannot be similarly described. According to Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson (1986b: 16), arguments favouring the promotion of English on the basis of what English *"is"* or what it can *"do"*, can be categorized as *value judgements*, which cannot be studied or explained *scientifically*:

*They are a matter of belief in the religious sense: belief in transcendental forces or in the newer gods of science, technology or efficiency.*

The development from a ‘Third World’ agrarian society to a ‘First World’ industrialized ‘nation’ is linked to a move from local *agrarian* languages to a universal *scientific* language. In order to transform *a traditional agrarian society* into *a modern industrialised one* means maintaining *an efficient interaction with the outside world*. For the linguist Labru (1984: 6, 119), using this line of argument, only English can *fuel* India’s *economic take-off*. The English language becomes the necessary mediator between the *traditional* and the *modern*, as Sridhar (1977: 110) declares:

*Several traditional societies are in the process of transforming themselves into industrialized societies with the concomitant changes in institutions. The dynamism for transforming such societies has, by and large, come from outside. In the case of India, the process of change has been mediated by the English language.*

While *the latest thoughts and developments* are creations or prerogatives of the ‘Western World’ (Sridhar 1977: 27, MacCallen 1989: 23) it is possible to promote them, along with ideals of *modernity* through the English language in ‘Third World’ countries. Only English dominance can provide *access to the modern world*, in fact, English is modern, because it is *the dominant world language* (Sridhar 1977: 116). In addition, as contemporary scholars have asserted, *modern science* and *modern knowledge* can only be taught through a European language, ‘Third World’ languages being incapable of accepting or transmitting the *advanced thinking of the world*<sup>77</sup>. African languages, such as the Ugandan language Lugbara, or even the nationally powerful Indian language Hindi<sup>78</sup>, are treated as relics of a folkloric past, and regarded as incapable of transmitting ‘higher knowledge’ or education.

Sridhar (1977: 116, 117) concludes that *the adequacy of the regional languages (including Hindi) to serve as the medium of education* needs to be examined. Sridhar concedes that there may be some (minor) levels, such as

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<sup>77</sup> See, for example, Anand (1973: 40).

<sup>78</sup> According to the 1991 Census, 38, 8% of the Indian population speak Hindi.

*the school level and for a liberal education*, where regional languages (including Hindi) may have been successful. English, however, remains *indispensable* for the sciences and technology at the advanced levels. At first glance, the reasons for such incapacities on the part of the *regional* languages do not seem to be insurmountable. According to Sridhar (1977: 116) *the regional languages lack the technical terminology, there is a lack of teachers who are able to teach advanced courses in the regional languages, and there is a lack of instructional materials*. Yet, the *problem* is not related to an unwillingness to finance, for example, teaching training programs in the Lugbara language or instructional materials for Punjabi-medium education. On the contrary, the problem is perceived as being somehow linked to the languages themselves, their inherent *underdevelopment* or their *locally limited roles*. The *technical underdevelopment* of African or Asian languages necessitates the installation of a European lingua franca. The possibilities of their ‘development’, their technical elaboration, their standardization or even their national recognition are not considered<sup>79</sup>. Without English, the intellectual, cultural, and technological development of ‘Third World’ people would remain an uncertainty, and *damage to the intellectual development of the nation* would be certain<sup>80</sup>. Already in 1917, and without needing to be a linguist, Gandhi (1965: 132) argued against the colonial myth that Indian languages were *not rich enough in words to express our highest thinking*. Even if this myth had any basis to it, the fault of such a condition would not lie with the language, but with the community speaking it, *it is for us to develop and enrich the language*.

The colonial powers have also been credited with having attempted to *extend the roles*, and develop the resources of some of the major African languages, though *not always successfully*<sup>81</sup>. Seemingly, however, nothing whatsoever can be done about the *unpreparedness of the regional languages to assume the role of English as the vehicle for sophisticated scientific and technological education* (Sridhar 1977: 115). This leaves entire populations

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<sup>79</sup> See Spencer (1985: 391); or Gokak (1964).

<sup>80</sup> See Kanungo (1962: 73)

<sup>81</sup> See, for example, Mazrui (1995: 173).

with a fear of being *limited* to a particular region by *a regional language*, and not being able to benefit from the opportunities opened up by English education. The promotion of local languages is seen as being in itself a problem, leading to, among other difficulties, the regionalized isolation of its speakers. As Spencer (1985: 396) puts it, if encouragement is given to certain (local ‘Third World’) languages, in order to give them an enhanced status or to extend their functions, this would only serve to *lock a language community into itself*, and *increasingly inhibit its members from playing a wider role in nationally integrative processes*.

In such pro-English arguments, the *efficiency* of teaching the neo-colonial language is set against the *inefficiency* of promoting local languages. This means that *the European language* must continue *to be taught more efficiently and extensively as before*. Renowned sociolinguists, the world over, warn people from ‘Third World’ countries against rejecting English, particularly as a medium of education. Any ‘Third World’ countries whose governments have replaced European languages with their own languages in their education systems, qualify as irreparably damaged. The example of Malaysia and the government’s establishment of Bahasa Malaysia as a national language is given to illustrate the negative effects that arise out of *imposing* an indigenous language as a medium of education. According to MacCallen (1989: 23) it is not surprising that *a small country relying on its own indigenous languages in preference to a major world tongue* should encounter difficulties. It is not untypical for arguments in favour of English to contain *covert or even overt threats*, should the promotion of English be discontinued (Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson 1986b: 8). The fact that, in the 1960’s, Bahasa Malaysia replaced English as a national language in Malaysia, led to at least one ‘negative’ consequence. *Young Malays found it difficult to obtain places at English-speaking universities abroad, to the detriment of both the individual and the state*. Whether or how English-educated *young Malays* would have related to their own societies, or exactly how *the state* and the vast majority of its people would have benefited from Malaysians studying abroad is not defined. Educating Malaysians in

Malaysia only in order to enable them to study abroad, conjures up the global neo-colonial situation Ngûgî (1986: xii) refers to in relations to African geniuses catering only to Europe:

*I am lamenting a neo-colonial situation which has meant the European bourgeoisie once again stealing our talents and geniuses as they have stolen our economies.*

This particular myth about the modernity and scientific quality of English, automatically leads to the conclusion that English cannot be efficiently taught or used *only* as a foreign language. Being in favour of English means favouring its *early* use as a medium in education, as well as in administration. As Crystal (1997: 14) puts it:

*If a global language is taught early enough, from the time that children begin with their full-time education, and if it is maintained continuously enough and resourced well, the kind of linguistic competence which emerges in due course is a real and powerful bilingualism, indistinguishable from that found in any speaker who has encountered the language since birth.*

There are numerous problems with Crystal's theories. The first question would be as to why mother tongue speakers of for example, Hindi, Zulu or Spanish (not living in dominantly Anglo-American countries) would need to be able to speak an English *indistinguishable* from that of mother tongue speakers? According to Bagchi (1981: 993) *the specific purpose* for learning English needs to be debated:

*Given the existing social and institutional constraints, both national and international, English is a necessity at various stages of our education system provided we know the specific purpose for which we are using the language.*

For an individual living in India the necessity to know English depends on what class they come from, what kind of education they have access to, and what profession they may occupy. The second problem relates to Crystal's failure to incorporate contemporary second language acquisition theory, which argues that a second, additional or foreign language does not necessarily need to be taught as *early* as possible, in order for the speakers to

acquire a reasonable degree of competence. According to the applied linguist Apeltauer (1997: 75), the theory that children are more competent second language learners than adults (particularly in formal situations such as the school) has not been proven:

*Aufgrund der vorliegenden Untersuchungsergebnisse lassen sich jedoch keine klaren Aussagen bezüglich einer Überlegenheit von jüngeren über ältere Lerner (oder umgekehrt) machen. Selbst im Bereich der Aussprache ist keine deutliche Überlegenheit von Kindern nachweisbar. Es zeigt sich vielmehr, daß insbesondere unter formalen (unterrichtlichen Bedingungen) ältere Kinder schneller lernen als jüngere, Jugendliche schneller als Erwachsene und Erwachsene wiederum schneller als ältere Kinder. Dabei scheinen ältere Lerner von ihren kognitiven Potentialen zu profitieren und sich vor allem formale (bzw. sequentielle) Aspekte fremder Sprachen schneller anzueignen.*

In reference to English language teaching and learning Phillipson (1988: 349) has pointed out several key tenets on the basis of which English is promoted. The first key tenet is the theory that *the earlier English is introduced the better the results*. The second tenet promoted is *the more English is taught the better the results*. According to Phillipson (1988: 349, 350) these two tenets are *widely accepted in the ELT<sup>82</sup> profession as the early start fallacy and the maximum exposure fallacy*:

*The effect of these tenets is to accord priority to English, to the exclusion of all other languages.*

Another additional factor that is omitted in Crystal's above statement is the globally existing reality, that English has been the most *continuously maintained* and *well resourced* language (at least) for the past two hundred years. According to Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson (1986: 5) *English "has" both material resources (such as trained teachers, teacher trainers, teaching materials, literature, dictionaries, multinational publishers, computers and software, BBC English by radio and TV, etc.) and immaterial resources (knowledge, skills, know-how via its "experts", etc.)*. The real contemporary problem of 'Third World' countries is that their own languages have neither been *continuously maintained*, nor *well resourced*.

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<sup>82</sup> ELT = English language teaching.

Lastly, Crystal doesn't mention the fact that mother tongue speakers of the global language will not voluntarily participate in promoting *a real and powerful bilingualism*, as they will never feel under any economic, political, social, or educational pressures to do so.

In comparison to most (national) languages of European majorities, views which declare 'Third World' languages to be inadequate *national* media of instruction, of mass communication, or of administration, simply declare that they cannot be financially supported. Not only their lack of scientific or technical development is stressed. Their inability to transmit to students *progressive, modern* knowledge of the world is also pointed out. Calvet (1978: 123) links colonial to sociolinguistic discussions as being based on two shared dogmas. While the first dogma argues that the colonized only gains entry to civilization and the modern world by learning the language of the colonizers, the second sees indigenous languages as incapable of functioning like the colonial language, i. e. expressing modern and scientific concepts, and transmitting education, culture or research (Calvet 1974: 123):

*Le premier dogme est celui selon lequel les colonisés ont tout à gagner à apprendre notre langue, qui les introduira à la civilisation, au monde moderne. Le second stipule que, de toutes facons, les langues indigènes seraient incapables de remplir cette fonction, incapables de véhiculer des notions modernes, des concepts scientifiques, incapables d'être des langues d'enseignement, de culture ou de recherche.*

According to the Ugandan president, Milton Obote, in 1967, no important issue could possibly be formulated without using English, as *those best able to discuss our problems are those who speak English*<sup>83</sup>. This politically disqualified the vast majority of Uganda's population from publicly *discussing their problems*. According to Sridhar (1977: 103) the 'educated' in postcolonial societies are monolingual English speakers. As she puts it, *the members of the educated community in India can communicate among themselves only through English: while a substantial part of their control*

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<sup>83</sup> See Mazrui (1975: 211) for further discussion.

*over political and social resources is intertwined with their control over English.*

The study of English does not only teach students a language, it teaches them about different aspects of Britain (or the USA), as well as about the progressive and democratic values the cultures and societies of these countries represent (Sridhar 1977: 109). While students should be encouraged *to read English books, talk to British people and learn about British life or some aspect of it*, they must also realize that *the study of British literature, history and British institutions*, as well as *the study of many branches of science and technology* cannot be accomplished without English<sup>84</sup>. According to Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson (1986b: 8) such types of arguments *promise us goods and services if we accept English*:

*These "carrots", put in front of us to tempt us, are often compared with what other languages can offer ... in a way which is a negative counterpart to what English offers ...*

Such arguments imply that the study of English by itself enables us to understand science and technology. Historically, the value of English has been shown in relation to 'Third World' elites, who as students of English, were exposed *to the liberal thoughts of the West including such concepts as democracy and socialism*: this knowledge actually gave them *the impetus to strive towards independence*.

The third myth (3) about English concerns its global establishment as *the* language with the highest mutual intelligibility rate. The high mutual intelligibility rate between all speakers of English is praised (Kachru 1983: 83, 84). There is an utter disregard for considering whether the speakers involved are speakers of *English as a second language*, speakers of *English as a mother tongue*, speakers of a standard, recognized variety or an officially discriminated variety. Mazrui (1975: 9), for example, points to a mutual English comprehensibility between the globally scattered African-origin diaspora (living in Europe, the USA, or South America) and the

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<sup>84</sup> See Phillipson (1986) for a discussion on the Drogheda Report of 1954.

diverse people and communities of the continent of Africa. Referring to a world-wide Black English-speaking community, he ignores diverse linguistic, historical and social developments out of which wide variations of languages have been created. As yet research has hardly been conducted to prove that the global spread of the English language has made Nigerian or Indian English either mutually comprehensible or acceptable to Anglo-American speakers of English.

A *world community* with a single objective for learning English is, however, assumed to exist by Anglo-American scholars of *standard* English. Quirk (1985: 3) argues that *we have a strong world-wide will to preserve intercomprehensibility in English*. The social, economic or political power of particular (mother tongue / monolingual) English-speaking communities, and therefore the power of their varieties over those of others, do not figure as relevant factors in such analyses. In relation to the term ‘francophone’ countries<sup>85</sup>, which include all countries in which French is officially spoken or used, Calvet (1978: 183) pinpoints the problems underlying such all-inclusive terminology. What does an individual fighting for his cultural and linguistic identity in Quebec, Canada, have in common with a minister in Mali, who establishes laws in the French language, which the majority of his country-people cannot understand? Under the term ‘francophone’ a struggle for linguistic liberation is subsumed under the perpetuation of linguistic oppression. The completely different power relations existing in the societies of supposedly ‘francophone’ (in our case, ‘anglophone’) people are ignored.

What is important, but only sometimes explicitly stated is that, inspite of the *differences in grammar, syntax and pronunciation* resulting out of the global spread of English, *the language still remains comprehensive to speakers of the standard variety* (MacCallen 1989: 24, 25). Comprehensibility at the centre of the English-using world community is what counts, i. e. the acceptance (or not) of Anglo-American native speakers of English towards other Englishes<sup>86</sup>.

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<sup>85</sup> See discussion of this term also in chapter 2 ii and 10 ii.

<sup>86</sup> See also Mehrotra (1982: 166, 170).

The fourth myth (4) about English is based on the idea that it is a language - unlike any other language - that is completely voluntarily popular. Crystal subscribes to this myth in one of his chapters on Global English. For a long time now, according to Crystal (1997: 75), English has been *taken for granted*:

*The story of English throughout this period is one of rapid expansion and diversification, with innovation after innovation coming to use the language as a primary or sole means of expression. It is not possible to identify cause and effect. So many developments were taking place at the same time that we can only point to the emergence, by the end of the nineteenth century, of a climate of largely unspoken opinion which had made English the natural choice for progress.*

According to the myth as promoted by Strevens (1982: 27) *the phenomenon of Standard English exists and maintains itself* without being established by any particular group of people. In addition, it has an *intrinsically in-built*, universally acceptable standard *dialect*. For English there are no *conscious or co-ordinated programmes of standardization*, unlike for the French language, *which has its Academie Francaise as the presumed guardian of the purity of language* (Strevens 1981: 8). Again, according to Strevens, a *peculiarity of English is that one dialect is non-localized, is not essentially paired with a particular accent, and is accepted by the public, world-wide, as a suitable educational model*. This globally accepted model *is usually known as Standard English*. Strevens (1982: 29) also points out that the popularity of standard English is voluntary, neither spoken nor promoted by any *oppressive majority* :

*Standard English, it should be noted, is not imposed by any authority; there are no inherent moral reasons for valuing it more highly than other dialects; it is not the dialect used by the majority. Nevertheless, it is accorded high pressure in the educational world.*

In regard to the voluntary popularity of English<sup>87</sup>, Calvet (1974: 232) notes that contemporary arguments favouring postcolonial languages for ‘Third

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<sup>87</sup> See also in reference to Quirk’s (1985: 3) strong world-wide will to keep English mutually intelligible.

World' countries, tend to emphasize the change in attitudes among the colonized people. Whereas, during colonial times, the colonial language had to be forcibly promoted, nowadays, such aggressive dogmas are known to offend sensitive 'Third World' intellectuals of postcolonial times. So, it is declared, that the African masses, for example, voluntarily demand to be taught the French language (Calvet 1974: 232, 233):

*Car la grande, la seule différence entre l'avant et l'après réside dans ce fait que ce qui était autrefois imposé doit maintenant être désiré. On expliquait avant les indépendances formelles des colonies françaises que les "langues indigènes" n'étaient pas aptes à véhiculer les concepts modernes, ce qui justifiait la suprématie du français. Ce discours pourrait aujourd'hui vexer certains intellectuels africains chatouilleux, on explique alors que c'est eux qui réclament la suprématie du français ... Ainsi ... les foules africaines avides réclament qu'on leur inculque le français. De leur plein gré. Pour édifier leur culture propre, leur civilisation originale.*

The fifth myth (5) categorizes English as *the* only politically, socially and culturally neutral language on a national and on a global scale. Historically, English is perceived as the colonial power's greatest gift to the people they once colonized. According to Spencer (1985: 394), both the French and English languages that were *introduced into Africa by the colonial powers*, have, *after all*, turned out to be two of the *most widely current and useful languages in the modern world*. In this argument the colonials are seen as having, after all, benefited from colonialism. Armed with a colonial theory, *Anglophiles* attributed a civilizing influence to this *culturally neutral* language. Today their neo-colonial theory even credits the development of independence movements in 'Third World' countries as having arisen out of the colonial language's *benign tolerance* and *unifying* influence.

The spread of a 'liberal European ideology of democracy' and socialism is also credited to the spread of the European language. In reference to African countries, the linguist Mazrui (1975: 15) marvels that *the remarkable thing is that English has not been rejected as a symbol of colonialism*. In reference to Sri Lanka, Kandiah (1991: 274) perceives English, *divested of its potential for perpetuating inequalities*, to have enabled the development of a

*more truthful and mature nationalism. In fact, it was European nationalism, more often than not, based on the English language, that enabled 'Third World' nationalisms and the colonized to drive their oppressors out. Used for political rallies, meetings, parties and movements, the English language helped to detribalize the African's mind and gave people a nationalist vision (Mazrui 1975: 53):*

*... through their (the British and Americans) language they had helped to detribalize the African's mind - and to give it a nationalistic dimension in modern terms.*

According to some sociolinguists, the English language can be distributed *equally and democratically* among all groups of people, while, at the same time, keeping itself universally *objective* in all internal political, cultural, and social matters. In relation to his research on English in Fiji, Moag (1982: 275, 276) proposes the theory of the *social neutrality of English*. According to Moag, both Tongans and Fijians have stated *that they find English the only safe medium in which to address those of higher status*. This theory of the *social neutrality of English* is also promoted in regard to *warring tribal factions in 'Third World' countries*, who themselves have come to support the intervention of a more *neutral and prestigious language* such as English (Sahgal 1991: 303). For the internal cohesion of a country a common language has become necessary, which is *neutral in respect of regional or ethnic identity*, as well as being able to adequately *fulfil the demands of versatile communication*. As Sridhar (1977: 111) sums up, social change actually demands *the retention and maximum utilization of English*.

According to Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson (1986b: 9, 10) *the growing sophistication in "selling" English* enables those promoting English to sell *the structures (i. e. the capitalist world order)* encompassing English along with the language. While English is marketed *with the help of cultural arguments* it is overtly disconnected from its capitalist structures:

*The sellers of English use cultural, "neutral" arguments and normally claim that what they are doing has nothing to do with political, economic or military power. In addition, the*

*"cultural" product, the "goods" to be sold, English, is technicalized and professionalized. What is sold is presented as a technical instrument (like a tractor), not a world order.*

Abolishing a colonial language in an independent 'Third World' country appears to cause major conflicts, such as interior segregation, civil war, international isolation, or even *intellectual disintegration*. The leading Indian writer (Anand 1973: 42) painted a nightmarish picture of India without English: *the abolition of English will make every state of India into a vicious circle and lead to idiocy*. The contemporary sociolinguist Sridhar (1977: 116) describes the scenario as a *vicious circle* reminiscent of the biblical *Tower of Babel* episode. According to Sridhar, *abandoning English prematurely would have two disastrous effects*. The country would be fragmented into *mutually unintelligible pockets*, and Indian people would be confined to their own regions, *with the resulting restriction of the mobility of scholars and experts*. Here again, included in the argument in favour of English, specifically overt threats are used<sup>88</sup>. If English is rejected language-inspired conflicts, civil wars, intellectual disintegration, economic sanctions or even the withholding of aid *threaten* to become a reality.

Examples given from Sri Lanka or Uganda reinforce this point of view. According to MacCallen (1989: 23, *the use of English was widespread on the island (of Sri Lanka) until 1956*, as it was the only language Sinhalese and Tamil communities had in common. The abolition of English was, in fact, *viewed as being one of the factors in the gradual worsening in relations between the two groups*. What MacCallen does not mention is that with the abolition of English, the Sinhalese elite also phased out Tamil (along with its speakers) in all government services, public offices, schools, universities, etc. Complemented at a lower level by Sinhalese, English has remained the (higher) medium of education in Sri Lanka. In the case of Uganda, too, for example, no attempt was made to promote the indigenous language, Lugbara, as according to the Ugandan president himself, *the task of teaching Lugbara or adopting it could result in serious riots and instability*<sup>89</sup>. Calvet

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<sup>88</sup> See also Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson (1986b: 8).

<sup>89</sup> See Milton Obote, 1967, discussed in Mazrui (1975: 211).

(1974: 229) has classified such justifications for the continued use of French as *the cultural argument*. This *cultural argument* perceiving the French language as an indispensable factor of African unity is used even by people who are opposed to the economic and political aspects of neo-colonialism (Calvet 1974: 229, 230):

*Le premier argument, le plus fréquent et le plus "neutre", c'est-à-dire celui qui apparaît partout, dans la bouche ou sous la plume de gens qui par ailleurs ne pensent pas de la même façon et s'opposent sur les aspects politiques et économiques du néo-colonialisme, est l'argument selon lequel la langue française serait pour l'Afrique un indispensable facteur d'unité.*

Such arguments stress the unique ability of the colonial language to simultaneously function as a *neutral, unbiased and untribalized* language on a national, as well as on a *neutral* 'international' level. According to Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson (1986b: 10) claiming that English is neutral, a tool or an instrument, is *part of the rationalization process whereby the unequal power relations between English and other languages are explained and legitimated*.

Crystal's (1997: 76) arguments favouring the use of global neutral official English see 'local' languages only as competitive entities: *the decision to give English official status has usually been made in order to avoid the problem of having to choose between competing local languages:*

*English is perceived to be a 'neutral' language, in this respect.*

Praise for the *neutral* qualities of English is accompanied by praise for its political, cultural, educational and social indiginization capacities, despite the fact that in most colonial contexts, knowledge of the English language is bound to a particular, higher, minority class. While diverse communities of users are able to give English its *distinct identity* in each region, *its diffusion* on a world scale make it less *culture-specific* (Kachru 1985: 20). In the case of India, this means that while English cannot be outdone on an international level, it also cannot be outdone, due to the *Indianness of Indian English*, on a

national level, as a medium of education, literature or as a link language. Sridhar (1977: 114) voices this position clearly:

*In considering the question whether English should be adopted (or rather, retained) as the medium of education and as the lingua franca of India, one important characteristic of English as it is used in India should be kept in mind. This is the 'Indianness of Indian English'.*

A rejection of English in favour of mother tongue languages, it is argued, can only lead to the promotion of a traditionally excessive, isolationist and divisive pluralism. While English is seen as a national *link language* or as a *window to the world*<sup>90</sup>, other languages are perceived as being able to achieve only the opposite. Using them means blocking *the view* or even failing to *facilitate communication*. English alone has the virtue of functioning both as a written and spoken *international* language (Strevens 1981: 3). In contrast, Indian languages, such as Gujarati or Punjabi, remain classified as *local* languages, even though their large migrant communities continue to retain them on the African, North American, and European continents (Alladina 1986).

The sixth myth (6) perceives the English language as a common global property, seemingly owned by nobody in specific and everybody in general. To Crystal (1997: 130), *it is plain that no one can now claim sole ownership*. In fact *the best way of defining a genuinely global language, is that its usage is not restricted by countries or by governing bodies* (Crystal 1997: 130). The English language has managed to remain *in essence a world language, the common property of all cultures* (MacCallen 1989: 24, 25). It is further argued, that no particular *tribe* owns English, and that the language belongs equally to everybody, all *tribes* having equal chances to initiate suitable *Africanization* or *Indianization* processes. Despite the visible dominance of Anglo-American mother tongue speakers of English - *so much of the power which has fuelled the growth of the English language during the twentieth century has stemmed from America* (Crystal 1997: 117) - English, as

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<sup>90</sup> In his theory of imperialism, Galtung (1981: 308) describes how for the Periphery (countries) the Centre (Mother country) assumes the role of the window to the world.

opposed to *local* ‘Third World’ languages, has ceased to be classified as anybody’s mother tongue. According to Wardaugh (1988: 143) the variations of all communities of English speakers are tolerated and accepted:

*There has never been (a) concern for purity and correctness (nor) any feeling that English is a particularly fine language that somehow must be protected at all costs. English is to be used. If it gets changed in use, then that is generally accepted as the price one must pay ...*

According to Kachru (1985: 30) *the native speakers of this language seem to have lost the exclusive prerogative to control its standardization. In fact, if current statistics (no statistics are specified) are any indication, they have become a minority.* Despite statements proving the opposite, learning English no longer means learning any particular culture or any particular standard. Battling against all *the vehement debates of all linguistic purists*, Kachru (1985: 17) argues that English has only indirect (no authoritative) channels of linguistic regulation, such as *dictionaries, social attitudes, educational preferences, and discrimination in professions on the basis of accent.* Kachru fails to specify, however, whose dictionaries, whose social attitudes, whose educational preferences are authoritative, or whose accents remain marginalized.

According to Kachru (1985: 14), though *all the countries where English is a primary language are functional democracies*, the global spread of English has overlooked any *such political preferences.* The presently wide diffusion shows that English *tolerates* any political system, in fact the language itself has become *apolitical.* It has even become possible for English to be *used as a tool for propaganda by politically diverse groups*, who all equally *recognise the value of English in fostering their respective political ends*, though *ideologically they may oppose the Western systems of education and Western values* (Kachru 1985: 14). As only the use of English *has fewer political, cultural, and religious connotations than does the use of any other language of wider communication*, no other contemporary language could possibly *do what English does.* The fact that English is, by birth, a

*democratic language*<sup>91</sup>, has helped it to foster an atmosphere of political neutrality in ‘Third World’ countries, which are disadvantaged by the existence of far too many language pressure groups (Moag 1982: 275, 276). The benefit of promoting English, is that *no group has the advantage of having its own language singled out for official status*. The fact that English in India, for example, has been appropriated by a particular social class, whose already ‘good’ position in society was professionally and economically boosted by this acquisition, is not mentioned here<sup>92</sup>.

According to Kachru (1985: 21) the present varied uses of English have *clearly shown that an initially Western code has acquired numerous non-Western cultural incarnations and messages*. On its own, English is able to represent global diversity. As a result, the diversity represented by the existence of numerous different languages seems to have become unnecessary. While, according to Kachru (1985: 17), the *de-Englishization* of the cultural contexts of English is rapidly gaining ground, English continues to develop into the most *pluralist* language of the world. For Kachru (1985: 14) the *three circles* of English users, i. e. the *inner*, the *outer* and the *expanding circles*, together *bring to English a unique cultural pluralism, and a linguistic heterogeneity and diversity which are unrecorded to this extent in human history*. Questions of class, social, religious and cultural background, political power and educational opportunity are all submerged under the equalizing carpet of English. With its immense diffusion, English has *ceased to be an exponent of only one culture - the Western Judaeo-Christian culture - and has been recognized as the world’s most multicultural language* (Kachru’s 1985: 20). In the context of Sweden and standard written English, sociolinguist Svartvik (1985: 34), finds the opposite to be true. However much native or non-native speakers vary their spoken English and ignore external norms, contemporary *written* English has never shown *greater homogeneity, than under the impact of such forces as*

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<sup>91</sup> See quote from Kachru (1985: 14) above.

<sup>92</sup> For a discussion on how English in India came to be linked to a particular class and religion, see, for example, Kochhar (1992).

*the internationalization of printing and the spread of word-processing with international software using electronic spelling-checkers.*

The seventh myth (7) current about English is the role it has played as a unifying language both on a national and an international level. The political indispensability of the *unifying* colonial English language is repeatedly asserted for postcolonial societies. According to MacCallen (1989: 22), the *conflicting claims* which came from various ethnic and linguistic groups regarding whose particular language should be promoted more often than not led to problems. The take-over of English in many areas *almost through default* was the only possibility of a resolution. Any constitutional delays in promoting English only proved its indispensability. The fact that India kept English as an associate official language acknowledged *the language to be indispensable* (MacCallen 1989: 22).

According to Sridhar (1977) or Kachru (1986) English as a national link language and a lingua franca has sealed the *gap* in India's multilingual scenario. Where even Hinduism failed to unify Hindus, this unification is *at last being accomplished through the English language*. Only English has been capable of this *achievement* (Sridhar 1977: 23, 24). According to Kanungo (1962: 14) and Kandiah (1991: 271, 274) the Indian *elite* refused to submit to overt colonialism or Christianity as positive forces of modernity, but accepted the English language as the only means to enter the twentieth century. While this *unifying influence* of English has been confined to an educated elite, it also has the capacity to grow. According to Sridhar (1987: 301) *there has never been any other truly pan-Indian contact language used by the masses, at the grass-roots level*. Even culturally, and again for the first time in the subcontinent's history, English has been able to capture a pan-Indian audience. According to Kachru (1976: 225), while English in 'Third World' countries teaches and maintains *the indigenous patterns of life and culture*, it also provides *a link in culturally and linguistically pluralistic societies*, and maintains *a continuity and uniformity in educational, administrative and legal systems*. Kachru and Sridhar remain undaunted by

the fact that after at least 200 years of promotion on the subcontinent, English is spoken by no more than 3% of the population, while the mutually comprehensible varieties of languages submerged under Hindi, comprise almost 40%<sup>93</sup>.

Arguments such as Sridhar's (1977: 31) have based the spread of English in India on the *needs of mobility and national unity which demand the promotion of a single language*. Before the arrival of the Europeans it seems, India's multilingual population was not *mobile*. In fact, according to Kandiah (1991: 272), the Indian subcontinent shared no integrated linguistic or cultural identity before the arrival of the British. Instead it *lacked a uniform set of linguistic and cultural symbols that could be ideologised for the purpose of creating an integrated national identity*. Only English has been able to overcome the boundaries of race, class, caste, and region. A *national identity* can only be forged on the basis of a *national language*, while only the existence of a *national language* promotes *unity* between people of one *nation*<sup>94</sup>.

The credit for *unity* in a colonized people's struggle for independence has also been given to the shared language and culture of colonialism. According to Sridhar (1977: 112), during the Indian independence movement, *English was the common denominator that united the elites of the various regions*. According to Görlach (1997: 12) liberation struggles based on English as a unifying element are common even today:

*... all freedom movements of the 1940's to the 1960's used English for political rallies - right up to recent campaigns in Southern Africa.*

For the first time through the presence of a unifying *English culture* the colonized began to perceive themselves as a *nation*, with a common *national* cause for liberation (Mazrui 1975: 48):

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<sup>93</sup> For evidence on the pre-colonial unity of India, as well as on 'divide and rule' policies of the British, see chapters 2 i, 5 iv, 6, or 10 i.

<sup>94</sup> See chapter 3 ii and 3 iii for European theories of centralization and monolingualization.

*Resistance to foreign rule in Africa did not become 'nationalistic' until its leaders became English speakers. ... the English language was an important causal factor in the growth of African national consciousness ... learning English was a detribalizing process.*

Even Jouhy (1985: 185, 186) links the development of independence movements to the colonial schools and therefore to their language:

*Auch die Autonomiebewegung und das 'nation-building' in der Dritten Welt, die von diesen 'neuen Eliten' - zum Teil im anti-imperialistischen Kampf - in Bewegung gesetzt wurden, sind ohne die Schule und damit die Sprache der alten imperialistischen Weltordnung nicht denkbar.*

For critical contemporary analysts such as Das (1991) or Joshi (1991), independence movements against oppressive colonial systems represented comprehensive massive peoples' movements, not offshoots of a *superior* imperialist culture. It was not the small English-using elite of the Indian National Congress that was able to mobilize a large number of people in the struggle for independence, but the consciously Gujarati- and Hindustani-speaking and writing Gandhi, or the Bengali-speaking and writing Tagore, who rejected English as a national medium of communication or education (Sheth 1990). Neither was pan-Indian unity *constructed merely in response to colonial rule*, nor was it just *a mere by-product of the national movement* (Das 1991: 4).

For the much earlier case of Irish liberation from colonization, which was to become *a pattern for freedom movements in Africa and Asia*, it has also been argued that those who rallied around the idea of Home Rule, all spoke, wrote and *unified* through the medium of the English language (Wardaugh 1988: 92, or Görlach 1997: 10). In reference to Ireland, Tagore argued very differently. To Tagore (1996: 477) the linguistic and educational parallels between Ireland and India were warning signals. Tagore was aware that though the Irish education system and culture had already been destroyed by the invasion of the Danes and the English, it was only under Queen Elizabeth's rule over the whole of Ireland, that the last Irish universities still

teaching through the indigenous languages were finally closed down. While, in nineteenth century Ireland, 80% of the Irish people still spoke their language, hardly any Irish mother tongue speakers survived the initiation of the ‘National School movement’. The ‘National School movement’ aimed to mould the Irish on the Anglo-Saxon pattern, and banned both the study of the Irish language, as well as the study of Irish history. Tagore warned the Indian people, that though Britain’s educational policy in Ireland might not be fully comparable to that of India, both systems ignored the independent minds of their students, being successful primarily in producing *English-educated* groups of *mental cripples* and *parrots*.

While colonial European languages continue to be associated with *progressive internationalism*, *national integration* and *progressive development*, local (‘Third World’) languages are perceived as possessing inherently dangerous tendencies towards *narrow nationalism*. The promotion of local languages is seen as a threat to the *international* language, English, which has successfully forced colonized peoples out of their traditional isolation into the present interconnected world. According to Sridhar (1977: 22), before the advent of English in India, individual Indians, however enlightened they might have been, *were confined by the vernaculars to their own region or province* with no possibility of an *interchange of ideas between educated groups from different parts of the vast country*. This myth sees local languages as never supplementing or interacting with one another, but only being in competition with each other. Sahgal (1991: 305) also argues that the *linguistic rivalry* between English and Hindi has turned English into the more popular language, *especially among migrant populations in India*. Sahgal’s sample of migrant populations in India is limited to English-educated people from the *elite residential areas of Delhi* (1991: 300).

While sociolinguists praise English, the mother tongue of a distant people, they argue the uselessness of the languages of neighbouring communities. Accordingly, centuries of interaction at multiple levels, between local

communities and their languages have left speakers of ‘Third World’ languages so alienated by one another, that the colonial language becomes a preferable *compromise*. According to Sridhar (1987: 312), for example, Hindi speakers can *find no use for a South Indian language*. In the case of some African countries, sociolinguists have emphasized the greater potential of major African languages for destroying smaller African languages, than the colonial language ever had. According to Spencer (1985: 395), for example, should smaller *vernacular languages* wish to play wider roles, major African languages will *appear a greater threat* to them than European languages.

Resistance to English in ‘Third World’ countries, according to Fishman (1977: 308), is part of a *puristic* and *exclusivistic* ideology of older generations, that must and will disappear:

*Attitudinal resistance to English ... can be expected to weaken as younger generations successfully shed more and more of the puristic and exclusivistic ideologies that their parents and teachers formulated and espoused during the formative struggles for political and cultural independence.*

In such cases as the traditionally multicultural and multilingual Sri Lanka, Kandiah (1991: 274) points to the users of English as having rejected their *pure* indigenous personality in order to gain a unique *symbiotic personality*.

Promoting bilingualism, let alone multilingualism, does not seem to be a part of the global agenda of English, while scholars propose that *tribal* languages cannot be *cleansed*, *purified*, or *modernized*, but mostly have to be eliminated to allow its speakers to *progress*. This destructive argument demands the removal of *tribal* or *indigenous (vernacular)* languages in the face of *far superior* European languages. The perception of powerless languages as threatening has been endorsed by linguists such as Crystal (1997: 118) in regard to the USA, and as a way to ‘justify’ the ‘official English’ movement:

*... the contemporary movement among some immigrant populations to maintain their original cultural identity through safeguarding their mother tongues is - given the large numbers involved - a matter of some consequence. What has emerged is a conflict between the demands of intelligibility and identity, and one outcome has been the 'official English' movement.*

Crystal (1997: 117, 118, 119) finds space to praise English for being *an important factor in maintaining mutual intelligibility and American unity in the face of immigration explosions which more than tripled the US population after 1900*. His emphasis on *immigration trends in recent years* having been *especially dramatic* in the USA as well as *everywhere*, however, reinforce his point that *internal forces are threatening the country's future unity* and may one day even threaten the global power of English.

Put together all seven interlinked myths promoted about English consider the survival of too many language varieties to be threatening, while their deliberate suppression is considered to be a *natural* consequence. Simply ignoring the existence of particular languages also 'helps' to lead to their disappearance. As the Ugandan president, Milton Obote, in 1967 phrased it, *clinging to a tribal language is absurd, while just letting it disappear is perfectly natural*<sup>95</sup>. Obote was sure that, with time, some of the African (*tribal*) languages would anyway lose their meaning, as he did not think *that a tribe will lose very much if it loses its tribal language*.

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the disappearance of numerous indigenous languages (along with the genocide of their communities) in the Europeanized continents (such as USA, Australia, etc.) was an integral part of both overt and covert language policies. As Herriman and Burnaby (1996: 9) put it:

*Those languages, which are mostly at risk of extinction, are important cultural repositories in addition to being a critical means of communication for their speakers.... Any threat to or diminution of the language is a threat to the culture it encodes. In all declared multicultural societies, language is therefore a part of the cultural resource to be protected.*

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<sup>95</sup> See Mazrui (1975: 212).

The seven myths discussed above are ‘only’ myths, such myths, however, often have a more pervasive strength than theories. In addition to retrospectively serving to justify colonialism, they perpetuate neo-colonialism, while they also pave the way for the future assimilation or abolition of diverse oppressed communities, classes, languages or cultures (Calvet 1978: 109). Perhaps with Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson (1989: 3) the issue needs to be taken one step further, to declare *language rights* to be *one category of human rights*. In most contemporary European and ‘Third World’ societies, where forces of centralization predominate over forces of decentralization, and political, linguistic, economic and cultural power continues to be unequally distributed, the recognition of all existing major or minor languages as equal *languages*, particularly in education, has yet to be established<sup>96</sup>.

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<sup>96</sup> See, for example, Sridhar’s (1996) discussion on particular minority languages in India, not specified or officially recognized under the Constitution.

## 1 ii Negating multilingualism as a ‘burden’, an ‘inconvenience’, and a ‘curse’

*Conflict is seen as resulting from linguistic diversity rather than economic and political inequality, and so any resistance to linguistic uniformity is seen as irrational, destructive, and not in the ‘national interest’<sup>97</sup>.*

The perception that *unity* and *pluralism* are incompatible, and that no society can have both, is an opinion that continues to be shared by numerous contemporary sociolinguists<sup>98</sup>. While multilingualism *beyond a certain point* is seen as counterproductive to the evolution of a *modern, economically sound, technologically developed* society, linguistic complexity is perceived as a *handicap that does not normally conduce to the peaceful and harmonious progress of its peoples* (Spencer 1985). Again according to Spencer (1985: 389) a development of *larger national unity* can be seriously hampered or even destroyed by *the inevitable battles for linguistic parity, or dominance in national institutions, in law, in administration, and in education*. In addition, *cultural and ethnic divisions* tend to be *intensified by religious distinctions* as they focus around issues of *language and linguistic loyalty*.

Sridhar (1977: 112, 113) has defined multilingualism as being another expression for *linguistic fragmentation*, which in turn leads to *social, political, economic and cultural fragmentation*. Pluralist linguistic traditions in societies, such as the Indian, are perceived as a *problem* to which there seems to be *no simple solution* (Sridhar 1977: 112). According to Zuengler (1985: 241) *language dilemmas* existing in ‘Third World’ countries cannot be fully appreciated by *Westerners*. In Zuengler’s or Sridhar’s (1977: 38) analysis most of the former colonial territories of Africa share India’s *problem* of lacking a unifying language. This *problem* has already been resolved by affluent countries (Spencer 1985: 390) - the circular argument

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<sup>97</sup> Tollefson (1991: 205).

<sup>98</sup> See, for example, Haugen (1985), or Kandiah (1991).

being that affluent countries are affluent because they have a unifying language which makes them affluent.

For many linguists *one language for the whole world* continues to be upheld as an *ideal* and desirable bureaucratic (i. e. *economic*) solution (Crystal 1997: viii). This ideal solution simultaneously solves the *problem of multilingualism* (Haugen 1985: 14). As the dream of a common global language for all – reminiscent of European Christian ideals of the ‘Ursprache’ - seems impossible to enforce universally in the immediate future, it is subsumed under *one nation: one or two language* models. Fishman (1978: 411) seems to favour monolingualism for most societies, except those able to financially tolerate *the luxury* of two languages occupying the same functional territory. The reason for Switzerland’s official recognition of four languages can only be its immense wealth.

Arguments against multilingualism do not only favour the official recognition of one (or two) language(s) for one country, but insist on a national medium for education, as well as for administration. Even in this regard, however, postcolonial monolingual *indigenous language models* are rarely seen in a favourable light in comparison to the option of the continued dominance of the colonial language. The European languages are seen as already having been adequately installed by the colonial powers, for this reason they are perceived as *cheaper* or *easier* to promote. In contrast, the propagation of existing local, indigenous link languages is considered to either be a *waste of time, energy, and money* (Görlach 1988) or a ‘luxury’ ‘underdeveloped’ countries can hardly afford. Even those ‘Third World’ countries using English as a second or foreign language only, are criticised for actually being *too poor to develop their own national languages* appropriately or successfully<sup>99</sup>.

Countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia or Tanzania, for example, who, after independence, at least temporarily succeeded in rejecting the colonial

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<sup>99</sup> See myths of English in chapter 1 i.

language by opting for indigenous (trade) languages as national media for education (Bahasa Indonesia, Bahasa Malaysia, Swahili respectively), have been severely criticised and sanctioned. In addition, the establishment of an indigenous link franca in 'Third World' countries forces the majority of Malaysia's, Indonesia's or Tanzania's urban populations not only to be bilingual (having knowledge of their mother tongue as well as the indigenous lingua franca), but also, for the political, technical-economic or academic elites the need to become tri-lingual (adding the globally dominant English to their linguistic repertoire) has become an unavoidable necessity (Jouhy 1985: 185). Even the installation of English-based popular (creole) link languages, that resulted out of colonial contacts in countries such as Nigeria (Awonusi 1983) or New Guinea (Sankoff 1980), as official languages has not been considered to be an adequate model for nation-states. With time, they have been or will be superseded by official versions of largely standard, educated (Anglo-American) varieties of English.

A minority of sociolinguists have considered the idea of *a thoughtfully planned bilingualism* to be a workable linguistic alternative to national monolingualism (Haugen 1985: 14). Kachru (1986: 31), for example, concedes the possible co-existence of two link languages for the second most populated country in the world. In India, *for pan-Indian interaction, Hindi and English go together*. This *pro-English-plus-Hindi* model, which confines each language to its respective sphere, is favoured by many. While Hindi-Hindustani could function as a *lower* link language for administration, education and development, English is classed as a necessary *higher* associate link language *for practical purposes* (Anand 1973: 35). In reference to the African continent, a limited bilingualism remains the only answer for Spencer (1985: 393), which he considers to be *a necessity for more and more people in Africa, as indeed elsewhere*. While bi- or multilingualism has been and still is a recognized fact of life for most 'Third World' communities, however, the same cannot be said to be true for native English speakers from Britain or from Europeanized continents such as USA. Ricento (1996: 149) characterizes *US residents* as being *remarkably*

*uninterested in developing second language proficiency or even in acquiring basic information about other peoples and their values, attitudes, and traditions, and this despite the presence of many foreign languages on their vast continent.*

The continuing reality of an immense diversity of mother tongue languages as decisive media of communication and identification, which continue to flourish against the official validation of specific ‘national’ languages, shows the oppressed majorities’ cultural and political revolt against the rule of the neo-colonial metropolitan classes (Jouhy 1985: 182). According to Calvet (1978: 131) use of the (suppressed) mother tongue language becomes an act of resistance and a refuge from colonial domination. At the same time, the continued (diglossic) bilingualism of the educated classes in the metropolises of ‘Third World’ countries, their continued use of their mother tongue side-by-side with the colonial language simultaneously symbolizes a form of protest combined with their increasing assimilation towards the ideals of the countries of the Centre<sup>100</sup>. Like some sociolinguists, they have attempted to continue to subscribe to the definition of multilingualism as a *burden*, an *inconvenience*, or a *curse*, while only nominally criticizing aggressive processes of cultural or linguistic assimilation<sup>101</sup>. Historically, economically, administratively and educationally English has been pushed into negating the status of the local languages of colonized countries. The inverse necessity to push local languages – not into reversely negating English – but into regaining parts of *the functional load of English* has yet to be acknowledged in the established linguistic discourse.

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<sup>100</sup> See discussion in chapter 7 ii, for example.

<sup>101</sup> See, for example, (Crystal 1997: viii, 18) or Görlach (1997: 23). Görlach sees widespread bi- or multilingualism as having secured national communication, but also as having hindered the development of a national identity rather than furthered it.

## 2 Political and economic support factors

At times, contemporary sociolinguistic attitudes towards English seem reminiscent of eighteenth century European dogmas, specifically eighteenth century French *revolutionary* dogmas, that categorized any resistance to what became France's only legitimate language, French, as divisive and *aggressive nationalism*. Acceptance of French was considered to be part of unifying under *positive nationalism*. From the end of the eighteenth century onwards, in all European and Europeanized countries, *language* became inextricably linked up with *nation*. In postcolonial countries, *the construction of the nation*, also took its model from European history where *nationhood had been sustained by religious, linguistic and cultural homogeneity* (Das 1995: 350). In most European and Europeanized countries, progressive educational policies inclusive of all social classes became regressive in terms of excluding all 'non-standard' variations or 'non-national' languages. In contemporary postcolonial societies, where unifying around a single language, ethnicity or religion was not considered directly or immediately possible, a colonial and neo-colonial superstructure was developed, which included English as a medium of education and administration. With European class structures superimposed on indigenous social structures, an education and administration system was created which was not only linguistically, but also socially limited to a minority section of the population.

After the French Revolution, when France's newly declared national mother tongue became established as the language in power, it seemed inevitable that more than half the citizens of France (who did not know the Parisian dialect) had to learn *French*. Though a similarly fatalistic attitude exists in regard to the inevitability of the English language as a colonial and now a global language, the majority of people from 'Third World' countries continue to counteract such linguistically, culturally and educationally homogenizing trends. Contemporary neo-colonial elite, however, having

modelled themselves and their nation-states on Western ideals, still rely on monolithic – therefore – exclusive structures to sustain their power, giving the majorities of their compatriots no loop-hole to enter or to share power on any other terms.

The only concession of these neo-colonial elite, in addition to keeping the *unifying* colonial culture installed, is the half-hearted offer to allow for a limited rise to power of indigenous diglossic or triglossic models, similarly based on Eurocentric ideals of centralizing and homogenizing their ‘excessively’ diverse societies. Such models aiming at the political centralization and cultural homogenization of decentralized, heterogeneous societies have set in motion their own chauvinist and segregationist movements and responses. In the case of India, in their *anxiousness to discover a similar monolithic symmetry (to the European) in the Indian situation, Indian intellectuals foregrounded the Hindu India as the basis of a new nation overlooking the simultaneous existence of the many other components*. According to Sircar (1992: 1926) such attempts *to naturalise the myth of a trans-historical, monolithic culture as the authentic Indian culture ... systematically suppresses the identities and aspirations of the majority of the Indian people*.

The political forces of independence movements, unquestionably leading to the physical withdrawal of the colonial powers from ‘Third World’ countries, have not yet succeeded in replacing the powerful apparatus of administration and education that were left installed. Though, according to Sheth (1989: 624), the builders of independent India may not have founded their ‘new’ nation-state on an ethno-religiously defined nationhood, *the policies of the Indian state sought continuity of political forces generated by the independence movement and of structures and institutions built by the colonial regime*. The educational, political, social and cultural dominance of English within this system of education and administration has not only failed to be extended to the larger part of the population (it was never intended to be spread either), but has consciously sought to excluded them

from participation at all nationally powerful levels of governance, by means of this dominance. While for the majority of Indians the politically powerful English language has remained an out-of-reach, limited, primarily written, academic or journalistic prose register of official and educational domains, its pervasive ideology based on dogmas of assimilation, substitution or elimination of all differences as a way of gaining political power has spread to all spheres of society.

For the state, (English) education has remained the most powerful apparatus through which the centralization and homogenization of culture and knowledge continues to be organized. The major part of educational policies are geared towards producing an English-educated professional middle class to control the national state's economic and political machinery. While elite institutions in the metropolis with scientific-technological infrastructures, library facilities, qualified academia - often trained in the West - are promoted, academic institutions in the provinces, especially in the rural areas, are *encouraged to degenerate and collapse*. Due to the highly uneven and differential government policies the whole structure of education has become *deeply elitist, hierarchical and anti-popular* (Joshi 1991: 22, 23). This situation is a direct follow-up from the colonial situation, in which the most fundamentally *recognized principles of education*, i. e. *that it should be planned with a view to the needs of the people*, seems to find have found no place in schools, universities or other scholarly institutions in India (Gandhi 1965: 38).

The study and analysis of centuries of past and present attitudes towards the role of the English language, including the mechanisms of its global spread, have shown that the dominance of English is not due to any mystical *psycho-social mechanisms* (Stevens 1981: 8), or the effect of some *transmuting alchemy of English* (Kachru 1985: 20). The dominance of English is due to conscious, co-ordinated and heavily funded (Anglo-American) institutional promotion programs, combined with functional, financial and professional incentives for the learners, in a world where hierarchically ordered and

selected English-speaking people dominate all high-level political, military, scientific and cultural arenas.

As long as contemporary sociolinguists<sup>102</sup> perceive the spread of English as a *scientific language* in terms of something that just *happened*<sup>103</sup>, they overlook the dominant positions of Western scientists, and continue to further promote already widely acceptable *scientific and technical development arguments* against the use of Asian or African languages. According to Joshi (1991: 22) such pro-English arguments come from consciously formulated *highly rationalist perspectives of development*, combined with the elite's *dependence on scientific and technical information* in their *state apparatuses*, as well as the importance given to *the politics of internationalism*. There is, however, nothing unexpected or mysterious about the *global power of English*<sup>104</sup>, nor about the increase of *the uses and diffusion of English* (Kachru 1986: 329), nor about the dominance of English in so many established and over-privileged domains of public life. Any critical examination of the reasons behind the spread of English automatically point to the powerful and officially sanctioned promotion of the language, only superficially covered by arguments relating to an *intrinsic, in-built* superiority, popularity or neutrality.

Philologists, dialectologists, or contemporary sociolinguists continue to stress the importance of *a single national language* as the primary means towards the unity and cohesion of the modern state, but few admit that there is, in fact, no (Western) European country that has been able to fully realize the nationalist slogan of *one language, one nation, one people* - despite centuries of attempting to do so. Even if a *good and big monolingual state*, clearly defined by its political and linguistic boundaries, were preferable to national *multiplicity*, such an *ideally* homogenous state is not a reality (Calvet 1987: 35). The fact that most European or Europeanized countries

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<sup>102</sup> See, for example, MacCallen (1989: 22), or Moag (1982: 284).

<sup>103</sup> See, for example, the statement by the above sociolinguists: the language began to pervade the scientific world, and then establish itself as the main system of communication within the scientific community ...

<sup>104</sup> See, for example, Kachru (1986: 31).

continue to perceive themselves as monolingual societies, relates to their colonial past, which also enabled the promotion and production of *a false sense of cultural homogeneity* among the colonizers, as they contrasted themselves to the pluralist perceptions of the colonized societies (Nandy 1983: 32, 35). While centralized rule enabled most European countries to promote chosen ‘high’ languages into becoming first national, and then - with the help of colonialism - international languages of bureaucracy, education, media, science and technology, other (indigenous and immigrant) languages demand their equal rights. Despite the fact that selected ‘high’ languages have been promoted and established as the ‘most important’ and ‘most useful’ media of communication for all<sup>105</sup>, ‘other’ languages and varieties continue to exist, develop and survive.

The basis of contemporary English *popularity* is due to the spread of Euro-American hegemony, particularly on economic, political, military, communicational and cultural levels<sup>106</sup>. In regard to American interest in the promotion of English, Crystal (1997: 117) emphasizes that *the future status of English* is linked to the future of the USA:

*So much of the power which has fuelled the growth of the English language during the twentieth century has stemmed from America.*

The expansion of English in Europeanized and ‘Third World’ countries is pragmatically and *inextricably linked up with the job market, social mobility and cultural superiority* (Joshi 1991: 21). In contemporary India, English is still *the* officially sanctioned means of upward economic mobility for a small privileged urban class of ‘Western-oriented’ people. In the past, positive reactions towards the English language in India were primarily related to its instrumental role in the acquisition of power. Today, more than ever, those wanting to have access or to remain within the circle of the powerful have no choice but to adopt the dominant language or remain excluded<sup>107</sup>. Outside

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<sup>105</sup> ... or at least those who consider themselves to be the “herrschaftlich Gebildeten” or the “gebildeten Herrschaften” (Jouhy 1985).

<sup>106</sup> See, for example, Galtung’s theory of imperialism (1981).

<sup>107</sup> See Calvet (1974: 50, 128, 130).

the 'inner' circle of power 97% of the Indian people continue to realize their lack of educational, administrative and linguistic power, combined with their disadvantage in economic, judiciary, cultural and political fields.

## 2 i The global power of Anglo-American infrastructure

Galtung's (1981: 301) theory of imperialism takes as its *point of departure* two of the most glaring facts about this world: the tremendous inequality, within and between nations, in almost all aspects of human living conditions, including the power to decide over those living conditions; and the resistance of this inequality to change. According to this theory, all nations can be divided into *Centre* and *Periphery* countries. Those in power in the Centre countries share communal interests with those in power in the Periphery. While these shared interests benefit the majority of people in the Centre, they disadvantage the majority of the people in the Peripheral countries. The relationship between the *Centre* and the *Periphery* is an imperialist one and depends on the cultivation and promotion of different types of mechanisms, such as economic, political, military, communicational and cultural exchange, including scientific (academic) 'exchange' (Galtung 1981: 311).

Galtung's theory relates directly to the mechanisms propagating the global spread and power of Anglo-American economic, political and military dominance. Within this system communicational and cultural structures, including the power of international organizations and institutions are interconnected. Language is an important element of the different types of imperialism in existence, but it particularly relates to communicational and cultural (scientific) imperialism. A complete analysis of linguistic imperialism must take into account all other types of imperialism. According to Phillipson (1988: 339):

*Linguistic imperialism is seen as an essential constituent of imperialism as a global phenomenon involving structural relations between rich and poor countries in a world characterized by inequality and injustice.*

Calvet (1978: 127) equally insists that it is not possible to see *the linguistic problem* on its own or isolated from problem of colonialism, nationalism and

centralization. Neither is it possible to resist the forces of *glottophagia* without situating it in its particular historical, political and economic contexts. In relation to *francophonie* and the resistance formulated against it, Calvet explains the contradiction in demanding (or accepting) the recognition of one's language from a state which represents the prime force behind the denigration and suppression of languages other than French (1974: 149):

*Lutter aujourd'hui uniquement contre la francophonie ne sert de rien, puisque celle-ci n'est que la traduction linguistique du néo-colonialisme, et qu'il y a une grande inconséquence à réclamer la reconnaissance d'une langue par un État qui est précisément à l'origine de sa péjoration et de sa domination.*

While the Centre owns and develops the means of communication, the means of transportation, the means of cultural creation, the means of economic production, or military destruction, the Periphery caters to it by producing the raw materials that the Centre turns into processed goods. The Periphery produces events that the Centre turns into news, it produces the data that the Centre turns into theory, and it provides the learners that the centre teaches, along with the definition of what is worthy of being taught, how it should be taught and in which language it is to be taught (Galtung 1981: 311, 312). The foundations of linguistic inequality are based on all these different, but interlinked relations of inequality. According to Phillipson (1988: 339).

*The foundations on which linguistic inequality rests, and the ideologies which legitimate the dominance of one language over others, as manifested, for instance, in beliefs and values in the teaching profession or in "aid" organizations, are relatively under-explored.*

The hegemony of English (along with the new world order) is *secured and maintained* via international economic (private or governmental transnational) organizations, political (international government) organizations, military relations (systems of treaties and alliances), as well as communicational (transport, press agencies) and cultural (entertainment, educational links) infrastructure (Phillipson 1988: 341, 342). All these

organizations, links or infrastructures give (postcolonial) European languages institutional support, set its standards and promote its *popularity*.

Learning English or French makes economic sense for the minority in power in neo-colonial countries, as long as they are economically linked with the Anglo-American or French-speaking world. As long as 60% of West African trade is with France, the West African elites will learn French (Calvet 1978: 193). As long as the best paid jobs are in ‘First world’ countries, 60% of the doctors trained in Ghana will look for work abroad (Waters 1992: v). Whatever linguistic, cultural or sociological justifications are otherwise given, the fact remains that African *francophonie* or Asian *anglophonie* are primarily based on political and economic interests (Calvet 1978: 194).

In the case of English, the politically and economically powerful Anglo-American mother tongue speakers dominate *the international community*, that can financially and ideologically produce accepted *universal, neutral* and *superior* standards of English. International institutions, such as, for example, the UN, the World Bank, the BBC, the VSO, English First, the Voice of America, the British Overseas Development Agency, the IMF, US English or the British Council<sup>108</sup> must be taken into account when assessing the force of the institutional promotion of *the universal spread of English* (Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas 1986: 11, Hernández-Chavez 1994: 157). In the new world order of neo-colonialism, the IMF or the World Bank represent economic domination, the UN Security Council represents the political, while Hollywood, UPI, Reuters, or CNN propagate techno-informational-cultural domination (Shohat & Stam 1994: 17). Together they conspire to keep the global scene under control.

Such powerful organizations and institutions, comparable to the historically and officially sanctioned French institution, the ‘Academie Francaise’ in France, but far more powerful, have become the authorities on

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<sup>108</sup> Among others, the IMF (International Monetary Fund) and the WB (World Bank) have been referred to as the New Conquistadors in the new world order (Waters 1992: v, vi).

internationally recognized versions of English<sup>109</sup>. In addition they are also responsible for disseminating and financing a global *standard* of English teaching models. As a sociolinguist from Sweden (Svartvik 1985: 33) puts it, *the current gigantic investment* in English language in countries such as his, is only justifiable if it produces *a means of international communication*. The acquisition of English by non-native speakers of English is *an investment worth the effort and the money* only as long as the central language functions *as a means of international communication for a range of purposes* (Svartvik 1985: 34) – besides being decoratively Indianized or Africanized. Most sociolinguists agree (Quirk & Widdowson 1985: 36) that if English is to be both a local and global medium of communication, its users would need to acknowledge and acquire norms for both domestic intranational and wider international communication.

The myth of the ‘First World’s’ *investments* in aid, education, loans, technical know-how or scientific expertise to ‘Third World’ countries has served to ‘justify’ the profits extracted from the countries of the ‘Third World’, that have presently reached phenomenal heights<sup>110</sup>. The Anglo-American ‘financing’ of the dissemination of English has had to be paid in terms of vast economic, educational and cultural costs by those communities marginalized within the countries of the Periphery (Phillipson 1988: 342):

*Those who fail in the quest for the alchemy of English see their life chances reduced. Those who become proficient in the alien language may sacrifice the language of their parents and their own culture in the process. The dominant language partially displaces other languages, through exclusive use of that language in certain domains (for instance in the media, or in the modern sector of the economy), and may replace the other languages totally. For well established languages the addition of English should represent no substantial threat, but in many parts of the world linguistic structures and processes have resulted not on English enriching other languages and cultures but in English supplanting them.*

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<sup>109</sup> For contrary arguments see, for example, Strevens (1981).

<sup>110</sup> Between 1983 and 1990, Third World countries paid out \$21 billion every year in a net transfer of resources to the industrialised nations. Debt repayments to the IMF alone account for \$6.3 billion annually. Africa, paying out \$10 billion a year in debt service, has in addition, lost one-third of its skilled workers to Europe (Waters 1992: v).

Although even the European Parliament has expressed its concern over the pervasive use of English in economic life, science and technology, as representing a threat to their languages and cultures<sup>111</sup>, English remains *the key language of the multinationals, of administration and justice, of the media, of the military, of science, of internationalism, of aid, of education, etc.* (Phillipson 1988: 345) - of which West Europeans form an integral part. In the case of international aid institutions, such as the IMF and the World Bank, their growing power to define what ‘modern development’ for ‘Third World’ countries is, how it is to be achieved and what type is considered feasible<sup>112</sup>, their decisions, for example, how and for what educational resources are to be spent has already had devastating consequences (CAFA 1992: 51):

*Studies the World Bank has published since the mid-1980s show that it consistently calls for a drastic reduction of higher education in Africa, as it has developed in the post-independence period. This reduction is promoted in the name of higher efficiency and a more egalitarian distribution of educational resources.*

According to Phillipson (1988: 346), *education in Third World countries has been indelibly marked by the West, as a direct consequence of the Western "aid" that followed on the heels of colonialism.* In addition to promoting a certain content, including ‘technology transfers’ and ‘expertise’, International aid also insisted on the medium to transfer this content, i. e. *the language medium of the donor country* (MacCallen 1989: 23). It follows that at least some parts of the local populations of ‘Third World’ countries *will need to speak the donor country's language.* Such international bodies are also involved in the planning of language policies of ‘Third World’ countries. According to Pattanayak (1987: 7) debates on education, as well as on the language of education, have always been included in discussions on development. *As one of the major instruments of human resources development, education in ‘Third World’ countries now forms part of the*

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<sup>111</sup> See The European Parliament Working Documents 1984-85, also the discussion in Phillipson (1988: 343).

<sup>112</sup> Alvarez (1992: 95) points in particular to the World Bank as being the new power over our lives these days. According to him, it is the World Bank that defines and controls what constitutes development.

*priority agenda*. In no way, however, has this agenda catered to the needs of the majorities of the people (Pattanayak 1987: 7):

*During the past decade, numerous committees and commissions of enquiry have churned out report after report throughout the world. Ironically almost all of them have provided strategies which affect excellence and saturation of education for the few and a deprived form of education for the many.*

In recent decades, some scholars<sup>113</sup> have examined and analysed the role of particular governments, as well as of specific private and state-funded institutions, and their policies and practices in spreading English, together with their instrumental role in suppressing ‘Third World’ or immigrant mother tongue languages. In the case of the USA, English language promotion has been an integral part of foreign policy, the *fourth* dimension alongside the economic, political and military ones<sup>114</sup>. One of the most powerful American governmental institutions, the Pentagon<sup>115</sup>, has been allocated the task of promoting English in almost every ‘Third World’ country (Coombs 1964). On the internal front, the pressure to make the already so dominant English language an official language has been mounted by national organizations, such as US English<sup>116</sup> and the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR), who have raised millions of dollars to support pro-English restrictionist language and immigration policies (Ricento 1996: 150). According to Herriman and Burnaby (1996: 5), the promotion of English as the language of power inside Europeanized, but English-dominant countries has greatly endangered barely surviving powerless indigenous languages, such as the Amerindian languages in USA, or Welsh and Gaelic in Great Britain.

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<sup>113</sup> See, for example, Mazrui (1997), CAFA (1992) or others in Skutnabb-Kangas, Phillipson, & Rannut (1984), or in Herriman & Burnaby (1996).

<sup>114</sup> See Coombs 1964, in Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas (1986: 10), and MacCallen (1989: 22).

<sup>115</sup> Brian MaCallen’s (1989) *English: A World Commodity* was published/commissioned by the Economist Intelligence Unit, in London, as a Special Report, Nr. 1166.

<sup>116</sup> David Crystal’s (1997) *English as a Global Language* was commissioned by this organization.

In order to successfully suppress other languages outside of the ‘mother countries’ of English, educational reports<sup>117</sup> have explicitly stated that the expansion of English as a world language or as a universal second language must *take place mainly under Commonwealth and United States auspices* (Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson 1986: 12). Britain also has widely spread cultural institutions for its English promotion industry, such as the British Council. Founded in 1935 and financed by the British government, the British Council, *which began its life under the title of ‘British Committee for Relations with Other Countries’* (Donaldson 1984: 1) is now well-established as an institution for promoting the English language abroad. Its expansionist aims and objectives were clearly stated in a speech at its Inaugural Meeting in 1935 (Donaldson 1984: 1, 2):

*To promote abroad a wider appreciation of British culture and civilisation, by encouraging the study and use of the English language, and thereby, to extend a knowledge of British literature and of British contributions to music and the fine arts, the sciences, philosophic thought and political practice.*

*To encourage both cultural and educational interchanges between the United Kingdom and other countries and, as regards the latter, to assist the free flow of students from overseas to British seats of learning, technical institutions and factories, and of United Kingdom students in the reverse direction.*

*To provide opportunities for maintaining and strengthening the bonds of the British cultural tradition throughout the self-governing Dominions.*

*To ensure continuity of British education in the Crown Colonies and Dependencies.*

Only twenty years after its inauguration, the British Council had representations in 82 countries, it was active in a further 50, and it sent its specialist ELT staff to a further 40 countries<sup>118</sup>. While ELT aid projects existed in 48 countries, there were 111 English libraries around the world, 47 English teaching centres, and everything was run by an operating budget of - at the time - at least 67 million pounds a year. According to Phillipson (1988: 347, 348), in order to promote their common language successfully world-wide, the Americans and British developed and expanded the

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<sup>117</sup> Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson have quoted a 1956 Report to the British Ministry of Education.

<sup>118</sup> See Report to British Ministry of Education, 1956, cited in Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas (1986: 12).

professionalization of English Language Teaching (ELT), *as a result of this, both the aid effort and the investment of newly independent countries primarily went into teacher training and curriculum development in the colonial language.*

‘Cultural’ institutions are complemented by political international bodies such as the World Bank. They have been examined in relation to countries of the African continent by CAFA (1992) and Mazrui (1997). Mazrui (1997: 35-48) has, for example, examined how international World Bank policies directly affect language planning policies in regard to the medium of education in many African countries. His conclusion has been that though in their reports, World Bank officials overtly favour African mother tongue languages as media of education, they neither endorse nor financially back any of these theories, even in regard to primary education. In regard to higher education, or secondary education, their theoretical support for mother tongue education completely ends, as they officially recommend that *higher knowledge* can only be transmitted through neo-colonial (European) languages. Such language planning policies hark back to centuries-old colonial policies in India, where, for example, primary *low-level* mother tongue education was combined with secondary and higher *high-level* English education. Critics continue to refer to such supposedly *bilingual* models of education as being more divisive and segregationist than in any way representing positive multilingual models of education.

By pressurizing African governments into cutting down their already low educational expenditure, World Bank structural adjustments programs force people – who can afford it - to finance their education privately. This conjures up images of colonial situations (CAFA 1992: 53). While access to higher educational institutions in African countries was to be limited by charging fees, determining access to primary and secondary schools was to be left to *local communities, religious institutions and private companies*, who would be made responsible for running such educational enterprises, as

well as dealing with *the cost of paying for teachers, school equipment and buildings* (CAFA 1992: 54):

*The World Bank vision for African education by 2020 consists, then mostly of primary education, a middle school system immediately shaped by the needs of the local labour market and a very selective higher education system, operating at the lowest possible public cost. Here students pay their way through parental contributions and/or loans, and spending would be monitored by international agencies and foundations, to ensure the most efficient transmission of a knowledge packet largely imported from abroad.*

Mazrui (1997: 43) points to the responsibility of the World Bank in creating and maintaining neo-colonial social, economic and political divisions, that primarily serve foreign economic interests:

*In essence, the World Bank's proposed educational configuration in Africa demonstrates the continued role of instruction in Euro-languages in creating and maintaining social divisions that serve an economy dominated primarily by foreign economic interests and, secondarily, by a small aspiring African bourgeoisie.*

Mazrui's examples (1997: 40) have shown that students suspensions from university primarily occur for financial reasons. An examination of Kenyan university records from 1986, showed that 1/3 of the students registered were suspended, due to their inability to pay their tuition fees. In the field of primary education, the majority of parents most probably react to financial difficulties by simply not sending their children to be educated in the first place. Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong'o (1981: 64) has also characterized the linguistic policies of his country as being a reflection of the neo-colonial situation in Kenya. Together with the intensification of *foreign language programmes*, the *foreign language theatre programmes*, and the *foreign language cinema programmes promoted by foreign imperialist embassies*, the suppression of Kenyan languages or Kenyan theatre is complementarily promoted by the local *comprador ruling class*. The provision of *free* language teachers to take charge of the foreign language programmes in Kenyan schools and colleges, as part of European technical aid programs, has done nothing to improve the state of mother tongue education throughout the country.

The World Bank-cum-IMF's policies towards countries such as Tanzania, also show how mother tongue education is the first area to be deprived by cuts in educational spending. Tanzania was one of the few African countries to have widely implemented the establishment of an African language as a national and official language, and as a medium of education, shortly after independence in 1961 (Abdulaziz 1971: 160, 165, 169). Until recently, Swahili was used as an instruction medium at primary, secondary levels, and higher college levels<sup>119</sup>, while English continued to be taught as a subject at school (Abdulaziz 1971: 169, 170). When, in the 1980s, Tanzania capitulated to the IMF and submitted to draconian cuts in educational spending, plans to introduce Kiswahili at university levels came to an abrupt end (Mazrui 1997: 41). Almost simultaneously along with this disruption in education, the British Overseas Development Agency (ODA) moved in, to launch their multi-million dollar English Language Teaching Support Project.

Other organizations, also in the field of media and communications promote English in order to cater to their home countries' vast unemployment markets. They give those speaking *native* English an automatic qualification from birth onwards in the international English-language promotion industry. In the Pacific area, for example, in countries like Fiji, New Hebrides, American Samoa Broadcasting Commissions are almost completely staffed and run by expatriates (Moag 1982: 279). The majority of student volunteers wishing to work for developmental organizations such as *VSO* (Britain) or *Peace Corps* (USA) need only two qualifications: American or British nationality and a degree in English.

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<sup>119</sup> For example, the University College Institute of Swahili Research (Abdulaziz 1971: 166).

## 2 ii The global-numbers-of-English game

Appropriating universal creativity, productivity and intelligibility

The *global-numbers-of-English game* is a favourite game played by scholars wanting to prove by statistical computations the world-wide presence, popularity and diffusion of English, while ignoring the limited local percentages and contexts of its speakers<sup>120</sup>. In this context, Kachru (1983: 69; 1986: 31, 33, 50) writes about the *immense creativity of the* (English) *language during the last forty years* - here he is not referring to Chomsky's (1975) universal principle of the *creativity* of all languages - but to the globally promoted products of the English language: English language technology, research, media, education, literature, and other institutions. As such, however, the productivity of particular languages, especially in written spheres, does not necessarily prove its frequent use. It can point to an active or powerful group of people who, for whatever reason, wish to promote particular ideas or knowledge.

In the Indian case, for example, the magnitude and frequency of translations from Sanskrit into different Indian languages, during the last two centuries, was not based on its widespread use, but was a scholarly strategy aiming at disseminating Brahminical learning based on a classical heritage. It may even have been a conscious assertion of indigenous literary traditions in the face of India's rapid Westernization (Das 1995: 47). In regard to English, education systems and the media (including the press, books, radio, T. V., video-cassettes, etc.) are forced into Anglicization, as the theories, analyses, and results of what is perceived as important scientific, economic and political world communication increasingly relies on one language (Jouhy 1985: 186):

*Selbstverständlich liegt dies daran, daß in diesen Sprachen die Ergebnisse der wissenschaftlichen-technischen Revolution, der weltwirtschaftlichen Produktion und des*

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<sup>120</sup> See Calvet's (1974: 96, 97) discussion on this game, which he discusses particularly in reference to Kachru and India.

*weltweiten politisch-militärischen Machtkampfes um die Verteilung des 'Kuchens' begrifflich produziert und vermittelt werden.*

While today primarily English, accompanied by a few other European languages, can be *associated with an advanced technology*, the diffusion of English no longer depends on conquest, but spreads on the basis of its association with an advanced technology<sup>121</sup>.

In contemporary analyses of English, however, transcontinental tables adding up the numbers of students globally enrolled to study English are presented (Kachru 1983), or the possible numbers of users of all kinds of English variations are estimated (Crystal 1997: 55), in order to deduce a world-total of English students or English users. The *extraordinary* fact of English having become a language on *which the sun does not set, whose users never sleep*, has led to its daily use by the estimated number of seven hundred million people, only half of them native speakers (Quirk 1985: 1). This proves to Quirk (1985: 3) that *the English language works pretty well in its global context today*, because at any rate, *the globe has at present no plausible substitute*. In the context of the growing population figures of many 'Third World' countries, particularly Asia, the figures produced do not seem so overwhelming.

In reference to the *inner circle* of English-speakers for whom English is supposedly the primary language, both Quirk (1985: 2) and Kachru (1985: 12) include the entire populations of the USA, UK, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and even South Africa. They are, however, referring to large percentages of people whose *primary* languages may just as well be (to name just a few) Welsh, Gaelic, Gujarati, Chinese, Punjabi, Tamil, Bengali, Spanish, native Australian or American languages, Xhosa, Zulu, or Maori languages<sup>122</sup>. In reference to gigantic numbers of people who potentially

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<sup>121</sup> See Thapar (1975: 27).

<sup>122</sup> See, for example, Herriman and Burnaby (1996) for statistics on Europeanized countries, or Alladina (1986) specifically for Britain.

belong to the expanding circle of English (as a foreign language) the vast total populations of China, USSR, Indonesia are cited.

Such estimated world totals of English speakers are presented in order to prove the immense popularity of English on a universal scale, while assuming that global English is a universally homogenous, universally intelligible language variety. These overgeneralized numbers overlook the wide linguistic, cultural, regional or social disparities and distances between the different users, the limited domains or functions of the language, or even its extensive - mutually incomprehensible - varieties, that may in fact be closer to other languages, that remain *unnamed*.

In this regard, Strevens (1982: 23) submerges differences of locality, class, context, process of acquisition, purpose of use, etc. by linking individuals such as Chinua Achebe, William Faulkner, *a taxidriver at a Calcutta railway station*, *a Nigerian professor of economics*, British diplomats and a group of people involved in *a bar conversation in Nairobi* into a world-wide *community* of English-speakers. As long as it is impossible to say whether the varieties based on or influenced by English are mutually intelligible, the estimation that, by the year 2000, there will be *more black people in the world who speak English as their native tongue than there will be British people* (Mazrui 1975: 9), seems of little use. The fact that it is already true today that European people are a global minority (compared to African, African-origin, Asian, or Asian-origin people, etc.) makes such *statistics* even more relative. Even contemporary speakers of varieties of English, such as Black American English and white American standard English, who have lived side-by-side for a few hundred years, do not necessarily understand each other when using their separate varieties<sup>123</sup>.

Mutual intelligibility on a global scale between speakers of African, American, European, or Asian Englishes (in themselves questionable entities) has been equally overgeneralized<sup>124</sup>. In Kachru's (1985: 15) chart,

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<sup>123</sup> See, for example, Smitherman (1986).

<sup>124</sup> See, for example, Quirk (1985: 3), Kachru (1985: 13).

India's 3% minority of English users are allotted third place in the list of the top ten English-using countries of the world. India being globally the second most populated country, after China, relativizes the subcontinental spread of 20 million or so Indian English speakers. In the context of more sparsely populated European countries, such figures seems formidable. The dominance of this 3% English minority becomes clear in relation to their powerful and 'representative' position among languages whose speaker groups range from anything below or upwards of 8% (Telegu, for example) to 38% (Hindi, for example)<sup>125</sup>.

For those who ignore divisive colonial policies, and exclusive educational structures, around which English based itself in neo-colonial societies, the *democratic* and *diffusive* qualities of English education (Kachru 1983: 69; 1986: 31, 33, 50) seem easily proved by universal numbers. It is not large numbers that count, however, but the power and the infrastructure of those using and promoting a certain language at certain levels. Numerically, Chinese must otherwise be considered to be the best option for a global language. Not only do Chinese-speaking people live in every part of the world, but Chinese population figures in present a strong argument for those in favour of large numbers. MacCallen (1989: 24) denies Chinese the status of an international language, on the basis of it being a *tongue* that consists of *several rather than one spoken dialect, which may be mutually unintelligible*. In addition, while Chinese ideogrammatic symbols represent *a great language learning barrier to orientals*, the scripts of Hindi, Bengali and Russian also discourage their world-wide adoption, and explain why so few people wish to learn Chinese, Hindi, Bengali or Russian as a second or foreign languages (MacCallen 1989: 24).

While literacy in non-Roman scripts is considered to represent a hindrance rather than an asset, the existence of large numbers of people in 'Third World' countries speaking languages that they do not write, automatically decreases the importance of their languages. The supposition that *few*

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<sup>125</sup> See Government of India, Census Figures (1991).

*Africans are completely literate in the vernacular tongues* enables language promoters to push forward English or French as media for instruction instead, as the most useful and *attractive proposition*. In this regard, it is perceived as unimportant that only small percentages in African countries actually use English or French. Less than 10% of the population in most African countries previously colonized by the French are francophone<sup>126</sup> (Mazrui 1975: 15).

While first and second language varieties of English, such as Canadian, American, Indian or Nigerian Englishes, are added up together in a grand *international* total, languages such as Chinese, Punjabi, or Tamil, also transported millions of miles away from their places of origin, continue to be classified as local or regional languages. Though such displaced communities have survived slavery, indentured or contemporary immigrant labour and continue to speak their languages, their powerlessness and their lack of infrastructure denies them the right to assert their linguistic, educational, or cultural rights in their new dominantly monocultural *homelands*. The question whether Chinese, Punjabi, or Tamil are recognized as British, US American or French languages becomes a side issue, as long as their presence – in whatever numbers - in the countries in which they are spoken is recognized, valued, used and respected at all levels (lower and higher) of education, administration, and at the workplace, etc.

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<sup>126</sup> See discussion of this term also in chapters 1 i and 10 ii.

## **PART II      Clash of Language Traditions and Cultures**

### *Designing the trap*

#### **3      Before colonization: ‘Unity in diversity’ vs. ‘unity in uniformity’**

In pre-colonial times, the peoples of the Indian subcontinent had ancient cultural, educational, political, linguistic, trading links with the universe around them: China, the Arab world, the continent of Africa, the Pacific world, and Europe<sup>127</sup>. As Dias (1992: 7) formulated it:

*The civilization of the Indian subcontinent has, at least from the sixth century B. C. onwards - ... - acknowledgeably ... influenced, in a decisive manner , both the whole of the cultural space in South and Far-East Asia, as well as the Western region, without, however, - and this is important to emphasize - exercising military, political and economic domination.*

Traders, travellers, invaders to and from the Indian subcontinent had come, settled or had gone. Those who had stayed had contributed to and had been influenced by local forms of government, society and culture. The multi-layered structure of Indian society had allowed for incessant interchanges between newly-arrived as well as locally diverse communities and cultures, leading to the periodic development of new or altered communities and cultures without destroying the already existing pluralist society. The existence of multiple cultures among the people of the Indian subcontinent did not hinder the evolution of a common Indian mythology, belief-system or ideology<sup>128</sup>. Nehru<sup>129</sup> not only coined the expression *unity in diversity* to describe Indian civilization - an analysis which also became popular among historians and social scientists - but also described in depth the meaning of

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<sup>127</sup> Thapar (1966: 19, 20) also emphasizes that another idea of India – as a static unchanging culture for many centuries - was and continues to be prevalent. She points out that: Even a superficial analysis of the changing social relationships within the caste structure, or the agrarian systems, or the vigorous mercantile activities of Indians throughout the centuries, points to anything but a static socio-economic pattern. For particular examples regarding trade with China and Africa, for example, see Thapar (1966: 297).

<sup>128</sup> According to Thapar (1966: 20) there is in India a continuous cultural tradition extending over three thousand years ...

<sup>129</sup> He was the leader of the Indian Congress Party, an independence fighter, and first prime-minister of independent India.

this *synthesis* of ideas prevalent on the traditionally pluralist Indian subcontinent (1946: 62):

*Ancient India, like China, was a world in itself, a culture and a civilization which gave shape to all things. Foreign influences poured in and often influenced that culture and were absorbed. Disruptive tendencies gave rise immediately to an attempt to find a synthesis. Some kind of a dream of unity has occupied the mind of India since the dawn of civilization. That unity was not conceived as something imposed from outside, a standardization of externals or even beliefs. It was something deeper and, within its fold, the widest tolerance of belief and custom was practised and every variety acknowledged and even encouraged.*

Forty-five years later, in his monumental two volumes on the History of Indian Literature, S. K. Das (1991: 4)<sup>130</sup>, emphasized the existence of the same unified ideology and mythology underlying the ancient, vast and diverse literary scenario on the Indian subcontinent. According to Das (1991), this perception of unity, based on diverse geographical, historical, ritualistic and behavioural factors, was as old as Indian civilization. On the basis of common phonological, morphological and lexical features distributed among *most of the languages of India, of no matter which major family*, the American linguist and anthropologist, Emeneau (1964: 642 - 653), classified *India as a linguistic area*. The anthropologists, Singh & Manoharan (1997: 16)<sup>131</sup>, stress that *one of the most prominent characteristics of Indian languages is that they show striking similarities in their phonology, grammar and lexicon, irrespective of the language families they belong to*. According to them (Singh & Manoharan 1997: 2):

*The enormous magnitude of diversity, both social and linguistic, has never been an impediment to social and linguistic development; in fact it has helped in the development of a unified, underlying linguistic substratum of a common cultural heritage.*

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<sup>130</sup> The literary historian from the Sahitya Akademi, Delhi, S. K. Das (1991 & 1995), together with a phenomenal 'pool' of Indian literary scholars, started this history from the modern period and aims to work his way backwards into India's ancient literary history.

<sup>131</sup> In their All India Linguistic Traits Survey (1976-78), Singh and Manoharan (1997: 16) found typological similarities - considered to be the core components of speech communities - such as echo-formation, numeral classifiers, numeral systems, verbal and non-verbal greetings and kinship terminology ... shared by people speaking languages of different language families.

Such unities were not constructed in response to colonial rule, nor as a by-product of the national movement. Indian unity existed outside the *pernicious political* colonial ideology, which identified only *one of the Indian traditions* - i. e. the Sanskrit Hindu tradition - *as national and everything else as regional* (Das 1991).

### 3 i Pre-colonial India: Pluralism and hierarchy-without-imposition

The pluralist nature of the Indian subcontinent cannot be contradicted by the existence of economic, social or linguistic hierarchies<sup>132</sup>. In fact, as India's leading sociologist and anthropologist, M. N. Srinivas (1971: 157) has argued in regard to the caste system and diversity in Indian society, it is *for the acceptance of cultural pluralism*, that the price of *hierarchy* (caste) has been paid:

*Caste is fundamental to Indian society, and it necessarily implies acceptance of pluralism in culture. People get used to cultural and ethical relativism though such relativism is qualified by an attempt, not always successful, to subsume the various systems in a hierarchy. This relativism is at the basis of Indian 'tolerance' while the hierarchy explains indifference if not arrogance on the part of the higher groups to the cultures or life-styles of the lower. ... Diverse styles of life, codes of conduct and belief systems can co-exist in a caste society. It is true that all the styles of life do not have the same validity and one is extolled above the others. That is, the idea of hierarchy is the price paid for the acceptance of cultural pluralism. There is no idea that one's style of life should be imposed on others – in fact, the opposite idea prevails that different castes have different styles of life.*

In pre-colonial times, this means that the members of India's higher castes did not question the validity of the experiences or cultures of the lower castes, nor did their relationship to each other corrode the underlying patterns of unification. New communities settling on the subcontinent joined or extended existing patterns. According to Thapar (1966: 301), though *the observance of caste was more rigid and automatic amongst the Hindus*, all other communities, such as the Muslims, Jainas, Syrian Christians, and heterodox sects, subscribed to this system, which had become *the very root of social relationships*<sup>133</sup>.

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<sup>132</sup> See Singer's (1972: 43) sub-chapter on The Unity and Diversity of Religious Traditions in India. Singer writes: *The multiplicity of sects and the absence of a single church organization within Hinduism has not prevented scholars from postulating an underlying unity and continuity.*

<sup>133</sup> See also the analysis of the French anthropologist and social scientist Louis Dumont (1988: 210).

On the linguistic level, this meant that though particular powerful court, religious, ritual, literary, inscriptional languages existed, the literary, functional, religious or cultural existence of all other languages was neither questioned, nor curtailed. In Indian history, three languages, belonging to different ruling classes at different (though overlapping) periods of history, have been repeatedly cited as examples representing high, literary, religious, ritual or administrative codes<sup>134</sup>. These three languages can be said to have represented or still represent important media of what was considered to be written, poetical, ritual (religious), or 'intellectual' communication in old, medieval and modern history, respectively (Das 1991: 23). The complementary use of peoples' (spoken, literary, religious and/or written) languages within and outside such powerful social, political, literary and cultural domains controlled the dominance of these 'high' languages. Widely spoken (mother tongue) languages, such as Tamil or Urdu, for example, were also court languages. At the same time, many Indian languages were primary vehicles of literary (oral and written) expression. In addition, the different communities' constant involvement and communication among each other, generated numerous cultural, social, religious, or linguistic (etc.) inter-linkages and adjustments. There were linking languages, linking customs, linking literatures or linking architectures. As a particular language or language variety did not necessarily correspond or 'belong' (on a one-to-one basis) to a particular religious, ethnic, regional or caste community, multiple linguistic linkages were inherent in the complex multicultural character of specific individuals, communities, as well as of society in general.

Before immigrant Mughals<sup>135</sup> started ruling large parts of India from the fifteenth century onwards, Sanskrit - which was nobody's mother tongue, and confined mainly to the priestly Brahmin caste<sup>136</sup> - was the language with the most prestige among upper caste Hindus. For centuries, Sanskrit writings and mythology spread throughout the subcontinent via adaptations and/or

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<sup>134</sup> Such as Sanskrit, Persian and English.

<sup>135</sup> The Mughals were originally Turks or Afghans.

<sup>136</sup> Brahmins used Sanskrit as a written or ritual spoken language.

translations in all the (mother tongue) languages of the people. As a language, Sanskrit had little or no functional value for the majority of common people. During Mughal times, Persian (as a literary and court language) and, to some extent, Arabic (as the language of the Koran) developed prestige. Unlike Sanskrit, Persian, being also a spoken language, became popular in the Mughal courts, as a language of education, of administration, of the judiciary, and also of literature (for both Muslims and Hindus). The immigrant Mughals, however<sup>137</sup>, did not Persianize their whole state apparatus. While they retained indigenous administration systems, they kept their records in local languages and employed local Hindus at all levels.

Similar inter-linkages also took place on cultural and religious levels between Hindus and Muslims<sup>138</sup>. The Mughals patronized and greatly respected Sanskrit poets and scholars, as much as they patronized and respected literature in the 'regional' Indian languages. The Turkish (Muslim) rulers of Bengal, for example, closely identified themselves with the life and literature of the region. Their genuine interest in Bengali literature encouraged those writing in the Bengali language (Thapar 1966: 312, 314). Here, as elsewhere on the subcontinent, land records continued to be kept in Bengali. At the same time, under the Mughal rulers' patronage of the primarily Hindu rent-receiving leisured class, even Sanskrit learning reached its peak (Acharya 1996: 100).

In addition, the extremely decentralized indigenous system of education, which had *evolved over the centuries*, was simply extended during Muslim rule. The schools and centres of higher education attached to temples and mosques, emphasized mainly religious training, offering the study of theology and/or linguistics (Thapar 1966: 302, 303). In terms of higher secular education, there was a particular interest in gaining knowledge in areas such as medicine. Schools or educational institutions were patronized and financed by the state or the local rulers - in the rural areas, by the

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<sup>137</sup> Contrary to British colonials ...

<sup>138</sup> Thapar (1966: 300, 301) refers to and describes in detail the fusion of Islamic culture with existing Indian culture.

wealthier castes. The Sultans of Delhi, for example, were generous in their patronage of Madrassahs, or Muslim schools<sup>139</sup>. There was also a system of vocational training offered by artisans, or run by state workshops. Additional educational institutions to those already in existence were inclusively accommodated (Acharya 1996: 98, 100):

*There were five types of educational institutions: for higher learning there were Sanskrit tols and Arabic madrasas, and for elementary education the pathsalas and maktabas (the pathsalas being the secular institutions for vernacular education for the masses). Additionally there were the Farsi schools for imparting training in Farsi language and literature<sup>140</sup>.*

Up to the beginning of the nineteenth century, Hindus' attraction to the Persian language expressed itself not only in their frequent attendance of Persian schools - usually headed by Muslim teachers - but also in their use of Farsi as a literary medium (Kochhar 1992: 2612). The encounter between Muslims and Hindus on the sociolinguistic level was expressed prominently in the evolution of the newly-mixed language, Urdu, which never replaced, but only supplemented existing languages (Majumdar et al<sup>141</sup> 1946: 401):

*The growth of Urdu, out of the mingling of Persian, Arabic, and Turkish words and ideas with languages and concepts of Sanskrit origin, is a proof of the linguistic synthesis of the Hindus and the Muslims.*

Up to the end of the eighteenth century, the multilingual situation on the Indian subcontinent can be classified as stable. The knowledge of more than one language or language variety was accepted as a way of life. According to Das (1991: 28), for example, hardly any evidence of linguistic tensions among different communities can be found. This is also reflected in writers' varied choices of their linguistic medium or media. It was characteristic for writers to use more than one language. Depending on their personal background and education, they used Sanskrit, Persian, and/or any other

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<sup>139</sup> During the Tughlaq period, in Delhi alone, there were about 1000 educational institutions (Thapar 1966: 303).

<sup>140</sup> Farsi was the court language during the Mughal rule in Bengal, and was sought by both Hindu and Muslim elites.

<sup>141</sup> Majumdar et al are critical historians.

Indian language. Besides Sanskrit and Persian, numerous Indian languages had ancient literary traditions<sup>142</sup>. In addition to the use of languages with written literary traditions, the parallel option of being creative in languages with large and vibrant oral literatures, promised an equally important place in pre-colonial Indian culture and society.

Bhokta (1998: 203) traces the powerful development of the popular (mother tongue) languages directly back to the Bhakti movement. The Bhakti movement, lasting from around the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries, was a widespread movement, mainly in the north of India, whose members strove towards religious and social egalitarianism, rejecting the caste system, Brahminical forms of worship and institutionalized religion. The movement's teachers came from diverse social backgrounds, with the majority, however, being from the lower artisan and peasantry castes, and the minority Brahmins (Bhokta 1998: 203). They initiated a whole new literary movement based on the people's languages or 'lok bhasha' (Bhattacharya 1998: 9, 10). They spoke and composed *their verses in the languages best understood by the people whom they taught* (Thapar 1966: 312). The *revolutionary social reformer and leading preacher of the time*, Kabir, declared his attitude towards the classical language Sanskrit, in comparison to Indian mother tongues, succinctly and in no uncertain terms (Bhokta 1998: 204):

*Sanskrit is the water in a well, the language of the people is the flowing stream.*

In her historical analysis of the power and spread of the regional languages literature of this period, Thapar (1966: 312) contrasts it with the more *artificial* Sanskrit literature:

*Literature in the regional languages was strikingly different from Sanskrit literature in one main respect; it was as spontaneous and imbued with genuine sentiment as the latter had*

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<sup>142</sup> See, for example, references to Tamil (Thapar 1966: 184), references to Prakrit or Pali, the popular spoken versions of Sanskrit, or Magadhi, used by the Buddha to teach (Thapar 1966: 63). Inscriptions on Ashokan pillars, from around the 3<sup>rd</sup> century B. C. were in the local (Kharoshthi) script, for example (Thapar 1966: 74).

*become artificial and forced. The themes of the new literature were often of common interest to more than one region, and literary innovations travelled quickly and widely in northern India.*

During this time, adaptations, translations, or commentaries of (earlier and contemporary) Sanskrit scriptures, sacred literature, or its epics abounded in many Indian languages. While the oral and written literature became widely popular, the languages of this literature - such as Assamese, Maithili, Gujarati, Rajasthani, Hindi, Oriya, Hindawi, or Urdu (to name only a few) - also flourished.

The Bhakti movement also generated a revolutionary educational and linguistic consciousness throughout the subcontinent. On the formal pre-colonial educational scene<sup>143</sup>, the effect of the Bhakti movement lasted well into nineteenth century India. In the large number of indigenous schools (*pathsalas*) the popular languages, i.e. the languages of the locality were the instruction medium (Bhokta 1998: 206). At local, primary and secondary school levels, mother tongue education was widely spread, well-attended by all the castes and generally free (Acharya 1996).

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<sup>143</sup> See chapter 10 for a further discussion of pre-colonial literature and education.

### 3 ii Early modern Europe: trends towards centralization and ‘monolingualization’

The European missionaries, traders and adventurers, all in search of their own sea-route to India, left behind societies that were in the process of destroying most of their pluralist wealth in order to become centralized, homogenized Christian nation-states. The American historian Carew (1992: 3), describes the period of the Inquisition as *the beginning of the Columbian era* in Europe. In Spain, the Inquisition almost completely destroyed *the seminal cultural infusions of Moorish and Jewish scholarship*:

*At the beginning of the Columbian era, thousands of books that the Moors had collected over centuries – priceless masterpieces that their geographers, mathematicians, astronomers, scientists, poets, historians and philosophers had written, and tomes their scholars had translated – were committed to bonfires by priests of the Holy Inquisition. And to cap this atrocity, an estimated three million Moors and 300,000 Jews were expelled from Spain (and this does not include the thousands forced to convert to Catholicism).*

This Spanish decree *expelling Moors and Jews and confiscating their property*, made ethnocide *an intrinsic part of Spanish domestic and overseas policy*. These events in Spain can be regarded as a *precedent*, which *established a tradition of conquest and ethnocide*, soon to be *adopted by all of the European colonisers who came in Spain’s wake* (Carew 1992: 4). This is not to say that European societies were not, or presently, are not inherently multicultural and multilingual. Though the Moors and Jews were physically expelled or wiped out – not only from the Iberian peninsula - the Renaissance would not have been possible without their contribution. This fact, according to Carew (1992: 3) *is seldom acknowledged by Eurocentric scholars*.

From this time onwards, there has been a concerted attempt on the part of the (Christian) religious and state powers of most European countries to eliminate diversity in the name of a powerful centralized unity. In the period preceding the French Revolution, the rise of modern nationalism in Europe

had already begun. The historian Szporluk (1988: 85) emphasizes *the earlier, but major events in European history, that created the essential preconditions for the formation of a nationalist world view*. Even before the eighteenth century, *the state began to be seen and see itself as an agent and instrument of public and national improvement* (Szporluk 1988: 85):

*In the era of nationalism, the adjective "public" was redefined to mean "national", and the scope of the state's functions was widened, but in actuality, the idea of the state as a creative force had emerged before nationalism. Furthermore, large-scale cultural communities, based on modern, standard languages, had also been formed in Western Europe before industrialization created a new set of ties and before the French Revolution invented a new politics.*

Before the 'one nation, one language, one people theory' became prominent with the American and French Revolutions of 1776 and 1789, concerted efforts had been made to install a centralized, official language for each separate state. At the same time, the usefulness or even continuing existence of all other languages was questioned. For England, the sociolinguist Görlach (1997: 1) roots the rise of the ideology of nationalism in concepts evolving in the sixteenth century:

*The concept of linguistic nationalism is first recorded for England in the 16th century, when the dominance of English had to be re-established in fields like law, science and administration.*

From early modern times onwards, powerless languages came to be derivatively classified as 'regional' languages, 'vernaculars' or 'dialects'. European thinkers increasingly began to interpret the diversity of their own, or of other societies as either incomprehensible or an unnecessary evil. In many European countries, the promotion of a centralized ideology set the scene for the eradication of powerless 'dialects', which were even denied the status of being referred to as 'languages' (Calvet 1978: 32-45).

Up to this day, a threat to the unity of a country, as well as its officially installed and sanctioned languages is seen as coming from languages, classified as *minor*. In the most powerful English-speaking country of today,

the USA, for example, organizations such as ‘English First’ or ‘U. S. English’<sup>144</sup> imagine a need to push for the constitutionalization of English as an official language. Their campaigns encourage a climate of resentment and fear by the dominant (white, Anglo-American) community against the educational rights of minorities, including their - already powerless - languages (Hernández-Chavez 1994: 155, 157). In the medieval/early modern line of argument, it was assumed that only a central, official language could promote the unity of a people. Cultural unity was seen as being based on linguistic unity. If this unity was not shielded from the segregational attacks of minor languages, national chaos, disintegration and the development of separatist political ideologies would follow. The modern line of this argument is presented in the book, *English as a Global language* (1997) of one of the most prolific modern linguists, David Crystal. According to Crystal (1997: ix) himself, the book was commissioned by the above-mentioned organization called US English. As *internal forces threatening the country’s future unity* pose a threat to American English, *global English* is seen to be in danger. Quite clearly, these *internal forces* have come out of the *immigration explosion* in the USA. As a note of warning to other nations, Crystal (1997: 118) emphasizes the fact that *ethnic minorities and immigrant populations ... are everywhere*.

The development of early modern theories of centralization in relation to state, language, culture, and education was reinforced by the spread of nineteenth century American and French *nation theories*. From the nineteenth century onwards, most European and Europeanized countries favoured the establishment of one central dialect as the language of government, education and culture. In Britain or other Western European countries, regional and nationalist battles were fought in order to establish the dialect of the ruling elite as an official medium throughout the state and its dominions (English for England, the British Isles and Ireland, French for

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<sup>144</sup> These organizations are promoted by private anti-immigration alliances, linked to the Intelligence community, and supported by white supremacist groups (Hernández-Chavez 1994: 157).

France, German for Germany, etc.)<sup>145</sup>. Later on, such monolingual policies - along with the European national languages –were exported to the colonies (Calvet 1978: 42). In his article, Columbus and the war on indigenous peoples, Stevenson<sup>146</sup> (1992: 41) shows how Europeans expanded their own nationalisms in the colonies:

*When Europeans made the Columbian journey, they reinforced a sense of themselves. By contraposition, they found the savage in order to reify their own diverse nationalisms, such as Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, French and English. The archetypal event of colonisation, which is called discovery, continues to shape current realities in that the complex of words and conduct developed centuries ago still structures European modes of perceiving and organizing.*

The legitimisation European languages gained on a national level in their countries of origin was later transferred to the colonies, and turned into an imperial legitimisation. The contemporary global promotion of English - supplemented by the ever-decreasing spread of other colonial European languages, such as French, Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, or German - can be considered an extension of this monolingual trend. The language of the ‘higher’ professional, technical and academic classes is somewhat euphemistically referred to as a means of *international* communication.

The pre-medieval, medieval and early modern periods of European history records numerous regional battles of languages fighting against a powerful language for their right to survive, or for their right to replace it. Price (1984: 170, 184) traces the spread of English as an exclusive language in the British Isles back to around the fifth century. From this time onwards, English was *a killer* (Price 1984), not only threatening languages with which it had previously shared the islands, but even eradicating dialects generated by English itself:

*If there are still parts of the United Kingdom, in Wales, Scotland and the Channel Islands, where sizeable communities speak languages that were there before English, sometimes as*

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<sup>145</sup> See consequent paragraphs in this chapter for further examples relating to Britain, Ireland and France.

<sup>146</sup> Stevenson is an Australian anthropologist and sociologist.

*their first language, nowhere in these islands is English not in everyday use and understood by all or virtually all. It is English that has killed off Cumbric, Cornish, Norn and Man. It is English that has now totally replaced Irish as a first language in Northern Ireland. And it is English that constitutes such a major threat to Welsh and to Scottish Gaelic, and to French in the Channel Islands, that their long-term future must be considered to be very greatly at risk.*

Then there is the twelfth century Irish example of a not-yet-so-dominant English language safeguarding its rights against the French and the Gaelic languages (Kallen 1994: 152). Twelfth century conquests resulted in the evolution of a multilingual society, adding French and English to the indigenous Gaelic. As English-speakers feared that their language would not survive the advent of the French language, however, a ruling was passed in 1366 in the Irish parliament<sup>147</sup>, that *every Englishman use the English language, and be named by an English name*. The Irish living outside the area of English control were classified as enemies, and intermarriage and alliances with the Irish were forbidden<sup>148</sup>. During the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, documents suggest that, all over the British Isles, the English language was struggling against the dominance of the French language.

By the beginning of the fifteenth century, English triumphed over French. This led to the instalment of English as the primary medium in schools, in parliament, in the courts, in letters, wills, petitions and ordinances. The 1536 ‘Act of Union’ made English compulsory for officials and called on all writers to write in English. By the end of the sixteenth century, English replaced French, as well as Latin in all scholarly domains. This consequently required a *necessary* and official homogenization of the English language. The support of London book printers was also instrumental in bringing about the identification of English as ‘the national’ language of the British nation (Görlach 1997: 5)<sup>149</sup>. As a fairly uniform *standard* of English began to be

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<sup>147</sup> The Statutes of Kilkenny were written in French!

<sup>148</sup> Britannica, The New Encyclopaedia 1990: 21, 960.

<sup>149</sup> See Szporluk (1988: 85, 86) in relation to the formation of cultural communities and the printing revolution in Germany. See also his discussion of Anderson’s (1991) analysis.

widely used for both official and literary purposes, English was established as a dominant language all over the British Isles.

The origins of centralist linguistic and literary ideals in European countries was also influenced by the establishment of philosophical, scientific and creative academies in the early Renaissance. In 1617, in Germany, for example, the academy ‘Fruchtbringende Gesellschaft’, was founded at Weimar. Its *expressed* purpose was *the purification of the language and the cultivation of literature*<sup>150</sup>. In Paris, the ‘Academie Francaise’ consisting, at first, of a private society of men of letters, came under the patronage of Cardinal de Richelieu<sup>151</sup> in 1635. Richelieu transformed this nucleus of writers *into a recognized body, with regulations, a set number of academicians, and formal gatherings, and made it a powerful agency to serve purposes of government no less than of art* (Cazamian 1959<sup>152</sup>: 151):

*The new institution, at the beginning, was meant to watch over the progress of the French language, and by means of its official decrees and publications, to preserve the purity of speech and style at a time when correct usage was still imperfectly established. It attracted most of the successful writers, and its authority grew fast enough to give it, before long, the standing of a public adviser in matters of criticism and taste. Needless to say, all its influence was exerted in favour of what may be called thenceforward the orthodox manner of writing.*

This bureaucratic literary institution, the ‘Academie Francaise’ was put in charge of laying down the rules of literary taste. Later on this included the establishment of rules for an officially sanctioned public usage.

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<sup>150</sup> See *Britannica, The New Encyclopaedia*, Vol. 18, (1990: 35).

<sup>151</sup> Chief minister to King Louis XIII of France from 1624-1642 (also known as ‘L’eminence rouge’). Richelieu regarded the gravest divisive factor in French society to be religion. Within France, he worked towards preserving social harmony, and he was prepared to tolerate religious dissent as long as this did not amount to a political challenge. Outside of France, he promoted and became a shareholder in overseas trading companies, which began the process of colonization in Canada and the West Indies, as well as gaining economic footholds in Morocco and Persia. According to the historian D. P. O’Connell (in *Britannica, The New Encyclopaedia*, Vol. 10, 1990: 50, 51), he was also concerned with the spread of French religious missions in Africa, the Middle East and America.

<sup>152</sup> Cazamian wrote the Oxford university reader on *A History of French Literature*.

Standardization trends banned not only *foreign*, but also *provincial* words from the French national language (Calvet 1978: 41). According to Cazamian (1959: 151, 152), one of the founding members of the ‘Academie Francaise’, Vaugelas<sup>153</sup>, whose Remarques sur la langue francaise was to have a lasting success in *learned circles*, referred to words as *the sacred instruments of human intercourse*. He was hailed as having made a lasting contribution to cutting off the French language *from its living roots in the habitual speech of the whole people – of the lower classes especially*. By weeding out *the uncertainties, discrepancies, and vulgarisms*, he was said to have fitted French *admirably for intellectual conversation, and for the varied scope of a rational literature* (Cazamian 1959: 152). From then onwards, in many European nation states, political, cultural, economic unity meant linguistic unity, and unity meant uniformity. Striving towards such uniformity was presented as *a battle for culture and against ignorance*<sup>154</sup>.

The English colonizers of Ireland also defined the Gaelic Irish as ‘cultural barbarians’. The Irish were regarded *as being ‘unreliable’, not open to persuasion, and so could only ‘be subdued by force’; they breach their faiths’ and had shown a tendency to revolt* (Stevenson 1992: 39):

*Being pagan also meant that the Irish were culturally backward barbarians. They were likened therefore, to Huns, Vandals, Goths and Turks and described as ‘little better than Cannibals who do hunt one another’.*

Already in 1619, the link between *provincial* languages (here, the local Irish language) and *barbarity* had been made<sup>155</sup>. This meant, that in order to abolish *barbarity*, the provincial language (here Irish) had to be abolished. When, in 1803, Ireland was incorporated into the United Kingdom, the severe political and economic decline of the country was matched only by the linguistic decline of the Irish language. While at the beginning of the nineteenth century Gaelic speakers numbered 50% of the population, a few

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<sup>153</sup> Claude Favre, sieur de Vaugelas (1585-1650), was characterized as one of the first of a long French lineage of modern grammarians and critics was referred to as a contributor to the rise of classicism (Cazamian 1959: 151).

<sup>154</sup> See also Calvet (1974: 16, 17, 18, 28).

<sup>155</sup> For the Statutes of Iona see Görlach (1997: 8).

decades later, they were no more than 25% (Görlach 1997: 10). By this time, the expansion of the English language throughout the British Isles and Ireland threatened not only the status, but also the very existence of the Scots Gaelic, Welsh, and Irish languages.

By the seventeenth century, most of Western Europe was dominated by centralist dogmas. Latin, the ‘sacred’ medium of medieval Europe began to loose its power. Whereas before, it had been the only language taught (by bilingual clerics who mediated between the vernacular and the ‘sacred’ language), after the ‘era of Columbus’ and the advent of printing, centralized, standardized national languages began to replace it. According to Szporluk (1988: 85, 86) this *medieval "imagined community"* disintegrated under the new pressures:

*... began to disintegrate under the pressure of two developments: an increased knowledge of the non-European world and the invention of printing.*

The concept of a centralized state further correlated with the concept of a centralized language, a centralized grammar, as well as a centralized script. According to Anderson (1991: 44), by the seventeenth century, the development of print-as-commodity, book publishing, and print-languages promoted and facilitated national linguistic standardization trends. Print-languages imposed and created unification on mainly three levels:

- a) *by creating a common readership unified and aware of each other through a particular print-language (below Latin and above the spoken vernacular)*
- b) *by giving a more permanent, standardized structure to a particular language variety*
- c) *by promoting the official power of such languages - fixed through print and used by powerful monarchs and their courts - on a political and cultural level (Anderson<sup>156</sup> 1991: 44, 45).*

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<sup>156</sup> As Anderson (1991: 44, 45) explains, firstly, unified fields of exchange and communication below Latin and above the spoken vernaculars were generated, secondly, print capitalism gave languages a new fixity, and thirdly, print capitalism created languages-of-power of a kind different from the older administrative vernaculars.

Languages that lacked political support (whether they were print-languages or not) were reduced to the status of ‘sub-standard’ languages. With the development of *monoglot mass reading publics*, the concept of the ‘mutual incomprehensibility’ of languages/language varieties also gained a political and cultural significance, that it had not had before (Szporluk 1988: 86).

By the end of the eighteenth century in France, the *revolutionary* Parisian ruling elite successfully turned the Parisian dialect into the French national language, and made its use obligatory in all public sectors (Görlach 1997: 3). Despite its ideals of liberty, equality and brotherhood, French citizens were not at liberty to officially speak or be educated in any language other than the nationally sanctioned Parisian *dialect*. All variations except the Parisian were excluded from recognition. Over half the population of France was forced to learn this (to them) unknown language (Calvet 1978: 139). In the Europe of the French Revolution, a homogenous language came to be considered a manifestation of the nation, and when, for example, France wanted to be a nation, all members of that nation had to be forced to speak one language, the same language: French, the language of the Parisian revolutionaries.

Though the French Revolution inspired many European countries to include all social classes in their developing primary education policies, such progressive ideas towards class were not accompanied by more language tolerance. In Western Europe monolingual theories for national education programs became increasingly dominant. In 1870, in England and in Scotland, for example, general English-medium education was made compulsory for all. The subordination of all regional languages or variations under the official English variety<sup>157</sup> also became a matter of course. Even before this, both in Ireland and Scotland, being *educated* meant being English-speaking, even if the English actually taught was influenced by ‘independent’ regional standards (Görlach 1997: 9).

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<sup>157</sup> The official English variety consisted of RP: Received Pronunciation, public school English or ‘Queen’s’ English.

From the nineteenth century onwards, ideals of a centralized state, a centralized language, and a centralized education system began to be linked to a homogenous national identity and the promotion of nationalism on all levels of European society and culture. In the modern history of Europe (Görlach 1997: 2), these concepts gained increasingly higher and more *destructive importance*. Language and education policies, based on centralized monolingual models of one language for national, institutional and even cultural purposes, were extended to the colonies. Countries wishing to call themselves *nations*, had to choose one language as a medium of instruction, for official purposes, as a literary medium, etc. The continuation of such ideals and policies of uniformization in the Americas, Africa, Asia, the Pacific, etc. either led to their complete Europeanization, or to massive interventions in their political, social, economic and cultural systems. According to Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas (1989), developed out of the destructiveness of nationalist and centralist ideologies in Europe, the colonial ideology served to justify the genocides and linguicides of millions of peoples.

The imperial spread of the English language received a boost from the consequences of the American Revolution of 1776. As Görlach (1997: 1) formulated it *a new centre of anglophones proud of their independent standards* was born. In spite of their diversity, by the beginning of the nineteenth century, the self-perception of (powerful) Americans had become dominantly Anglo-centric. In 1789, for example, the American English lexicographer, Noah Webster (1789: 20), defined American people as *children of Great Britain*. Besides completely excluding indigenous Americans, he also ignored the existence of enslaved, forced or bonded labour 'immigrants' from other countries of Europe, from Africa, Asia or the Pacific.

Up to today, the powerful communities of the USA - in reality a conglomeration of linguistically and culturally diverse immigrant communities from all over the world - see and present themselves as an

(American) English-speaking community, and allow no other language to share this prerogative<sup>158</sup>. There are, however, over 30 million inhabitants continuing to use Native American languages or other European mother tongues (Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson 1989: 26). In Britain, in 1978, 131 mother tongues other than English were recorded - many spoken by over 1000 pupils each<sup>159</sup>. They range from Asian languages such as, for example, Chinese, Bengali or Gujarati, to Middle Eastern languages, such as Turkish or Arabic, to Southern European languages<sup>160</sup>. Cities such as Leicester have recorded the use of a wide range of Eastern European languages such as Latvian, Polish, or Ukrainian, etc. (Price 1984: 11).

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<sup>158</sup> How monolingual American high school graduates are, is shown by Asher's study (1981: 53), Fear of Foreign Languages: In 1979 only 2% of high school graduates had taken more than two years of a foreign language.

<sup>159</sup> According to a census taken by the Inner London Education Authority in 1978 (Price 1984: 11).

<sup>160</sup> In relation to the existence of these languages in Europe and outside their countries of origin, a debate about their 'Britishness' or 'Europeanness' (comparable to the one in regard to the 'Indianness' or the 'Africanization' of English) is seldom initiated. More important than such a debate is the fact that they still have to find their place in British/ European education systems.

### 3 iii **Conflicting language ideologies: Early modern Europe vs. pre-colonial India**

Beginning from the sixteenth century onwards, the European invasions of the Indian subcontinent initiated processes which undermined the pluralist structures of Indian culture, economy, and society. Exploitative and segregational in nature, European colonization was incomparable to anything the people of the subcontinent had previously experienced. The striking difference about these colonial invaders compared to migrant Turkish, Persian, Mongolian or other diverse Muslim groups, is the way in which their European *motherlands*, materially and ideologically, continued to have the predominant hold on them. In contrast to other migrant groups, Europeans came with no intention of settling in India. This attitude was mirrored in every field of their encounter with Indian civilization, also on the linguistic level. The contact between Persian and Indian languages contrasted sharply to the encounter between English and Indian languages (Das 1991: 31):

*Persian, too, was a foreign language imposed upon India by an imperial power, but the Pathans and the Mughals who accepted India as their home, also accepted Indian languages as their own.*

The whole life of the Mughals - not only their official life - was centred within the land they ruled. The Mughals greatly encouraged the flourishing of an indigenous architecture, literature, music and art (Tagore 1996: 487, 488). Comparably, the British were unable or unwilling to make this material or ideological transfer on to the Indian subcontinent. While their art and culture continued to thrive back home in Europe, Indian cultural and intellectual life was disrupted and decentred.

Thapar (1975: 65) points to the existence of a similar break into Indian economic development, before and after the colonial contact. The abrupt separation between the pre-colonial and the colonial period in Indian history

resulted primarily out of the *European pattern of trade* which severely conflicted with local structures of trade and economy:

*Indian trade related not only with the local economy, but also with the broader pattern of Asian trade. This pattern began to be disrupted by the arrival of the Portuguese at the end of the fifteenth century, followed by a succession of European trading companies. These ushered in what was finally to become a period of colonialism, resulting in a radical change in the direction which Indian history was taking.*

The four centuries of European colonization, the character of the conquest, and the implementation of its structures and policies also spanned the entire social, economic, political and cultural development of the European continent. In this space of time, Europe went from trade to capitalism, from the first industrial to the second technical revolution (Jouhy 1985:182). The conquest of the diverse peoples of the continents of Africa, the Americas, Asia and the Pacific region and the imperial spread of European economic, agricultural, political, and cultural uniformity took place against this background. The obsessions or presumptions of European philosophers and philologists, developed on European soil, coloured and distorted their view of other continents, which they classified as *newly discovered*. The exploitation and ransacking of the resources of these continents formed the basis of Europe's wealth.

The encounter between these two worlds, the Eastern and the Western, has been described as *deeply injurious to both parties*, due to the ulterior motives of the Western world (Tagore<sup>161</sup> 1996: 556):

*The political and commercial adventures carried on by Western races - very often by brute force and against the interest and the wishes of the countries they have dealt with - have created a moral alienation, which is deeply injurious to both parties. The perils threatened by this unnatural relationship have long been contemptuously ignored by the West. But the blind confidence of the strong in their apparent invincibility has often led them, from their dream of security, into terrible surprises of history.*

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<sup>161</sup> Tagore was a poet-educationalist from Bengal, in 1913 he won the Nobel Prize for Literature. See also chapter 7 i.

The Indian subcontinent formed a complete contrast to Europe (Tagore 1996: 459). While India represented a world in *miniature*: vast in its area, and diverse in its people, a subcontinent with *many countries packed into one geographical receptacle*; Europe looked like the opposite. Consisting of *one country made into many*, it had wiped out its different cultures and communities. A prolific critic of colonialism, Tagore criticized Europeans for homogenizing their continent and promoting policies to shut out *aliens*, which eventually led to the extermination of indigenous populations in America and the Pacific. In contrast, Tagore felt, at least historically, the people of the Indian subcontinent had attempted to accept diversity as a fact and incorporate it into their system. There was a system in *which there was no central authority - neither religious, nor political, nor economic* (Dias 1992: 8). Even *the idea of one national language* in relation to India, presupposed that it was possible to homogenize such diversity into a central national culture and a uniform *imagined community* (Joshi 1991: 21).

#### 4 Eurocentric ideology: transmitted through religion, language and education

Seventeenth century missionary language crusades

Though the combined invasion of missionaries, traders, adventurers, and officials into India resulted in the economic, political, military, social and cultural exploitation of the subcontinent and its peoples - there were complementary differences in the approaches of these incoming groups towards the local communities, their autonomy and their cultures. The European missionaries' aim was the mental colonization - or Christianization - of Indians, and was directly related to the expansionist nature of their religious zeal. The East India Company officials', traders' and merchants' invasion concentrated on the commercial-economic exploitation of the Indian subcontinent and its peoples for the benefit of the British motherland, as well as for their own personal benefit. As Dias (1992: 6) puts it, *in the search for "Christians and Spices" (Vasco da Gama) and "Souls and Gold"*, the non-European *Other* had *only a derivative reality, dependent upon commercial greed and exploitation, and not on the grounds of a quest for knowledge of other peoples, their cultures and land management*. Das (1991: 70) also points out the complementary *utilitarian* motivations of the missionaries and the East India Company officials. While the East India Company (barely) tolerated the activities of European missionaries - as long as they were assured administrative efficiency - the missionaries relied on the political and economic progression of the Company<sup>162</sup>, in order to extend their religious and educational advances.

Published in 1915, Law's detailed historical account on the Promotion of Learning in India by Early European Settlers, described the missionaries in their first ventures to India, as bold in their educational and linguistic activities. The missionaries helped the settlers to establish religious schools

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<sup>162</sup> At times, British missionaries, particularly the Baptists, who were not supported by the East India Company (as opposed to the Anglicans), requested the protection of other European trading companies. The British Baptist missionaries set up Serampore mission in Bengal, for example, under the protection of the Danish.

in their fortresses and strongholds. As early as 1579, under Portuguese rule, an English missionary founded a Jesuit College in Goa. According to Sinha (1978: 2), this missionary was also known for having advised his countrymen at home on the availability of vastly profitable shares in India, and encouraged London merchants to embark on Indian expeditions or speculations. On the whole, missionaries ideally and practically promoted the economic and imperial conquest of the colonies. They were dependant on the protection and establishment of settlements on the East India Company. Their attempts at large-scale conversions of Indians on southern coastal India, for example, can hardly be called successful. In theory, and primarily at the beginning of their commercial conquest of India, the East India Company's 'Court of Directors' supported their religious initiatives. In 1659, they stated that it was their earnest desire to promote Christianity among the people of India by all possible means (Ram 1983: 18). Though the Christian ideology influenced the educational policies of the East India Company and the British Crown administration, in the case of India, the early official commercial power remained wary of antagonizing their Indian trading 'counterparts'.

In contrast to such actions as the sixteenth century burning of all Konkan scripts by Portuguese missionaries in Goa, British missionaries were, on the whole, forced to tread carefully on Indian ground. This may have also related to the fact that, at home in Britain, the link between the British state and the Church was not as close, for example, as between the Portuguese state and its Church. At no stage of their rule over India, did the East India Company or the British Crown fully endorse or give a free hand to their missionaries, as did the Portuguese or the Spanish colonizing powers to their missionaries.

In the Americas and in the Pacific, the combination of state conquest backed by - and backing - religious (Christian) conquest proved to be devastating: it resulted in an almost complete annihilation of the indigenous peoples, their societies, their cultures and their languages (Stannard 1992). This fate has

not yet overtaken the continents of Asia or Africa. Though in all colonies European missionaries participated in devising colonial educational policies, it turned out to be less the promotion of their religion, than the promotion of their language that was to have a lasting effect on colonized societies<sup>163</sup>.

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<sup>163</sup> Particularly in regard to the contemporary categorization of African societies, Mazrui (1995: 161, 162) points out that it has become normal to classify African countries according to whether they are anglophone, francophone or lusophone, but never as being part of Protestant or Catholic Africa.

#### 4 i One universal language of origin

Europe's Search for the 'Ursprache' and the battle against 'Babel'

The thinking of sixteenth century European philosophers was dominated by Christian ideology and Christian parables<sup>164</sup>. Their search for the 'original' language of humankind was a major obsession, as well as the monogenetic belief that all languages came from one source language. This 'original' language was assumed to have been some 'sacred' or 'aristocratic' language such as Latin, Greek, German<sup>165</sup> or Hebrew for Europe. In La Guerre des Langues et les Politiques Linguistique, Calvet (1987: 42) summarizes the influence of the myth of the 'Tower of Babel'<sup>166</sup> on nationalist (and linguistic) conflicts:

*C'est au nom d'une certaine lecture de la Bible que l'on va, au XVIIe siècle, subordonner la réflexion sur les langues aux conflits nationalistes, en tentant de montrer que sa langue est la plus proche de la langue prebabelique...*

In 1756, a Prussian statistician-clergyman, J. P. Suessmilch, in a paper delivered before the Prussian Academy – quite ahead of his time - argued that all languages were perfect, therefore of divine origin. He proposed that the great and abstract ideas of Christianity could even be discussed in the languages of 'primitive' peoples (Fromkin & Rodman 1974: 20, 26)<sup>167</sup>. The empiricist, Rousseau, however, contradicted such theories. He suggested that the 'cries of nature' and gestures formed the basis of language development, and that the first languages used by humans were crude and primitive languages *approximately like those which the various savage nations still have today*<sup>168</sup>. The Romantic philosopher Herder in his Essay on the Origin

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<sup>164</sup> See discussion in preceding chapter on the view of Latin as a sacred language, etc.

<sup>165</sup> A German scholar of the sixteenth century, J. G. Becanus (1518-1572) argued that German must have been the primeval language, the language given by God to Adam and then the Germans, therefore the most perfect language. He also argued that the Germans (early 'Cimbrians') did not participate in the building of the Tower of Babel (Fromkin & Rodman 1974: 22).

<sup>166</sup> The 'Tower of Babel' parable is from Genesis, in the Bible.

<sup>167</sup> See also the Schlegel's theories on the divine origin of languages, discussed by Römer (1985: 106).

<sup>168</sup> Essay on the Origin of Languages, published posthumously in 1822.

of Language (1769) again argued in favour of the universal properties of all languages, but also in favour of the monogenetic (family tree) theory of the origin of all languages (and all races, the purest of which he considered to be the Aryan race, originating in the Himalayas<sup>169</sup>). He also coined the concept of an ‘Ursprache’, with each language having an *ultimate nature in-built in its beginnings ... not fundamentally affected by later contacts* (Bernal 1987: 227). Preoccupied with language, Herder denied the precedence of thought and reason over words, and claimed that the chief purpose of language was the expression of feeling (Bernal 1987: 226).

Theories relating European languages to South Asian languages were known from the sixteenth century onwards. Fame was finally accorded to Jones, however, as well as to other eighteenth and nineteenth century European historical philologists’ (and Indologists) who believed in the direct relation between Sanskrit, Latin and Greek (Römer 1985: 49)<sup>170</sup>. William Jones, founder of the ‘Asiatick Society’ in Bengal, argued in a lecture in 1786, that Sanskrit, with its *wonderful structure*, together with Latin and Greek, was at the root of the Indo-European language family (Römer 1985: 49)<sup>171</sup>. Bernal (1987: 29) points out that this *passion ... for ancient India* of historical linguists, at the turn of the eighteenth century, was also constructed on the level of race and civilization. European Indologists, such as the scholar Max Mueller<sup>172</sup>, for example, envisioned a vast Aryan race speaking inter-related Indo-European languages, and being the originator both of Indian and European ‘high’ culture (Thapar 1975: 10).

From early on, such streams of idealizations of the Indian past, later to develop into the ‘Orientalist’<sup>173</sup> construction of India, were countered by a

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<sup>169</sup> See Bernal (1987: 220).

<sup>170</sup> In her book *Sprachwissenschaft und Rassenideologie in Deutschland*, Römer devotes a whole informative chapter to the topic of ‘Die Wissenschaft von den indogermanischen Sprachen’.

<sup>171</sup> See Bernal (1987: 227), also for references to this ‘newly discovered’ language family under the name of ‘Indogermanisch’. Also Das (1991: 25).

<sup>172</sup> The German Indologist, Müller, never visited India (Thapar 1975: 9).

<sup>173</sup> According to Said (1989: 100) “Orientalism” is not the sum of the works of Western specialists and scholars who have studied non-European societies ... This term refers to the ideological construction of a mythical “Orient”, whose characteristics are treated as

negative assessment of the Indian past. According to Bearce (1961: 80), initially, *the missionary conception of the land, people, and culture of India was decidedly unfavourable*:

*This conception of India was derived both from the observation of conditions in India and strong presuppositions in the Christian faith.*

Similar negative views also came from particular East India Company administrators, such as James Mill, for example. In the nineteenth century, with Macaulay, such attitudes seemed to comprise the Anglicist view of India. According to Calvet, (1978: 42), numerous European missionaries and philologists were dismissive in regard to their ‘encounter’ with the people and the languages of the colonized countries (Calvet 1978: 42). In relation to India, the ‘backwardness’ of its culture was blamed on the existence of ‘fatal flaws. India was classified as representing a *stagnant, irrationalist society*, as lacking *a legal system*, and as having cultivated *despotism* (Thapar 1975: 11).

The ‘Orientalists’ *discovery* of a *unique, ancient* language, as well as a classical Hindu *Golden Age* for India, had to be countered by (negative) missionaries and historians. The ‘disarray’ Indian civilization had somehow fallen into, had to be conjured up<sup>174</sup>. As European (language) philosophers saw it, the *evil* that had befallen a ‘flawed’ culture and civilization, such as India’s, where classical languages had ‘degenerated’ into ‘dialects’ and ‘vernaculars’, could be explained in biblical terms. The ‘evil’ had begun with the *language chaos in Babel* when this *paradise on earth collapsed into the hellish babble in different tongues*<sup>175</sup>. As Römer (1985: 103) characterized philologists’ views on linguistic diversity:

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immutable traits defined in simple opposition to the characteristics of the “Occidental” world.

<sup>174</sup> For further discussion on the ‘fatal flaw’ in modern Indian civilization, see chapter 3 i, on Two Options for India’s future - Orientalization and Anglicization.

<sup>175</sup> Reference to biblical Tower of Babel myth (Genesis), see Calvet (1987: 33), for further discussion.

*Die Sprachen der Menschheit bieten sich in unerhörter Vielfalt dar. In dieser Vielfalt Ordnung zu bringen, war stets der Wunsch von Sprachwissenschaftlern und auch von den spekulativen Köpfen, was mitunter in eins zusammenfiel.*

Calvet (1987: 35) also shows how under the influence of this ‘Tower of Babel’ myth everything to do with pluralism came to be considered as ‘a punishment’ and ‘a curse’:

*Le plurilisme est vécu, en référence au mythe de Babel, comme une punition, voire même comme une malédiction.*

Even today, the French term ‘babélisation’ describes such a negative view of diversity. According to this ideology, an excessive multiplication and diversification of languages in a given territory can only lead to an excessive multiplication of conflict. The consequent diversification of a larger territory into smaller nation-states, is negatively referred to as ‘balkanisation’. The existence, development or promotion of ‘too many’ different ethnic groups or ‘too many’ different linguistic groups, is seen as causing the fragmentation into (smaller) of nation-states. Mutual incomprehensibility on the linguistic level is consequently related to mutual incomprehensibility on political, cultural, and social levels. The history of the Indian subcontinent, however, has proved the opposite: cultural and linguistic pluralism lead to interaction resulting in the sharing of traits across cultural and linguistic boundaries, but not in the disappearance of diversity.

In the (mythical Christian) line of thinking, ‘national’ homogenization, or ideals of ‘unity in uniformity’ or ‘one nation, one ethnicity, one culture and one language’ are conceived as goals towards which it is worth striving. The condition to be revived would be the ‘paradisical’ non-chaotic pre-‘Tower-of-Babel’ state, in which all people spoke only one language. The myth of the existence of a historically (unified) condition of linguistic and cultural uniformity preceding (a branching out of this homogeneity into) pluralism cannot, however, be scientifically verified - at least not in relation to the Indian subcontinent. As anthropologists such as Emeneau (1964) and Singh and Manoharan (1997: 17) have stressed, despite their linguistic affiliations,

*all languages currently spoken in India are not direct descendants of a common proto-language, but have as often as not evolved out of convergences between two or more adjoining (also linguistically and historically unrelated) local languages. In linguistic surveys of India, particular languages have been classified as belonging within the same group in a particular linguistic region on the basis of extensive structural affinities, despite the fact that (historically) their source languages of origin belong to completely different language families (Singh and Manoharan 1997: 17).*

According to the Orientalist scholar and East India Company administrator, H. H. Wilson<sup>176</sup>, references can be found relating to early missionaries mistaken search – on their arrival on the Indian subcontinent - for *the one pan-Indian language* that would enable them to spread the Gospel to all. During the sixteenth or early seventeenth centuries, the missionaries coming to India from any European country, kept largely within the boundaries of Portuguese (or other European) strongholds. They first learnt the coastal European lingua franca based on Portuguese (used among the Dutch, French and English trading company employees) for catechizing the Europeans or spreading the Gospel to any Indians who had contact with or worked for Europeans (Yule & Burnell 1985: xviii)<sup>177</sup>. Their early attempts to bring about mass conversions in or outside the forts were not very successful. As a preaching medium, they began to substitute Portuguese with Arabic, then turning to a language referred to as *Malay*<sup>178</sup>. According to Yule & Burnell's (1886: xviii) impressions of early missionaries in India, it was only the exceptional missionary who attempted to learn the local language:

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<sup>176</sup> In 1855, Wilson compiled A Glossary of judicial and revenue terms and useful words occurring in the official documents relating to the administration of the Government of British India.

<sup>177</sup> Hobson-Jobson, A Glossary of Colloquial Anglo-Indian Words and Phrases was first published in 1886.

<sup>178</sup> Though Malay as a trade language is associated with the region of Malaysia or Indonesia, there is also a reference by Yule & Burnell (1886: 545, 546), that such a language (Malaya / Mayalan tongue) or region (Malabar) also existed in India. Missionaries in the southern region of India may have been using the Malayalam language, according to Yule & Burnell (1886: xviii, xxiii) particular missionaries, at the very beginning of the sixteenth century showed some acquaintance with Malayalam, the Lingua de Calicut. See also Kopf (1969: 51, 52) for a reference to the missionary who referred to Tamil as the Malabaree language.

*We find instances of missionaries and others at an early date who had acquired a knowledge of Indian languages, but these were exceptional.*

By the seventeenth century, however, missionaries' negative attitudes about Indian society, as well as their misdirected attempts at using any single language for general proselytization, had changed to a vigorous endeavour to translate the Bible into any of the diverse languages of the communities they encountered<sup>179</sup>. According to Kopf (1969: 71):

*In 1800, only the Serampore Missionaries seemed organized for studying the popular culture or languages.*

For the British missionaries the only hope for the 'salvation' of the subcontinent arose out of the Indian peoples' 'chance' to be converted to Christianity. For East India Company administrators, such as Mill, British administration and legislation over India offered the 'only' hope for an eradication of the 'evils' inherent in Indian society.

Throughout their rule over India, particularly the Orientalist faction among the colonizers<sup>180</sup>, complained about the East India Company officials' and British administrators' general disinterest or incompetence in local languages (Sinha 1964: 13). The East India Company administrator, Wilson (1855: XIX), for example, argued that British civil servants in India tended to be linguistically incompetent: their *whole linguistic stock* consisted of *a little Hindustani* and *less Persian*. This went hand in hand with their ignorance of the *polyglot nature of the current speech of India*. Similar to some of the initial attitudes of ignorance of the missionaries, many British officials also failed to realize, for example, that particular court languages, or trade languages used in the north, were not necessarily known to or used by people in the south. Wilson (1855: xix) argued in favour of linguistic training to be given to those wishing to work for the Company administration:

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<sup>179</sup> See Serampore Mission in Bengal, chapter 2 ii.

<sup>180</sup> See, for example, the attitudes of the Governor General of Bengal, Wellesley, or the scholar and Company administrator, Wilson (1855: XXI) from the Orientalist faction.

*A real knowledge of the speech of another 30 millions of people should not be an object of indifference to their rulers; nor should the materials for its acquirement be suffered to remain imperfect (but be) required as a condition of public employment from the junior civilian.*

While missionary involvement in local cultures, languages and religions was already quite strong, the initiative of administrators and officials forcibly grew with the increase in economic and political power of their trading company. For a while, British official (particularly financial) lethargy in promoting educational directives remained (Sinha 1964: xi), as well as an aversion to India's multilingual scenario, in as far as it was seen to hamper their purposes of trade and exploitation.

#### 4 ii Pragmatic missionary attitudes towards languages and education

According to Panikkar (1953: 385) the aggression of the early European Christian missionaries (Portuguese, Jesuit) during Moghul times (in regions such as Goa), proved to be *disastrous for the future of missionary activities in India* in general:

*The ruthless destruction of Hindu temples and religious institutions, the proscriptions of non-Christians from participation in the Government and the general intolerance of the (Portuguese) authorities were well known all over India, and revolted the conscience of both Hindus and Muslims alike.*

The European powers coming to India after the Portuguese were primarily interested in trade, and being organized as commercial corporations, they gave little backing to any individual or concerted efforts at Christian conversions of the Indian population (Panikkar 1953: 385, 386). Particularly the British East India Company worried that missionary *interference with the social habits, religious beliefs and practices* of Indian people would work against their own economic interests. The early period of English trade with India is largely marked – at least - by overt policies prohibiting evangelization in territories under their control (Panikkar 1953: 418, 419). The missionaries were largely limited to instructing officials or ‘servants’ of the Company and their families. The Charter Act of 1698 (Law 1915: 25, 65), which established the need for an appropriate ‘vernacular medium’ education, still concerned itself primarily with the largely European communities associated with the Company. The ‘Act’ obliged chaplains to offer English-medium education for English children, Portuguese-medium education for the Portuguese community, and local language-medium education for the ‘natives’ (working for the Company).

Whatever their views on India, European missionaries showed an interest in (spoken, written, regional, mother tongue) Indian languages, with the help of which they aimed to achieve the (Christian) religious conversion of the Indian people. By the end of the sixteenth century, for example, Christian

prose writings from Portuguese or other European languages were already being translated into Tamil, Telegu, Malayalam or Bengali.

British missionary organizations in India flourished at the end of the eighteenth century, when missionary zeal in England had also gathered force. After 1813, when the East India Company lost their (trade) monopoly over India, they were pressurized to allow for the official launching of a new phase of (colonial) missionary activity (Bearce 1961: 78, 79). On the whole, missionary educational and linguistic endeavours were prepared to *compromise* with all other forces *important in the formation of British policy* (Bearce 1961: 82). Their enthusiasm for the religious and educational colonization of Indians<sup>181</sup> aimed at bringing about their *moral and spiritual improvements*, as well as the subcontinent's *political, legal, and social* 'development' (Bearce 1961: 82).

Despite – or on the basis of - their negative attitudes towards Indian religions and society, in their efforts at promoting the Bible for the 'advancement' of the Indian people, British missionaries took a pragmatic, practical attitude towards the educational use of Indian languages, as well as English<sup>182</sup>. Education for the 'improvement' of India, was one of their most important aims, as they translated the Bible into numerous Indian languages, and attempted to organize diverse 'primary' schools for small numbers of pupils (Bearce 1961: 94). They used whatever language served them best in attracting potential converts among the Indian people<sup>183</sup>. Whether through Indian languages or through English, what the missionaries aimed at was Christianizing - as opposed to Orientalizing or Anglicizing - Indian

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<sup>181</sup> According to Bearce (1961: 94): The missionaries were very nearly the first group to expound their educational aims and to organize schools in India.

<sup>182</sup> In the nineteenth century, British missionaries, such as Reginald Heber<sup>182</sup> stressed the role of education (along with the spread of Christianity and Westernization) in transforming Indian society.

<sup>183</sup> Bearce (1961: 85, 84) also gives the example of the missionary William Carey, who in his enormous effort to spread the Christian faith among Indians (of any social standing) learnt about thirty or forty Indian languages.

education, in order – as they put it - to secure the future of the British Empire<sup>184</sup>.

Unlike the Oriental scholars of the East India Company who favoured mainly ‘classical’ Indian languages (i.e. Sanskrit, Arabic and Persian) for the ‘traditional’ centres of learning they promoted, missionaries succeeded in learning and translating a number of Indian mother tongue languages (Kopf 1969: 71). According to Bearce (1961: 94):

*... the missionaries by-passed India's oriental literature and learning, tried to promote the vernacular languages of India, to translate Western literature and religious works into those vernacular tongues, and to encourage the study of the English language.*

They also encouraged and taught British officials to learn (regional) Indian languages<sup>185</sup>. They argued that this would help them *extend the domain of British civilization* and *diffuse the spirit of Christian principles throughout the nations of Asia* (Bearce 1961: 84).

The missionaries’ choice of educational medium, or any change in their choice, also related to official East India Company (later British Crown) administrative (educational) policy. In his critique of British education in India, Mahmood (1895), referred to the hypocritical attitudes of numerous British statesmen, administrators or officials, who, while they overtly upheld *the principle of religious neutrality in government education institutions on the grounds of good policy*, covertly hoped *that the natural effect of the advance of the English language, literature, and science would be the propagation of Christianity among the natives of India*. The institutionalization and dissemination of English in Indian education (after 1835), proved to have a more powerful effect on the ‘colonized mind’,

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<sup>184</sup> In 1852, for example, the British missionary, Rev. Duff, in India (see Mahmood 1895: 74) voiced his opinion that the Christian faith was the only means of consolidating and perpetuating the British empire in India for years, or even ages to come. See also Ahmed (1965: 151).

<sup>185</sup> Set up at the beginning of the nineteenth century, to train newly arriving British officials, Fort William could not function adequately without the help of the missionaries from the Serampore Mission (Kopf 1969: 71).

however, than Christianity. One of the first most active group of missionaries<sup>186</sup>, who set up the Serampore Press in Bengal, realized the ‘commercial’ popularity of English very early on (Sinha 1964: 10):

*Commerce has raised new thoughts and awakened new energies, so that hundreds, if we could skilfully teach them gratis, would crowd to learn the English language. We hope this may be in our power some time and may be a happy means of diffusing the gospel.*

By the beginning of the nineteenth century, exactly in 1800, the Serampore Mission (in Srirampur) in Bengal<sup>187</sup> was established - comprising a paper factory, a printing press, two boarding schools and a girls’ ‘vernacular’ school. Besides offering some form of (religious) ‘education’ to European, Eurasian, as well as to some (Anglo-)Indian children, the Mission also took pride in their ability to steadily increase and disseminate the publication of their prose works, their translations of the Bible, their Christian tracts, their dictionaries and grammars in local Indian languages. One of their lasting contributions within the translation business, was the churning out of vast amounts of pedagogical material in some Indian languages (Bearce 1961: 95).

The missionaries Indian language textbooks for children, used prolifically, after 1854, when the British Crown initiated the take-over of primary and secondary schools in different rural areas. Besides their long-term effect on the secular quality of widespread traditional Indian village education (‘pathsalas’<sup>188</sup>), the production of these rudimentary translations of religious and pedagogical material, greatly influenced the modern development of Indian languages. In spite of the missionaries’ disregard for the mother tongue norms of the Indian target languages, as well as their ignorance of the many language varieties in existence (Bhokta 1998: 208), these ‘pedagogical’ materials served as models both for European and local

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<sup>186</sup> They wrote a report to their Baptist Mission Society in England.

<sup>187</sup> The missionaries, W. Carey, J. Marshman, and W. Ward, members of the Baptist Mission Society in England, received no financial help from the company, but charging small fees to those wanting to attend, made some profit of their undertakings (Sinha 1964: 9, 10).

<sup>188</sup> See Shahidullah on ‘pathsalas’, the widespread traditional secular mother tongue educational institutions in Bengal, for example (1996: 119-134).

grammarians and lexicographers (Das 1991: 71). They generated and spread *quaint* and *stilted* variations of Indian languages, generally referred to as *missionary prose* style. Such ‘pedagogical’ or socio-religious materials were produced in all Indian languages. According to Das (1991: 46), these materials had a lasting effect on the spread and dissemination processes of Indian (written and oral) literatures, on the educational, linguistic and religious traditions of the subcontinent, and on the Indian psyche as a whole:

*The factors that brought disruption within the literary map of India are the intervention of the missionary activity making the Indians either defensive or critical of their religious traditions; the spread of English education, causing a split in literary taste and canons; the gradual disappearance of patronage and the earlier scribal-performer-audience relationship.*

## 5 From trade to politics

The emergence of imperial British language and education policy

After the East India Company's successful war<sup>189</sup>, in 1757, against Siraj-ud-Daula, the last nawab of Bengal Province (present-day states of Bengal, Bihar, Orissa), the company took over large parts of the region's indigenous administration. They increasingly began to require the services of such middlemen as interpreters, linguists (multilinguals), confidential agents and *India specialists* - whose main expertise consisted in knowing the local languages (Cohn 1985: 277). As long as possible, however, the administrative officials of the East India Company remained distanced from local legal or educational affairs – fearing the endangerment of their economic exploitation of the subcontinent. Initially, for the highly-placed British administrative officials there had been little need to learn Indian languages, for purposes of trade it was easier to employ interpreters to communicate to local powers. Though in regard to trade, they monopolized and controlled large parts of the subcontinent, in legal procedures, for example, the British courts initially maintained the Mughal system of keeping judicial and revenue records in Persian (Wilson 1855: XIX). In matters of diplomacy and *high society* both Persian and Urdu were temporarily retained (Nihalani et al 1979: VI).

Having extended and secured the realm of their rule regionally and politically, East India Company administrators lagged behind somewhat in terms of the formulation of a specifically British educational policy for the parts of the Indian subcontinent they governed (Ahmed 1965: 151). Having come to India for trading purposes, they had had no desire to establish a territorial empire, but soon realized that their trading interests could only be safeguarded by military power (Sinha 1964: x, xi). By the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Company had militarily and politically consolidated its powers over the Province of Oudh in the North, over Tipu Sultan of

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<sup>189</sup> The British referred to this event as the 'Battle of Plassey'.

Mysore in the South, and over the Marathas in the West. The Company had come to realize the usefulness of (their administrators) knowing Indian languages, as well as the consequent necessity of having corresponding textbooks to teach them. The establishment of the College of Fort William in Calcutta in 1800, by Lord Wellesley, though having been referred to as *a landmark in the history of Indian education* (Ahmed 1965: 151):

*... was designed with the sole purpose of training young civil servants of the Company in the laws and languages of India ...*

Fort William was staffed with 110 Indian scholars, whose duties consisted in teaching, translating as well as composing their own works in ‘Oriental languages’. In co-operation with the missionaries from the Serampore Mission in Bengal, East India Company officials and local Indian scholars were jointly required to produce Bengali, Hindi, Urdu and Marathi textbooks for British civilians. These textbooks were often twice-translated, from Sanskrit or Persian into English, then again into Bengali or Hindi, or vice versa (Das 1991: 46). By the early part of the nineteenth century, such joint ventures (comprised of missionaries, Company officials and Indian scholars) were able to offer pedagogical materials in Indian languages to distributing agencies all over the country. A small amount of textbooks also catered to the demand for translations from one Indian language into another.

After the East India Company’s trade monopoly was partially withdrawn by the British government in 1813, they were finally pressurized by public British (missionary) and Indian opinion into financing or subsidizing some kind of minimal educational system. They promised to do this out of a surplus of the taxes they collected, with the extractions of which they had impoverished the people of the subcontinent. The Charter Act of 1813 included an ecclesiastical and educational clause. While both the clauses provided for financial support out of the Indian revenue to relevant institutions to be set up in Bengal, Madras and Bombay, the educational clause specified *the revival and improvement of literature, the*

*encouragement of the learned natives of India, and of a knowledge of the sciences among the Company's Indian subjects* (Ahmed 1965: 153, 154).

Even after this educational Act, however, the East India Company was slow to implement their educational policy<sup>190</sup>. For some time, their educational policy continued to consist primarily of a half-hearted support of whatever (primarily 'Oriental') institutions already existed. When it was finally launched, the British Crown's system of education primarily offered higher education for certain more affluent sections of Indian society. In contrast, the missionaries tended to offer education from lower, primary or secondary levels, to whatever sections of Indian society seemed to promise some hope of conversion (Ramanna 1989: 210).

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<sup>190</sup> The British argued that there was no surplus out of the Indian Revenue and only began implementing their policy after 1823 (Ahmed 1965: 154).

## 5 i Two options for India's future - Orientalization and Anglicization

The opposition of classical languages to a 'universal' foreign language

By the beginning of the nineteenth century, British administrators and officials<sup>191</sup> realized that the East India Company had become a territorial power. The need for trained administrators to run and finance an expanding administrative system had become an unavoidable necessity (Sinha 1964: 13). The Orientalist pressure group among the officials of the Company, to which Wilson<sup>192</sup>, for example, belonged, asserted the importance of the systematic appropriation of Indian languages for the purpose of strengthening British rule over India (Cohn 1985: 282, 284).

The 'discovery' of classical Sanskrit by European philologists, at the end of the eighteenth century, began to have its impact on British language policy in India. In 1786, Jones had proclaimed Sanskrit, Latin and Greek to have originated from a common 'mother' language source, belonging to a particular, identifiable common 'race'<sup>193</sup>. 'Language' as such, was not of central concern for Jones, it was primarily *one method of making a comparative study of the human race* (Mukherjee 1968: 98):

*Thus the famous philologist's passage was an integral part of Jones's master plan to write a history of mankind.*

The categorization of Sanskrit as a 'high' language, and the view of its users as a 'classical', 'civilized' community, initially boosted the power of the

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<sup>191</sup> See, also, the views of Wellesley in Bengal, the Governor General of the East India Company (Sinha 1964: 13).

<sup>192</sup> In 1855, H. H. Wilson, published A Glossary of judicial and revenue terms and useful words occurring in official documents relating to the administration of the Government of British India.

<sup>193</sup> This common language family later came to be known as the Indo-European languages, supposed to be spoken by some kind of Indo-European race. Bernal (1989: 2, 229) discusses this theory under the name of 'the Aryan model', which formed the basis of all theories relating to 'Western civilization'. It replaced the 'Ancient model' of history, which considered ancient Greece a result of African and Semite 'colonization', an intolerable idea to 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century Romantics and racists. For further discussion, see also Mukherjee, chapter 5 (1968: 73-90).

Orientalist pressure group among the East India Company's Board of Directors and British administrators. The 'Orientalist' group was opposed by other leading British East India Company officials and historians, such as, for example, James Mill, whose construction of Indian history completely opposed such 'Romanticist' ideas about India (Mukherjee 1968: 111). Up to 1835, the Orientalist faction of the Company continued to favour the promotion of 'classical' Indian languages, by which they meant Sanskrit, Arabic and Persian. Early British administrators, such as Warren Hastings, for example, emphasized the cultural value of Sanskrit, and encouraged young British civilians to study it.

Up to the present day, this nineteenth century European 'discovery' of the Sanskrit language as the medium for the *essential* and *most superior* Hindu literature and culture of the Indian subcontinent remains the greatest misinterpretation of Indian pluralist history. Thanks to this Orientalist and (later on) Indophile myth, a Hindu India, conjured up from the past, was projected as the subcontinent's finest achievement (Das 1991: 25, 131). Up to today, this projection has led to the fundamentalist misconceptions on which contemporary chauvinist Hindu cultural pride and superiority continue to be based. In addition, according to Joshi (1991: 15), it has trapped the intelligentsia into producing a nationalist ideology equally based on communalist theories and practices, that threaten to break up the pluralist nature of the Indian subcontinent:

*The Orientalist field ... produced a body of knowledge about India, initially collaboratively with Brahmin pandits, which was partially appropriated by the upper caste and class Hindus. It was finally to lead to a hegemonic agenda as a field of parallel cultural authority for the nationalist intelligentsia. The Orientalist construction of the Golden Age of ancient Indian civilization that fed the notion of the 'renaissance' - which also presupposed the Muslim interregnum as a dark age and responsible for the contemporary degenerate state - influenced social and political thought, literature and a dominant historiographical model throughout the nineteenth century. It continues to inform popular consciousness and the most dangerous manifestations, in our times, of the communalist and reactionary nationalist ideologies.*

And as Tagore (1996: 483) satirically put it: as long as the British education system had no room for the teaching of Indian culture, educated Indians agreeably believed that they had none. When, after all, they heard from foreign ‘pundits’ about the *discovery* of their Indian (Hindu) culture, they became over-enthusiastic about themselves, and hailed it as *divine*! According to the subaltern critic, P. Chatterjee (1995: 73, 75), however, *the classicization of tradition* also comprised a certain *passive revolution* on the part of the growing nationalist (Bengali) middle class:

*If nineteenth century Englishmen could claim, with scant regard for the particularities of geography or anthropology, a cultural ancestry in classical Greece, there was no reason why nineteenth century Bengalis could not claim one in the Vedic age. All that was necessary was a classicization of tradition. Orientalist scholarship had already done the groundwork for this. A classicization of modern Bengali high culture - its language, literature, aesthetics, religion, philosophy - preceded the birth of political nationalism and worked alongside it well into the present century.*

The Sanskrit language and its literature, known to only a handful of upper caste priests, began to be placed high above Indian *living* (spoken and written) languages and literatures, used by and known to the vast majority of the people<sup>194</sup>. However ancient, whatever their literary traditions, whatever their relationship to the highly-placed - ritual, religious and written language, Sanskrit - Indian languages could only be included in its superior category, if they proved a close ‘classical’ linkage. Those languages that could not, and in addition had primarily oral traditions, derivatively came to be labelled regionally limited and primitive ‘dialects’ or ‘vernaculars’. In describing the British *difficulties* in developing an administrative and educational policy in Bengal, Sinha (1964: xii) points out two factors that were regarded as being ‘problematic’, at the time. Both Indian multilingualism and the ‘negative state’ of Indian (mother tongue) languages were ‘accused’ of being ‘the problem’:

*There were different languages in different parts of India, and consequently there was no one language which could be used for the whole country. Besides, they were in a crude state and so could not be used for the whole country.*

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<sup>194</sup> See particularly Macaulay and Anglicist policies discussed in chapter 3 i, further down.

The colonial situation was comparable to the nationalist European context, where all *dialects* - except the one belonging to the ruling elite - were simply considered relics of past history (see Calvet 1978: 43, 48).

Though Sanskrit had been classified as a ‘superior’ language, it was considered to be a relic of past Indian glory, without any links to the present cultures or languages of the subcontinent. Besides ignoring Sanskrit’s long literary history rooted in the literary history of all Indian languages, this line of argumentation left the entire Indian subcontinent without any languages really worthwhile promoting. The classical language was dead and the living languages were only ‘dialects’ and ‘vernaculars’. This linguistic scenario of India created by Western scholars, conjured up such a gap in pan-Indian communication, that it was easy, in the course of time, after the rejection of the ‘classical Oriental’ model, to supply a ‘modern’ European language as the ‘logical’ solution for the Indian problem. The rulers of the Indian subcontinent being the British colonizers, it came to be considered ‘natural’ that the language they spoke should rule - the same was true for most of the European colonies (Calvet 1978: 32).

By the beginning of the nineteenth century, the East India Company’s Charter Acts, such as the one from 1813, officially recognized *the encouragement of learned natives of India*. By this the British primarily addressed the issue of the educational promotion of an indigenous elite, which had come to be regarded as a responsibility of the state (Trevelyan 1938: 2). The Crown’s actual linguistic or educational practice mainly consisted of perpetuating existing policies, or supervising missionary ventures (Kanungo 1962:16). The nationalist sentiments of this ‘indigenous elite’ may well have caused an element of anxiety, that they would not cooperate in helping to rule the vast unknown (rest of the) population. In the early 1820s, with the help of the Orientalists, the East India Company set up the ‘General Committee of Public Instruction’ (in charge of educational policy) in the early 1820s, which concerned itself with reorganizing or

establishing Sanskrit and Arabic *Oriental* colleges at Agra, Delhi, Calcutta and Benares. This Committee was also in charge of organizing the translation of English books into Indian classical languages. During the first half of their rule over India, the colonizers considered it safest to present European ideology to Indians through their own classical languages (Persian, Sanskrit).

In addition, at these *Oriental* institutions, it was deemed necessary to teach Indians their own classical languages *properly* - Sanskrit for Hindu Brahmins, and Persian and Arabic for educated Muslims - (Shukla 1969: 12). The (British) Orientalists that patronized these local Indian institutions allowed only those indigenous religious and literary specialists, who maintained and transmitted what Europeans defined as *Oriental traditions* or *Oriental wisdoms*, to participate (Cohn 1985: 316). The aim of the Orientalists was clearly to construct their own historical version of the relationship between India and the West: to classify, order and locate the Western and the Oriental civilizations on an *evaluative scale of (Western) progress and (Oriental) decay* (Cohn 1985: 316). In other words, European or British scholars and administrators decided what Indian civilization was, what was modern or out of date, what was worth being kept or abandoned. For that, the accumulation of knowledge about India was necessary. As the Orientalist and first Governor General of Bengal, Warren Hastings, realized, the accumulation of knowledge about India made the subjugation of vast indigenous populations by a handful of foreigners easier to manage (Cohn 1985: 315):

*Every accumulation of knowledge and especially such as is obtained by social communication with people over whom we exercise dominion founded on the right of conquest, is useful to the state.*

Hastings patronized Sanskrit and Persian, because, on the one hand, they facilitated the governance of the Indian people, while, on the other hand, their use kept up the pretence of adhering to a policy of non-interference. Apparently, he also wished to reassert his autonomy from the mainland

British parliament, by promoting these two Indian classical languages. In addition, by introducing separate civil laws for Hindus and Muslims, which enabled him to legislatively establish a different treatment for each community, Hastings also distanced himself from British laws.

The other language pressure group that became established at the beginning of the nineteenth century, was the Anglicist group, to which Governor General Bentinck, as well as Thomas B. Macaulay, member of the Governor-General Council and president of the 'Committee of Public Instruction', belonged. They increasingly dominated the colonial language discussion after 1835. Although missionaries or East India Company officials<sup>195</sup> had argued in favour of the introduction of English into India before, the fear that English-educated Indians could in some way threaten colonial rule was still too great, to take any concrete educational measures in that direction.

Anglicists argued, however, that there was an increasing need for a local bureaucratic class that could deal with the work of intermediating between the - primarily monolingual English-speaking - rulers and the multilingual masses of the Indian population. They wished to promote English for primarily two reasons:

- a) *for their own administrative convenience and*
- b) *in order to avoid mastering any of the large number of local languages.*

They wanted to turn English into a high level link language, to make comprehensible to themselves an incomprehensible multilingual world. In order to justify their aim they promoted the categorization of English as *the vehicle of a superior civilization*, and praised its role as *the means of economic and social mobility* (Kanungo 1962: 26). At the same time, Anglicists' ignorance and disinterest in widespread traditional Indian systems of (classical languages or mother tongue) education led them to

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<sup>195</sup> Such as the Anglican missionary who was also a Company official, Charles Grant.

denounce all as worthless. This was a part of their generally negative attitude to India (Ahmed 1965: 160):

*The overzealous 'Anglicists' were obsessed with the idea that everything in the East was bad and everything in the West good, an attitude which made them impatient in their demand for the wholesale replacement of Indian learning by Western learning.*

While the Orientalists looked towards an 'ideal' classical past and favoured Sanskrit and Persian education - even for the dissemination of European knowledge - the Anglicists looked towards a 'modern Westernized' future and favoured the spread of European learning primarily through the English language.

In retrospect, the whole language and education discussion, whether Orientalist or Anglicist, denied the existence of Indian learning, knowledge, philosophy, science or wisdom. On both sides, it mirrored the extreme arrogance inherent in colonial British decision-making: a decision-making process that took place in India about India, but without the participation of Indians (Achard 1987). For those chosen few who wished to, or were allowed to participate, advancing within the colonial system was made difficult as the rules of the game were constantly changed.

Despite their seemingly oppositional views, the two main language pressure groups had much in common. Both groups allowed primarily an elite access to education. To the majorities of the Indian population neither a classical Indian nor a 'superior' European language as a medium for instruction – or as a subject - were of any use. While both factions agreed to promote elite languages as educational media, they also agreed on the content of education: it was to be based on European literary and scientific knowledge. Macaulay (1862: 107) pointed out the basic agreement between Orientalists and Anglicists, which related to their complete denunciation of spoken and written Indian mother tongues<sup>196</sup>:

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<sup>196</sup> See Das (1991: 87) for further discussion of this point.

*All parties seem to be agreed on one point that the dialects commonly spoken among the natives of this part of India, contain neither literary nor scientific information, and are, more over, so poor and rude that, until they are enriched from some other quarter, it will not be easy to translate any valuable work into them. ... the intellectual improvement of those classes of the people who have the means of pursuing higher studies can at present be effected only by the means of some language not vernacular amongst them.*

Macaulay (1862: 111) went farther than the Orientalists, in his complete lack of respect for anything *Oriental* whether classical or contemporary, according to him, *it is universally felt that the Sanskrit and Arabic are languages, the knowledge of which does not compensate for the trouble of acquiring them.* He (Macaulay 1862: 113) dismissed the Orientalist idea that the teaching of Sanskrit, Persian or Arabic languages would be able to play any role in the ‘intellectual improvement’ of the Indian people, their languages and their literatures:

*It is said that the Sanscrit and Arabic are languages in which the sacred books of a hundred millions of people are written, and that they are, on that account, entitled to peculiar encouragement. ... But to encourage the study of a literature admitted of small intrinsic value, only because that literature inculcates the most serious errors on the most important subjects, is a course hardly reconcilable with reason, with morality, or even with that very neutrality which ought, as we all agree, to be sacredly preserved. ... We are to teach false History, false Astronomy, false Medicine, because we find them in company with a false religion.*

Only the English language, able to transmit English knowledge, English ideals, English morals, was to be offered as the sole resource for the *upliftment* and *enrichment* of Indian education, literatures, languages and cultures through an educated class of ‘enlightened natives’ (Macaulay 1862: 26)<sup>197</sup>:

*The English language, I conceive, is the great avenue by which the people of this country must arrive at all valuable knowledge. A native, without that language, can never have more than a smattering of science: and it is well if even that smattering be free from error. A native, with that language, has ready access to full and accurate information on every subject, and will be able, if his natural talents are great, to make very considerable advances in knowledge, even without the aid of a teacher.*

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<sup>197</sup> See also Macaulay (1862: 9, 44, 45, 115).

According to Devy (1990: 350), the Anglicist/Orientalist debate concentrated on the false opposition between alien, industrialized, unassimilated traditions with ‘Marga’ (classical, elitist) traditions. The hypocrisy of imperial language policies was also apparent in regard to their projected aim of having the *improvement* of the *vernaculars* at heart. With the representation of the ‘Deshi’ (local, regional, agrarian) traditions almost blended out, the possible participation of the majority of the population or the inclusion of their languages was not considered (Joshi 1991: 18).

Arguments in favour of the maintenance of Indian mother tongue languages, can be said to have been minimally presented by a third, not very powerful language pressure group, whose demands largely went unnoticed (Kanungo, 1962: 29). If further endorsed by the colonial administration, the missionaries may have pursued a ‘vernacular’ language education, only, however, in order to further their own aims of successfully converting ‘the natives’. Their basic attitudes towards these ancient Indian literary and oral media of communication, however, would not have been different from those of the colonial ideologues, to whose opinion-making processes they gave a solid base.

In terms of choosing a ‘superior’ culture, language or education, today’s (still diglossic<sup>198</sup>) Indian elite continues to follow primarily two possible alternatives (both false, and both practically not in contradiction with one another):

- a) the traditionalist revivalist Orientalist choice, i.e. glorifying the classical past in order to positivize the present, and / or
- b) the modernist Anglicist choice, i. e. choosing to endorse a ‘bad’ imitation of an idealized colonial tradition.

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<sup>198</sup> Calvet (1974: 51, 54) defines the bilingualism and diglossia in colonial contexts as the linguistic expression of power relations. Bilingualism has to be seen in the context of the opposition between dominated and dominating language.

A historically-continuous, organically-grown, socially egalitarian modern Indian culture combined with a conscious empowerment of all Indian languages, cultures, and people remained the most disadvantaged option<sup>199</sup>. In relation to postcolonial India and the implementation of the regional language policy, Sheth<sup>200</sup> (1990: 34) remarks:

*The implementation of regional language policy followed so far in several Indian states since the late fifties has been, at best, partial and half-hearted.*

Sheth (1990: 37) stresses the effect this *half-hearted* promotion of regional languages has had on literacy levels among the majority of Indians:

*Does our woefully bad performance on the literacy front, which is worse than many underdeveloped countries, have to do with the dominance of English in our educational system?*

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<sup>199</sup> The new Anglicist system of primarily (higher) education contrasted sharply with pre-colonial mother tongue education.

<sup>200</sup> Political scientist and sociologist.

## 5 ii *Armies of bilingual clerks*<sup>201</sup> and *qualified candidates*<sup>202</sup>

The triumph of the ideologically exclusivist British English model in India

The period between 1835 and 1857 witnessed the further consolidation of British power in India, as well as the growth of Indian ambivalence towards British rule. While the annexations and conquests of one state after another had succeeded in making the East India Company the supreme power in India by the 1850's, the ruination and impoverishment of the Indian subcontinent on every level had reached its peak. As Chandra<sup>203</sup> (1979: 83) put it:

*If the second half of the nineteenth century was the heyday of British economic expansion and exploitation in India and of the effort to make Indian economy complementary to British economy in a subservient position, i. e., to make it a colonial economy, it was also the period in which the chief inner contradictions of British imperialism matured, the agrarian basis of Indian economy was firmly set on its process of decay and ruin, an indigenous industrial capitalist class emerged, and the nationalist intelligentsia took roots.*

On the sociolinguistic scene, from the beginning of the nineteenth century, English, in favour of which the Anglicists had argued became the *superior* language of economic, social or political advancement in British India. By the middle of the nineteenth century, the British Crown's system of rule (in contrast to the East India Company's rule) had changed from requiring vast numbers of Indian scholars for their 'Oriental' institutions, to needing vast numbers of English-educated Indians for the Anglicization of their expanding bureaucracy, in which English was to be the global linking language of the British empire. As early as 1828, and before Macaulay, another British administrator, Frances Warden<sup>204</sup>, envisaged English as *the most durable tie* between Britain and India (Mahmood 1895: 42). A few years later, in 1835, Macaulay (1862: 108), in his reinterpretation of the East India Company's educational directive in the Charter Act of 1813, endorsed

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<sup>201</sup> See Anderson (1991:115).

<sup>202</sup> See Tagore (1996).

<sup>203</sup> As a critical historian, Bipan Chandra has mainly analysed colonial and modern periods in Indian history.

<sup>204</sup> Warden was a member of the Governor of Bombay's Council.

this opinion on a global scale: for *our Indian empire*, for the *two great European communities* in the south of Africa and in *Australasia*, English was to be *the pre-eminent language*, the *language of commerce*, the *language spoken by the ruling class*, the greatest literary language of the world together.

Despite these grandiose statements, however, the still Orientalist-dominated East India Company's 'Committee of Public Instruction' continued to resist the educational implementation of the Anglicist Minute. They evaded pressures to offer English classes both in *Madrassahs* and Sanskrit Colleges. While British officials enforced the Anglicization of India on an economic, bureaucratic and administrative level, from quite early on, the missionaries ventured into teaching English at primary, lower levels, and using it as a medium of instruction. Clearly, it was a potentially successful *instrument of religious conversion* (Kanungo 1962: 26). Side-by-side with 'vernacular' education, missionaries were willing and ready to offer Christian English-medium (for quite some length of time. Citing a Resolution of the British Government of India, from 1904 (March 11<sup>th</sup>), Ahmed (1974: 7) wrote:

*The impulse towards reform came from two sources, the need for public servants with a knowledge of the English language and the influence in favour both of English and of vernacular education which was exercised by the missionaries in the early years of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.*

Endorsement of English on an educational level offered Indians the only chance to partake in the benefits of the colonial cake, and made missionary educational ventures more popular than ever before. After their historically largely unsuccessful attempts at conversion, European missionaries turned to the English language as a new and hopeful possibility to further their unwavering goal of proselytization through education (Kanungo 1962:7):

*The ultimate aim of the missionaries was to convert heathens, and they turned to English education as the most effective way to reach the influential upper classes among whom they hoped to find native converts who might help in carrying the Christian faith to the masses.*

Even before 1835, there had been British suggestions<sup>205</sup>, relating to the adoption of English in public offices, in business, in political negotiation, and in jurisprudence, as the prime way to enforce the willingness of *native subjects* to study it *universally and extensively*. The decree that *all Native Princes or persons of rank* were to be corresponded with in English was a first step in this direction (Sinha 1978: 43). In addition, the recommendation that *after the expiration of three years, a decided preference will be given to candidates for office, who may add a knowledge of English to other qualifications*, made the need for English education to any Indian wishing to succeed in the colonial system an unavoidable necessity. All that was necessary, according to Warden in 1832, was to lay *the foundation-stone of a good edifice for teaching what the higher classes of Natives are eager to acquire: a knowledge of English*<sup>206</sup>.

While favouring the general use of English in all British transactions and proceedings in India, most British administrators continued to subscribe to the undemocratic offer of English education only for a specific group of Indians. In 1828, Warden had already suggested that English education was to be accessible only to a chosen class, as he felt that *it was better and safer to commence by giving a good deal of knowledge to a few, than a little to many* (Mahmood 1895: 42). Like Macaulay, Warden favoured the creation of a particular English-educated class of Indians - not the spread of English education throughout the subcontinent for all classes of people<sup>207</sup>:

*I do not contemplate the education of a population of 80 millions of souls in the English language, but I do contemplate, and at no distant period, its general use in all our proceedings, and its ultimate foundation, as the language of the educated classes of British India.*

Macaulay's Resolution of March 7th, 1835, which made *the promotion of European literature and science among the natives of India*, through the

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<sup>205</sup> See discussion on the Governor of Bengal's letter, dated June 26th, 1829 (Sridhar 1977: 56) & Mahmood (1895: 77).

<sup>206</sup> See Mahmood (1895: 42).

<sup>207</sup> See Kanungo (1962: 20) for a discussion on Warden's statement of 1832.

English language, into *the great object of the British Government*<sup>208</sup>, summed up what many previous British administrators had in mind. It was to be an offer of English education, along with the possibility of access into an exclusively Anglicized power hierarchy, to a chosen minority of Indians<sup>209</sup>. English in India was to be used exclusively between *the higher class of natives at the seats of Government* and the colonial power (Macaulay 1862: 108). These chosen Indians were to be *moulded* into a *class who may be interpreters*, mediators between the masses of the Indian population and the British rulers, outwardly *Indians in blood and colour*, but ideologically *English in taste, in opinions, in morals and in intellect* (Macaulay 1862: 115):

*... it is impossible for us, with our limited means, to attempt to educate the body of people. We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect. To that class we may leave it to refine the vernacular dialects of the country, to enrich those dialects with terms of science borrowed from the Western nomenclature, and to render them by degrees fit vehicles for conveying knowledge to the great mass of the population.*

The reason this Minute was hailed as an historical<sup>210</sup> decision in favour of English in India (Trevelyan 1876: 104-116), may have had less to do with the grandiosity of Macaulay's statements (1862: 115), and more with his resolve to appropriate all the funds marked for the purpose of education for English alone.

Despite Macaulay's decree of 1835, and all Anglicist decrees that were to follow, a deliberately hesitant, haphazard, more regionally specific rather than *subcontinental* implementation of pro-Anglicist policies was enforced (Shukla 1969: 29). The implementers of colonial education policy remained wary of arousing adverse emotions in any part of the population. All linguistic pressure groups (the Anglicists, the Orientalists, as well as those favouring Indian mother tongues) were sought to be continually pacified. In

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<sup>208</sup> See Macaulay's *Minutes on Education in India*, edited by H. Woodrow (1862: 104-116).

<sup>209</sup> For a discussion on Macaulay's Minute see, for example Pattanayak (1981: 175).

<sup>210</sup> Joshi (1991) refers to this Minute as hysterical.

1839, for example, the Governor General of India, Auckland, promised the champions of the ‘vernaculars’ the compilation of textbooks in Indian languages. At the same time, he soothed the sensibilities of the Orientalists, by promising them continued maintenance of their colleges, scholarships, and the publication of useful works in classical Indian languages. To the Anglicists, as well, he promised all that he had promised to the other groups.

Feeling they had to tread carefully with the spread of English-medium education in India, the East India Company explicitly stated in their language policy that they did not intend to replace the ‘native’ languages with English. English was to be taught only on request. Schools were to be opened only at places where there was a popular demand for them. As a result, English education spread regionally unevenly on the Indian subcontinent. In Bombay and Madras, for example, where the demand was said to be low, there was a ratio of about one English school per million people. Comparably, in the state of Bengal, where the demand was said to be higher, English schools were established in every district. Of the schools established throughout the country, missionary schools enjoyed more popularity than private or government schools<sup>211</sup>, mainly because the former were charitable institutions, while the latter had to be paid for (Roy 1993: 44).

The introduction of English education on the Indian subcontinent did not arise out of any philanthropic feelings on the part of the British rulers. In order to run their huge colonial bureaucracy, a reliable English-educated, but Indian class of middlemen had become necessary, who would mediate between the rulers and the vast populations they ruled. In fact, some contemporary critics have classified the entire English-language colonial education system as being structured to turn out mainly *bad* clerks<sup>212</sup>! There was much more to colonial education than that, however. According to Tagore (1996: 560), the British had succeeded in turning an educated

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<sup>211</sup> In 1845, students at Government institutions numbered around 17 000, while missionary schools had almost twice that number (Ram 1983: 108).

<sup>212</sup> According to Kachru (1983: 58) the American linguist Firth made this remark in 1930.

cultured community in India into a *community of qualified candidates*. Dias (1985: 147) refers to ‘the product’ of the *dominant culture* and education system, i. e. *the educated person*, as being a *qualified expert*<sup>213</sup>. These qualified candidates, together with *armies of bilingual clerks* had become necessary to run the expanding colonial state apparatus. As Anderson (1991:115) points out:

*The colonial state, and somewhat later, corporate capital, needed armies of clerks, who, to be useful, had to be bilingual, capable of mediating linguistically between the metropolitan nation and the colonized peoples.*

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<sup>213</sup> For further discussion on this allegiant class, see Dias (1985: 148, 149) or Chatterjee’s chapter on The Nationalist Elite (1995: 35-75). See also chapter 5 i.

### 5 iii The power of English: transmitting ‘Western liberal knowledge’

Other pro-Anglicist Minutes in other regions of India under British rule followed Macaulay’s. Seven years later, in 1846, in the Madras Presidency, another Governor relaunched another Anglicist Minute<sup>214</sup>. This again proclaimed *the universal language, English to be the best, if not the sole, means of extending scientific knowledge and the literature of Europe* on the Indian subcontinent. Again in 1854, the Court of Directors made an attempt to launch a uniform course of education for the whole of India by sending out an Education Despatch, that was later referred to as the ‘Magna Carta of English Education in India’. The intended spread of English language education in India was, however, phrased diplomatically. According to Gandhi’s analysis (1965: 39), the role of the ‘vernacular’ languages of India was emphasized, and *the mass of people* understood that their mother tongues were not to be substituted by English. Indian languages were to replace Persian in *the administration of justice and in the intercourse between the officers of the Government and the people*. For those majorities who had been turned into the socially, economically or culturally ‘backward masses’ by the colonial powers, the provisions of mother tongue education, teachers and books were promised<sup>215</sup>. The writers of this ‘Magna Carta’ stressed, that for a *general system of education* the ‘vernaculars’ had to be considered *indispensable*. As the majority of people outside the (colonially developed) metropolitan centres could not be expected to overcome the difficulties of a foreign language, they would be communicated to in their own languages, which would (eventually) enable them to gain an *improved high standard of European knowledge*.

According to the analysis of Anderson (1991: 116) the spread of modern-style education by the colonial state, together with private religious and secular organizations, *occurred not simply to provide cadres for*

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<sup>214</sup> See Mahmood (1895: 57, 58) for a discussion on this.

<sup>215</sup> It was overlooked, that these ‘backward masses’ previously had mother tongue education, teachers and books (Acharya 1996, Shahidullah 1996).

*governmental and corporate hierarchies, but also because of the growing acceptance of the moral importance of modern knowledge even for colonized populations.* The diffusion of European knowledge was stated to be of utmost importance, and both the ‘vernacular’ languages and English were to transmit this together. While the English language, along with *Western liberal knowledge* remained an exclusive prerogative of the elite, the same *liberal knowledge* was also to be offered to the masses through their own languages. In addition, it was also hoped, that the concentration of English education on transmitting European knowledge to the elite would - in the long run - *naturally* filter down to all classes of the Indian people (Macaulay 1862: 9, 44, 115)<sup>216</sup>. Joshi (1991: 18) sums up what Macaulay’s greatest triumph finally consisted of: the investment of *Western liberal knowledge* into the major part of indigenous educational, cultural and political institutions, an investment which turned out to be a *form of dominance far more powerful and permanent than any direct form of government*. In contemporary debates, references to the ‘Westernization’ of ‘Third World’ education systems have been rephrased in terms of their ‘need’ for ‘modernization’. Both debates have failed to include the issue of literacy, however. As Majumdar points out in relation to the *still remote goal of universal literacy* in most South Asian societies, particularly India:

*Literacy and modernization are conceptually interrelated and therefore, their pursuit should be also interdependent. Yet the two movements appear to be proceeding in their respective ‘self-reliant’ ways.*

Interestingly enough, according to Harrison (1996: 155-189), developments in England, emphasizing the importance of English as a subject of education, lagged behind those in India. Until the mid-nineteenth century, the ‘classics’ (Latin, Greek, etc.) were the most important subjects at prestigious universities (such as Oxford). Education (particularly higher education) was considered to be a privilege for an exclusive privileged class of students. When national education movements, liberal attitudes, but much more the need for the professionalization of English teachers and teaching, finally

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<sup>216</sup> See also Ram (1978: 114, 115) for further discussion.

began to validate English as a (also middle class) university subject, *the Indian Civil Service*, played a key role. *The lead for the growth from 1853 of competitive examinations as the means of selecting men for increasingly professional government services was given by the Indian Civil Service* (Harrison 1996: 157, 158, 162). The ICS examinations first introduced English studies as a core subject and encouraged its teaching at university levels. The ICS was popular, able to offer successful candidates attractive career opportunities, large financial rewards, including pensions, etc.

#### 5 iv ‘Purdah-nashin’: *behind the veil of a foreign language*<sup>217</sup>

The ‘Magna Carta of English Education in India’ led to the establishment of a special department of education, the inauguration of more English universities, and a system of grants for scholars of the English language in Calcutta, Madras and Bombay (Mahmood 1895: 89). A skeletal continuance of the partly traditional, partly colonial Orientalist system of education, as well as the promotion of numerous conflicting policies of ‘vernacular’ education, together formed the basis of a divisive, class-biased system of education in India. Classified by critics as a two-tier (i. e. two-level and two-class) system of education, it even continued for sometime to be a three-tier (i. e. three-level, three-class) system of education. Colonial educational policy established a ‘high class’ English university education for the professional elite, (higher) Oriental education for the now ‘secondary’ (‘traditional’) elite, and ‘low class’ primary mother tongue education for the majority of people. Only English education promised employment, and financial or economic benefits from the colonial system. Classical Oriental and, even more so, mother tongue education could be regarded as more or less ‘useless’ educational efforts, from the point of view of a colonial power hierarchy, that had little value, respect or administrative, literary, judicial or official status for indigenous languages.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Bengal Province, for example, still had an intact network of an indigenous system of elementary mother tongue education. By the end of the century, government intervention had almost completely displaced the traditional ‘pathsala’ education system. Shahidullah (1996: 119-154) describes the ‘pathsalas’ as *secular educational institutions imparting practical instruction in accordance with the requirements of the local community*. British Reports on the State of Education in Bengal<sup>218</sup> found that, throughout the province,

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<sup>217</sup> Used by Tagore (1996).

<sup>218</sup> Commissioned by the British Government in India, the Scottish missionary Adam, conducted the survey in the Bengal Province between 1835 and 1838.

primary schools existed in abundance, while teachers and pupils came from a variety of castes. Fees varied according to income (the poor were taught for free), some pupils paid in material goods or by working for the teacher, and teaching hours were flexible according to local convenience of all sections of rural society. As Shahidullah (1996: 122) sums up:

*Being set up generally with the approval and Cupertino of the people, the pathsalas were popular institutions welcomed by all sections of the community, irrespective of their religion, caste, or social status.*

More concerned with the promotion of higher rather than elementary education, by the middle of the nineteenth century, the British government in Bengal felt under pressure to reorganize the indigenous primary and secondary systems of education. In the following years and decades, the haphazard implementation of the Educational Despatch of 1854, brought ‘improvements’ to the ‘pathsalas’ and a number of them under government control. This was done by the financial promotion of selected schools, (they were ‘developed’ into *government schools of a higher order*) and the offer of a system of grants to selected (successful) pupils, or selected teachers (the ‘re-education’ or removal of traditional gurus and the insertion of newly trained teachers). Emphasis was placed on promoting new elementary Bengali books on subjects decided by the government (*including teaching of arithmetic by the English method, emphasis on reading from print, the study of the administration of Warren Hastings, Lord Cornwallis, and Lord William Bentinck, etc.*). School timings and fees were fixed, pupils who attended irregularly or could not pay fees in ‘cash’ were suspended (Shahidullah 1996: 119-134).

According to Shahidullah (1996: 123, 125, 129), the centralization and patronization of rural schools by the British administration, was welcomed by the rural upper classes, as it also opened up the prospect of getting higher education at government cost. Such ‘developments’, however, had a negative impact on the enrolment of pupils coming from the lower classes, whose agricultural work-load and inability to pay fees regularly disqualified

them from attending. As Shahidullah (1996: 123, 125) says somewhat disparagingly of these pupils, they could not *comprehend the utility of the changes introduced and began to drop out from the improved pathshalas*.

On the part of the growing Indian urban and rural upper and middle classes, it comes as no surprise then, that a decisive change of attitudes was registered towards English education, as well as the use of English as a medium of instruction. Whereas before, according to British administrators' reports<sup>219</sup>, *English requirements were held in great contempt*, or, even a certain *prejudice against English* was common, to know English had now become *the grand road to distinction for the native aspirant*, which people of 'all classes' wished to attain. Again, according to the same colonial administrator *multitudes of the upper and middle classes now flock to our seminaries to learn, without fee or reward, all that English literature can teach them*. In an analysis of the social background of educated people in Bombay City, in the first half of the nineteenth century, Ramanna (1989: 203, 210) sums up that *while those educated in the vernaculars came from a wide range of castes and communities ... the English-educated were a homogenous group, showing common socio-economic origins and were not representative of all sections of the population*:

*The upper castes, the merchants and trading castes, constituted the majority of the English-educated. However, they were not of the wealthy aristocracy but were those, who hoped to gain materially through better paid jobs, after acquiring, in some cases, a knowledge of the English language and, in other cases, completing their collegiate education or acquiring proficiency in a professional course.*

Finding English education to be the most popular type of upper/middle class education, educational policy ventured a step further. It classified *superior* English education to be a private social activity, ruling that it had to be paid for by those who could afford it themselves, or by private, mostly religious funding institutions. The state no longer made any effort to promote Indian languages on higher educational levels. By the 1860s, the British Crown

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<sup>219</sup> See, for example, Trevelyan (1838: 107, 114).

government withdrew Indian languages from higher education even as *subjects* for examination, only in some cases allowing them to remain optional extras. By the 1870s, state-aid was withdrawn completely from higher English education. By the 1880s, subsidies were withdrawn from primary ‘Anglo-vernacular’ government schools (Sinha 1978: 91, 94, 98). While the demand for higher English education grew<sup>220</sup>, the demand for mother tongue education decreased. Though the British Raj proclaimed itself responsible for ‘inferior vernacular’ education at elementary levels: this, in (financial) practice, did not mean much. Between the 1860s and the 1890s, most Indian language schools had to be closed down for lack of students or funds (Ram 1983: 169). The higher castes being involved in financing primary ‘vernacular’ or English-medium schools for their own communities, the missionaries constituted the only ‘private’ agency offering free instruction in primary ‘vernacular’ education (Ramanna 1989: 205, 210). Similar to the higher English educational facilities offered by the government, the missionary primary English-medium schools were also predominantly availed of by Hindus (Ramanna 1989: 203, 205).

According to Gandhi (1965: 39), by the beginning of the twentieth century, even the British Viceroy in India, Lord Chelmsford<sup>221</sup>, was forced to admit that English, the passport to employment or to upward economic or political mobility, had replaced all other languages as the sole medium of education. The problem that now arose, however, was that while the number of *qualified candidates* had grown, the number of possible employments had not. Consequently, for a large amount of (potential) *bilingual clerks* and (unemployed) *qualified candidates* in favour of English education, frustration and disillusionment with the colonial regime set in.

By the beginning of the twentieth century, criticisms against the colonial regime from the English-educated elite also gathered strength in India. In the early 1920s, M. K. Gandhi (1965: 16) criticized English education in India

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<sup>220</sup> For example: the number of secondary English schools increased from 142, in 1860, to 4872, in 1891, while the number of colleges rose from 17, in 1860, to 104, in 1891.

<sup>221</sup> In his address to the ‘Conference of Directors of Education’ on February 22nd 1917.

for being responsible for creating, as well as widening the gulf between the educated classes and the masses (*we do not know them and they do not know us*). Judging English education from the point of view of the masses coming from the less privileged sections of Indian society, Gandhi (1965: 16) called it the British system *a vicious system* of education, which had left Indian languages in a miserable state. From being a practical reality, mother tongue education had changed into becoming a theoretical idea. Particularly for higher levels of study, hardly any Indian language textbooks were available. The only way to study their own mother tongues was for students to memorize what they had to learn. The underprivileged classes now had the choice of either availing of what the British had turned into 'lower class' Indian language education, or no education at all. They had no possibility of gaining any kind of higher education, which was not only exclusively English-medium, but which also had to be paid for and which had been appropriated by particular Hindu castes. Socially and economically, underprivileged Indians - along with their languages - were completely excluded from colonial society's spheres of power. The, in other ways conquered upper or middle classes, were given a precondition to enter: to gain positions of authority, they had to learn the conqueror's language.

This linguistic expression of existing power relations meant that for a particular class of Indians the ruling language had become both a means of dominating others and of themselves being subjugated. As Chatterjee (1995: 36) summed it up in relation to the Bengali middle class:

*The colonial middle class, in Calcutta, no less than in other centres of colonial power, was simultaneously placed in a position of subordination in one relation and a position of dominance in another. ... For the Calcutta middle class of the late nineteenth century, political and economic domination by a British colonial elite was a fact. The class was created in a relation of subordination.*

In the newly structured linguistic hierarchy of Indian society, English occupied the highest position in respect to administrative, educational and literary functions. For the vast majority of people it simply represented a

means of exclusion<sup>222</sup>. This kept three hundred million Indians in ‘purdah-nashin’, or *behind* the veil of a foreign language, in relation to the English government (Tagore<sup>223</sup> 1996: 481):

*... the three hundred millions of people inhabiting this country, are kept strictly purdah-nashin, behind a foreign language, the codes of law, the proceedings of the legislative councils, the lectures of the Governors addressed to the people, and all the important Government communications affecting their life.*

Everything that directly related to the millions of Indians and governed their everyday lives, such as laws, legal proceedings, government notifications, agricultural bulletins, etc., was written in an inaccessible foreign language. For the English officials and administrators everything to do with the administrative ruling of the colony, previously written in Indian languages, had now, via *expensive arrangements* made by the British Government, been conveniently translated into English. The British rulers, as Tagore (1996: 481) put it bitterly, had *made their duties cheap for themselves, but immensely expensive for the people they had come to govern*, from whom they extracted the phenomenal resources, goods, labour, taxes and fees to pay for this unjust system.

Gandhi and Tagore were not the first to voice their resistance to colonial education. Since the nineteenth century, the minority of Indian middle-class Hindu intellectuals who had availed of English education had also attempted to separate the English language from being associated with the Christian religion and Western ideology<sup>224</sup>. The majority of Indians, increasingly viewed English, its ideology and system of colonization and exploitation, as an instrument of denationalization, the symbol of a foreign authority, and of a new, distant, different and alien world (Das 1991: 137). During Gandhi’s ‘civil disobedience’ or ‘quit India’ campaigns, this majority’s demand for Indian language education grew. Their intention was to build up their defence, not only against the British rulers, but also against the dominance of

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<sup>222</sup> See Calvet (1974: 51, 53) for further discussion.

<sup>223</sup> Rabindranath Tagore was a great critic of the role of the English language in India.

<sup>224</sup> See Rammohun Roy in chapter 6 i.

the newly Anglicized ‘brown Sahibs’ (Indian masters), serving as colonial India’s middlemen.

As the British responded with minimal increases in the availability of Indian language education, the tensions between English and Indian languages grew. In the face of all contrary evidence, this was what numerous sociolinguists still retrospectively refer to as the British *laissez-faire* attitude towards English education in India<sup>225</sup>. This, however, can be considered less than a partial truth in regard to the East India Company’s and British Crown’s policies towards India. The colonial British system of education not only established the English language as an exclusive medium of instruction, but also used it as a class-biased, community-biased and generally divisive instrument for the dissemination of *Eurocentric* education<sup>226</sup>. Educational policy was an integral part of their ‘divide and rule’ policy over India<sup>227</sup>. Dias (1985: 148) has summed up this historically determined process of education, as ‘*Education vs. Education*’:

*With the coming of the imperial age and the school legislation in the metropolis, the newly introduced school system began to be developed on the basis of restricted cultural code and in strict functionality to the economic and ideological needs; it became a major force to remake the educational reality in the subjected societies and to marginalize or destroy the existing socialization agencies.*

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<sup>225</sup> See, for example, Görlach (1997: 21), or Kachru (1983a).

<sup>226</sup> For further discussion see Dias (1985: 143-149).

<sup>227</sup> See chapter 4 and 6 ii.

### **PART III     Defining Colonial Boundaries in a Multilingual Landscape**

Linguistic and Ideological Reorganization of Pre-colonial Patterns

*Setting  
the trap*

#### **6     ‘Divide and rule’**

British classification, hierarchization and division of multilingual India

The revolt of 1857, referred to as the ‘Indian Mutiny’ by the British, confirmed colonial fears in regard to a growing animosity coming from the colonized population. It confirmed the British Crown’s doubts about the governing powers of the East India Company. As a consequence, Company Rule was terminated and the administration and rule of India was transferred directly to the British Crown. In addition, looking around for a scapegoat to blame for the uprising, British rulers blamed European missionaries for their more religious than educational onslaught on the Indian people. The government of the British Crown in India took this opportunity to officially suspend administrative and educational ties with the missionaries (Sinha 1978: 86).

By the middle of the nineteenth century, trading connections between the Indians and their colonizers had been transformed into colonial relations. For a securer grip on their colony, the colonizers had grasped the importance of knowing and understanding the colonized people, their history, their norms, traditions, languages and behaviour patterns. According to Cohn (1985: 276), *the conquest of India became a conquest of knowledge*. They required a knowledge of India’s *intricate, often baffling, indigenous systems of landed property*, for example, in order to effectively collect land revenues in the mercantile political economy they had established (Joshi 1991: 14). Roy (1993: 39) marks out this period as the one in which the East India Company changed from being a mercantile trade power to being a political revenue collecting agency. Not only did the Company now assess and collect land revenue, it also became responsible for the maintenance of law and order. In order to find better ways of extracting taxes from the local population,

Company officials were obliged to engage themselves in the study of Indian languages, history and culture, Their need for knowledge was based on administrative requirements, not on *intellectual curiosity* (Thapar 1975: 4). It comes as no surprise then, to find that one of the first English dictionaries, published in 1855, in India, was H. H. Wilson's Glossary of judicial and revenue terms. This glossary served to enable administrators in Britain to understand the terminology developed in India.

It began to dawn on colonial British ideologists, that their continued economic, political and administrative success in retaining hold over the Indian subcontinent, depended on their ability to link all forms of colonization (i. e. military, economic, educational, and linguistic). Minds in addition to bodies had to be colonized, in order to initiate processes whereby cultural priorities within colonized societies were completely and irreparably altered<sup>228</sup>. As Ngûgî (1986: 16) emphasises

*The real aim of colonialism was to control people's wealth ... But its most important area of domination is the mental universe of the colonised, the control, through culture, of how people perceive themselves and their relationship to the world.*

In this process, colonial education was important and needed to be continued. For British Crown administrators it became a pressing colonial necessity to deal with India's educational and linguistic scenario to a much greater extent than their East India Company predecessors. Similar to the missionaries, British Crown administrators realized the importance of getting across a message, while concentrating less on the medium of getting it across. British Crown administrators felt that they could, to a certain extent, be pragmatic about choosing between English or Indian language education. Contrary to the missionaries, the British Crown's message in education was not to be the religious, but moral 'upliftment' of the Indian people. By the middle of the nineteenth century, the *moral importance* of spreading *modern knowledge* as well as *a modern-style education* among their own population, as well as among the colonized people had become

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<sup>228</sup> See, for example, Ngûgî wa Thiong'o (1986) or Ashish Nandy (1983: xi).

widely accepted (Anderson 1991: 116). Both for the colonized and the colonizers, mental colonization began to change the concept of *the modern West* from a limited, distant *geographical and temporal entity* into a *psychological category* permeating everything (Nandy 1983: xi). This was also the beginning of the transmission of Eurocentric education.

For the perception of imperial rule, the entire world was hierarchized and a distinctive place given to every civilization, whether African, American or Asian (Nandy 1983: 17). In order to justify the ‘necessity’ for their rule, the colonizers reclassified their colonies as politically and culturally degraded. While Hindu India was categorized as having once had a civilization measurable by European standards, the societies of the African continent were declassified as ‘folk’, ‘oral’ and ‘rural’. This made it all the easier to denounce them as ‘savage’. The ‘discovery’ and categorization of pre-Islamic Egyptian civilization as ancient and classical, did not disturb the colonial logic, for whom Egypt ceased to represent an integral part of the African continent. Similarly, while ancient *civilized* (Hindu / Indo-Aryan) India was declared to be extinct and was consequently *museumized*, living India was stated not to be the *true* India at all<sup>229</sup>. India’s downfall was related to some inherent fatal *irrational, oppressive, retrogressive* cultural flaws - chiefly due to medieval Muslim rule - from which only colonial rule, which linked the subcontinent’s ‘classical Indo-Aryan past’ to *the modern world*, could redeem them (Kochhar 1992: 2611):

*Emphasizing joint Indo-European origins, the British rulers successfully projected themselves as patrons of India’s ancient culture, as if the Muslim rule was an aberration, and the British rule a continuation of the Hindu golden age.*

What had begun as a commercial adventure for the British, now developed into a conscious mental and a cultural intervention, in other words, *a major colonial intervention*<sup>230</sup>. Out of this Eurocentric colonial intervention economic, political, and educational structures were set up, that have not

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<sup>229</sup> See Max Mueller’s ideas, as discussed by Nandy (1983: 17, 18).

<sup>230</sup> See also chapter 2 i for further discussion on this ‘intervention’. See also Cohn (1985: 297), Das (1991: 32), Guha (1988: 27) & Joshi (1991: 16, 17, 18).

been completely dismantled even in modern postcolonial Indian society. The colonial system ruled by selecting minorities as collaborators, while dividing and excluding majorities of the colonized population. According to Tollefson (1991: 7), it is not untypical for *modern social and economic systems* either, to, on the one hand, *require certain kinds of language competence* from those aspiring to be successful, while, on the other hand, simultaneously creating conditions to *ensure that vast numbers of people will be unable to acquire that competence*. Overt or covert language policies established by the state, responsible for determining language education, can be seen as the central mechanisms by which such discriminatory processes are set in motion.

**6 i** A universally applicable, *all-encompassing, totalizing*  
*classificatory grid*<sup>231</sup>

With the memory of the last major Indian uprising of 1857 fresh in their mind, the British may have had another reason for their continuing interest in Indian languages, despite the Anglicist policies of 1835 and after. In their enthusiasm for the gathering of information *to conciliate and control the peoples of India* (Cohn 1985: 316), British administrators felt increasingly insecure about the reliability of local informants. They realized that they themselves needed to be able to incorporate, objectify, deal with and use Indian languages as instruments of rule, in order to better understand and be wary of the *peculiar* manners, customs, and prejudices of Indians. Despite the criticisms launched against the missionaries, British Crown policy-makers generally based the production of textbooks, the compilation of dictionaries, and the summaries of various Indian language grammars on missionaries' pedagogical materials or on translations of the Bible. In their drive for colonial classification and standardization of all Indian languages, British officials initiated an even greater production of glossaries, grammars, dictionaries and translations than the missionaries and East India Company officials had done before. This was necessary, according to Cohn (1985: 283, 284), in order to classify, categorize, bind and then hierarchize *the vast social world that was India*.

On the linguistic, literary and educational front, the systematic colonial classification, standardization, hierarchization - and ultimately division - of the subcontinent began with full force<sup>232</sup>. In the colonial state's drive to classify everything it came across, i. e. *peoples, regions, religions, languages, products, monuments, and so forth*, the development of the *census*, the *map*, and the *museum* were to play key roles (Anderson 1991: 184):

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<sup>231</sup> See Anderson (1991: 184).

<sup>232</sup> See also discussion in Alvarez (1995).

*Interlinked with one another, then, the census, the map and the museum illuminate the late colonial state's style of thinking about its domain. The 'warp' of this thinking was a totalizing classificatory grid, which could be applied with endless flexibility to anything under the state's real or contemplated control: peoples, regions, religions, languages, products, monuments, and so forth. The effect of the grid was always to be able to say of anything that it was this, not that; it belonged here, not there. It was bounded, determinate, and therefore - in principle - countable.*

From then onwards, every language that colonial researchers and scholars (*explorers, missionaries and administrators*) happened to come across, was classified as either *new, incomplete or deficient*. Some 'classical' or 'written' languages were officially recognized as *languages*, while others (primarily oral) were downgraded as *dialects* or *vernaculars*. Even retrospectively, the contemporary linguist Crystal (1987: 365) seems to subscribe to such a colonial view, in presupposing 'newly discovered' languages to be purely oral:

*One of the first tasks facing explorers, missionaries and administrators, when they encounter a new language, is to devise a means of writing it down.*

Not counting Roman and Arabic, India has eight major script systems, about a thousand years old (Pattanayak 1988: 379). Without considering whether the languages they encountered already had names, histories, writing systems or links to languages surrounding them, (missionary) European philologists, language surveyors and lexicographers saw a clear *task* ahead of them: it was their duty to establish names, family trees and writing systems for all the 'new vernaculars' they encountered. Such surveys tended to emphasize the outward structures of the complexity of the linguistic situation rather than an underlying pan-Indian consciousness of unity.

The first British language surveyor, G. A. Grierson, however, who joined the Indian Civil Service in 1873 and was designated superintendant of the newly sanctioned Linguistic Survey in India (Singh & Manoharan 1997: 4), did recognize the linguistic affiliations of Indian languages and the wide diffusion of common traits. According to Sridhar (1996: 328), this was *the earliest attempt at codifying the linguistic diversity of India, a single-handed*

and *monumental* enterprise that took about twenty-nine years (Singh & Manoharan 1997: 4). Grierson identified 179 languages and 544 dialects (altogether 723), but in the appendix of his 'Linguistic Survey of India' he gives a list of 872 classified languages (Sridhar 1996, Singh & Manoharan 1997). The main handicap of this survey was that it did not cover the whole of India: language specimens and analyses of the grammatical structures of the languages spoken in the South of India were not provided (Singh & Manoharan 1997: 4). According to the anthropologists Singh and Manoharan (1997: 4,5), *Grierson's classification of languages was based on grammar, and made no reference to the important subject of phonetics.*

Nevertheless, Grierson attempted to place the linguistic identity of an individual somewhere *between* the notions of nationality, bilingualism and language boundaries. He observed that *the identification of the boundaries of a language, or even language itself, is not always an easy matter ... unless they are separated by great ethnic difference or by some natural obstacles, such as a range of mountains or a larger river, Indian languages gradually merge into one another and are not separated by hard and fast boundary lines* (Singh & Manoharan 1997: 5, 17). What Grierson's followers seldom stress, however, is that during *the thousands of years of interaction*, India continues to emerge *as a single, sociolinguistic and semantic area* (Pandit 1979, Pattanayak 1988: 379, Singh & Manoharan 1997).

The British realized that it was not only necessary to take over and restructure *the languages of command*, such as Sanskrit, Persian, and then English, but that *the cultivation and reconstitution of the vernacular languages of India* had also to be dealt with (Cohn 1985). Macaulay's legacy of arrogance towards - and ignorance about - the whole of *oriental* civilization, did not hinder the colonials from considering it of utmost importance to acquire command over - or, at least, make accessible to their officials - some of the Indian languages that were spoken and written by the vast majority of Indian people. For most Indians, however, the involvement of British administrators in Indian linguistic activities, was to have primarily

negative consequences. The restructuring of the linguistic map of India threatened the status of all Indian languages, particularly minority and oral languages. The haphazard recognition of some varieties as opposed to others, led to the centralization of some, the growth of regional power of others, and the marginalization of many more. This resulted in a complete reorganization of linguistic power on the Indian subcontinent (Das 1991: 139). Different language, religious or ethnic communities and their political spokespeople, as well as representative writers, educationalists were to react against the new system of hierarchies in diverse ways<sup>233</sup>.

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<sup>233</sup> See chapter 5 ii and 5 ii for attitudes of different speech communities, as well as for opinions of literary spokespeople. The attitudes of Indian politicians (Gandhi) or educationalists (Tagore) are discussed in PART III.

## 6 ii Link languages and multilingualism as administrative and judicial ‘impediments’

In regard to India’s multilingual landscape, the *excessively high* variety of languages was problematized<sup>234</sup>. Following in the footsteps of missionaries and colonial administrators, British language surveyors had similar problems of coming to terms with Indian multilingual reality. They characterized the pluralist situation confronting them as a ‘Tower of Babel-like’ linguistic chaos among Indian people. The British Crown’s negative view of Indian pluralism had mostly pragmatic economic reasons (Das 1991: 139). British administrators found Indian multilingualism *a great impediment towards administrative and judicial efficiency* (Trevelyan 1838: 179). In order to minimize their bureaucratic problems, they gave official recognition to a few languages, while denying others their right to be named, therefore to exist (Calvet 1978: 46). It was not unusual for the British to chose between two (or more) mutually intelligible languages bordering on each other, and to dismiss at least one of them as unnecessary.

According to the British Crown’s classificatory grid, and based on their mutual intelligibility, the Assamese and Oriya languages were categorized as mutually intelligible, therefore as mere dialects of Bengali. Despite protests and resistance from Oriya, Assamese and Bengali language and literature scholars, Bengali forcibly replaced Oriya and Assamese in courts and schools. Within the same reclassification system, some Oriya-speaking areas suffered the official imposition of Telegu, while some Telegu-speaking areas had to accept the educational and judicial promotion of Tamil and Urdu.

These excessive divisions and subtractions of languages, leading to their eradication<sup>235</sup>, have been categorized as a general Eurocentric tendency and attitude of *linguistic cannibalism* towards the multiple mother tongues of the

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<sup>234</sup> See, for colonial examples, Trevelyan (1838: 179). For modern examples, see chapter 2 i or 11 ii.

<sup>235</sup> See also Cohn (1985: 254).

colonized world<sup>236</sup>. One of two neighbouring languages were wiped out, or, after reclassification, stood facing each other antagonistically. Instead of emphasising their all-important role of link languages, such *mutually intelligible* languages were dismissed as excessive, unnecessary variations.

The most conspicuous and the lengthiest struggle between languages in India, originating from such divisive nineteenth century colonial policies, was the battle between Hindi and Urdu. Being mutually intelligible languages, they were historically identical in their (grammatical) linguistic structures. Urdu and Hindi had separate literatures, however, and, as a result, diverged on the level of style. Rooted in the language varieties of Eastern Hindi and Punjabi, from around the 12th century onwards, Urdu, and/or Hindi, were only marginally distinct at spoken popular levels. For a long time, they even had the same name. According to Indian literary or linguistic historians<sup>237</sup>, differences between Hindi and Urdu were at script, literary or elite communication levels.

European scholars of the nineteenth century, notably a Christian missionary and philologist, William Yates, insisted on the separate categorization of Hindi and Urdu<sup>238</sup>. Hindi was classified as the language of the Hindus, while Urdu was described as the language of the Muslims. The origins of both languages were wrongly traced on religious lines to languages to which they were completely unrelated. While Hindi was linked to Sanskrit, Urdu was related to Persian or Arabic. The divisive language policies of the College of Fort William in Calcutta also encouraged the differentiation and divergence of Hindi towards Sanskrit, and Urdu towards Persian. The popular language of northern India was separated into modern Hindi and modern Urdu. As communal tensions between Hindus and Muslims grew, literary tensions between the two languages also grew. This situation was further aggravated by other administrative decisions the British made over centuries of colonial rule. In 1836, for example, they decided to change from Persian as an

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<sup>236</sup> See Calvet (1974: 9).

<sup>237</sup> See, for example, Pattanayak (1988: 379) or Das (1991: 139).

<sup>238</sup> See Das (1991: 140) on Yates.

official language in their North Western Provinces to Hindi, and then, in 1837, they changed to Urdu.

The introduction of Urdu as the official language of administration and education in British Punjab, caused divisions between Punjabi Sikhs, Punjabi Hindus and Punjabi Muslims. The battle between languages and religious communities was carried out on the level of scripts, as well. Whereas before colonization, one language could be represented by more than one script<sup>239</sup>, after the advent of the British, a ‘one script: one language’ trend began to dominate India’s linguistic and literary scene. In pre-colonial times, the Manipuri language, for example, shared its script with the Bengali language. Under colonization, however, they reverted back to a much older script, different from the Bengali one, in order to emphasize a separate cultural identity. From the point of view of the majorities of illiterate, but historically extremely literature conscious Indian people, Das (1995: 36) described the tendency of an exaggerated *emotional attachment* to a particular language name or a particular script, as emanating mainly from the middle classes. The association of only one script to one language, and to one cultural and religious identity, became a dominant and divisive tendency.

Like all pre-colonial Indian texts, the sixteenth century Sikh religious book, the Guru Granth Sahib, which also invented the Gurumukhi script, was a multilingual text comprised of poems written in different languages and using different scripts. Ranging from ancient spoken and written languages such as from Prakrit and Sanskrit to Old Punjabi, the Granth Sahib also includes regionally neighbouring languages such as Khari Boli and Multani, as well as the court and literary languages of Mughal India, Persian, and Arabic, and adds new coinages created from all the mediums fused together (Shackle 1981: viii). In modern India, however, the Gurumukhi script has become inseparably identified as being part of the Punjabi language and of

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<sup>239</sup> Hindi and Urdu could be represented by the Devanagari or Arabic script, while Punjabi Sikhs preferred Braj to Gurumukhi, which was one of the languages/scripts used in their religious book, the Guru Granth Sahib.

the Sikh community. Before colonialism, all communities in the area of Punjab spoke Punjabi, also using other languages and other scripts for literary purposes. Today each religious community has made a - linguistically, religiously and culturally - exclusive choice, based on differentiation through script and/or language. Punjabi Sikhs have chosen the Punjabi language along with the Gurmukhi script, Punjabi Muslims have opted for Urdu and the Arabic script, while Punjabi Hindus identify with Hindi and the Devanagari script (Das 1995: 139).

### 6 iii In the name of Sanskritization<sup>240</sup>, language ‘purification’ and Anglicization

In the name of Sanskritization and ‘purification’ - from the nineteenth century heavily supplemented by Anglicization - Indian languages were reorganized on the basis of European grammatical categories<sup>241</sup>. This set in motion primarily artificial and elitist processes, i. e. attempts to modernize<sup>242</sup> or uplift Indian languages through a classical ‘Ursprache’<sup>243</sup>. These processes were based on European philological ideas of the existence of a hierarchy of ‘high’ to ‘low’ languages. Having established Sanskrit as India’s only ‘worthwhile’ language, European philologists regarded other Indian languages (‘vernaculars’) as needing to be ‘purified’ and ‘upgraded’ through this language. In addition, along with the dogma of ‘one language: one religion’, the Sanskrit language, as well as the processes of Sanskritization, came to be exclusively associated with the Hindu religion. According to Bhattacharya (1998: 9, 10) and Bhokta (1998), the educational system introduced under British Rule supported the Sanskritized, chaste Hindi or *shisht Hindi* ideology in schools and textbooks.

At the turn of the nineteenth century, many writers promoted such language ‘purification’ or Sankritization slogans in their own languages or writings.

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<sup>240</sup> Srinivas (1969: 6, 28) first used this concept of Sanskritization in the analysis of social change. He described the process whereby a ‘low’ Hindu caste, a tribal or other group – having achieved power through secular means – also attempted to change their customs, rituals, ideology or way of life to correlate with the traditional (ritual) symbols signifying the high status of the locally highest castes. English, or processes of Anglicization, seem to have become modern symbols of high status.

<sup>241</sup> See numerous examples of contemporary stylistic, syntactical, semantic and morphological Anglicization of Indian languages in newspapers, for example, in Krishnamurti et al (1984).

<sup>242</sup> According to Gore (1971: 233) the term ‘modernization’ is used in India (or other postcolonial countries) primarily to refer to industrial or economic development. Less emphasis is placed on stating that the social aspects of modernization (including the potential usefulness of education as an instrument for achieving modernization) are a necessary condition for the facilitation of the process of economic modernization.

<sup>243</sup> Up to the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Sanskrit was assumed to have come from a common ‘Ursprache’ (with Latin and Greek) by the ‘Indogermanisten’. This ‘Ursprache’, however, was not necessarily considered to be the original language of humankind (Römer 1985: 55). See also Bernal (1987: 229, 230).

Some even initiated similar movements, based on equally chauvinist concepts, such as the Persianization or Dravidization of their languages. Generally, it was agreed that Indian languages needed to be ‘developed’ and ‘engineered’ into the ‘right’ direction. These movements crucially influenced the development of numerous languages on the Indian subcontinent. The need for the modernization of Indian languages was linked to the need for the Sanskritization of languages spoken by Hindus and the need for the Persianization of languages spoken by Muslims. The fact that most Indian languages were spoken by more than one religious community was left unconsidered<sup>244</sup>.

In addition to launching Sanskritization movements<sup>245</sup>, growing Hindu chauvinist groups actively began to discourage the influence of Persian on any language classified as being spoken by Hindus<sup>246</sup>. What had developed into a common heritage for North Indians, under the influence of Persian on their languages, was retrospectively extracted. Bengali presents an interesting example, being a language of large majorities of both Muslims and Hindus. While Hindu Bengalis promoted the Sanskritization of Bengali, a group of Muslim writers - unsuccessfully, and under much criticism - attempted the Islamization of Bengali (Das 1984: 7). However, even after the partition of Bengal (into East Pakistan, later Bangladesh, and West Bengal), Bengali - not Urdu - remained the central language of individual, social and cultural identification for the Bengali Muslim community on both sides of the divide.

The majority of (northern) Indian languages were classified as languages spoken by Hindus, and Sanskritization processes were set in motion. Urdu was, from then onwards, associated with Islam, while other languages were associated with other religions, Punjabi with Sikhism, etc. Mainly in the

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<sup>244</sup> This is true of almost all Indian languages, such as Bengali, Sindhi, Punjabi, or Hindi, to give just a few examples.

<sup>245</sup> See for example, the ‘Nagari Pracharini Sabha’ founded in 1892 in Varanasi, which developed into a literary and cultural Academy for the development of Sanskritized Hindi (Chatterji 1973: 68).

<sup>246</sup> Such as, for example, Hindi, Marathi, or Bengali.

South, Hindu communities reacted with antagonism to such enforced Sanskritization trends. Tamil-speaking Hindu communities, for example, did not at all associate their language with the Sanskrit language. In order to preempt and counteract any such influences and to promote the independence of their language and their culture from the northern states, they initiated the Dravidianization of their language. A movement for 'pure' Tamil was initiated as a campaign against Sanskrit scholars, who continued to insist that Tamil could not survive without 'upliftment' from the religious and classical language of all Hindus. This type of planned language change, based on the exertion of political, mixed with religious dominance of some communities over another, has left its mark on South Indians' attitudes towards North Indian languages. Their antagonism against the pan-Indian promotion of Hindi is strong even today. As Das (1995: 38) points out:

*The strong anti-Hindi attitude in Tamil Nadu has its roots in the anti-Brahman and anti-Sanskrit movement. The resistance to Sanskrit and Brahmanism, Hindi and the domination of North India over South has provided a strong emotional base for several political parties ...*

Hindi itself, or the de-Persianized, Sanskritized Hindi artificially developed by colonial and now contemporary officials, began to be promoted as an official replacement for English, especially after Indian independence. According to Sheth (1990: 36) *the work of the Hindi proselytisers or of the so-called national policy on Hindi have together inhibited rather than promoted* the spread of Hindi in the non-Hindi speaking regions. Still Hindi is spoken in different variations by 38,8% of the population, used as the official language of six states, comprising 43% of the Indian population, in addition to being used as a second or third language outside the 'Hindi belt'. Sheth (1990: 36) puts the reasons for the spread of Hindi in contemporary India down to increased migration of Hindi speakers all over the country, its use in the electronic media, and the popularity of the Hindi cinema. Nevertheless, already during colonial times, other Indian languages, asserting the same right as Hindi to become India's official language, reacted with hostility. Tensions also developed between Hindi and languages similar

to, or bordering on Hindi. Having been classified as dialects of Hindi by the British, languages such as Maithili, Bhojpuri and Maghai, for example, found it difficult to counteract the hegemony of Hindi as an administrative and as an educational language in many northern states.

There were also, however, many Hindu scholars, or Urdu/Hindi/Hindustani writers, who strongly criticized the enforced artificial Persianization or Sanskritization of their languages. Their warnings, however, went unheeded. Around 1875, for example, Raja Shiva Prasad, an eminent scholar of both Sanskrit and Persian, criticized the artificial extraction of Persian or Sanskrit words from Urdu/Hindi, as being an error against the natural laws of linguistic growth. According to Prasad, the majority of people (whether Hindu or Muslim) used both Persian and Sanskrit words side-by-side without any qualms. Both elements were already naturalized in the language and had become common usage. Bharatendu Harishchandra from Varanasi, referred to as ‘the father’ of modern Hindi literature also protested strongly against such trends. He was not in favour of either an overtly Sanskritized Hindi, nor a Hindi ‘purified’ from words of Perso-Arabic origins<sup>247</sup>. Unfortunately, even in postcolonial India, such balanced views of literary scholars and popular writers have been forgotten by both communities.

By the end of the nineteenth century, the Hindi-Urdu question had left the sociolinguistic-stylistic domain, and become part of the much larger issue of an increasingly separate cultural consciousness between Hindus and Muslims in India. Divisive tendencies also became prominent among other linguistic, cultural and religious groups. While some language groups had, temporarily, accepted the new hierarchy imposed on them<sup>248</sup>, the ambivalence between other groups grew<sup>249</sup>. Again among other

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<sup>247</sup> Bharatendu Harishchandra also protested against English education and the use of the English language (see Trivedi 1991: 191).

<sup>248</sup> For example, Kashmiri dominated by Urdu in Kashmir, Punjabi and Urdu by Hindi in Punjab.

<sup>249</sup> For example, between Assamese, Bengali and Oriya.

communities, the development of separatist movements led to unbridgeable divisions<sup>250</sup>.

This now overall tense sociolinguistic situation was carried forward into the twentieth century. Even today, linguistic tensions initiated between particular language communities continue to breed disturbances and violence. With the development of regionally and linguistically diverse middle classes, each laid a claim to the exclusive legitimization of their particular language. This situation is described succinctly by Das (1995: 39):

*The hostility among languages in a multilingual situation erupts only when one linguistic group challenges the functional hierarchy of languages. With the rise of the middle class within each language community that had legitimate aspirations to share political and social power, language-tension became more acute.*

According to Sheth (1990: 35), referring to regional developments in postcolonial India, *the vernacular elite has entrenched itself firmly in power at the local and regional levels*. In the decade of the nineties, Sheth emphasizes, *the vernacular elite is struggling to acquire its hold on the levels of power at the national level*.

While written Sanskritized texts of spoken languages were promoted, the split between written and spoken versions of the same language also grew<sup>251</sup>. The artificial Sanskritization, as well as the enforced purging of Persian expressions and terminology, weakened or led to the eradication of the multiple - cultural, judiciary, political, literary - relationships between Indian languages. Such multiple links had formerly been expressed in dialects, jargons and idioms shared by the larger (subcontinental) Indian linguistic community. Indian languages were recast, in diverse ways, into textualized, codified forms. The vast majority of illiterate people had less and less access to these newly created literary and cultural texts, the existing modes of oral transmission (including the oral transmission of written literature, accessible

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<sup>250</sup> For example, between Tamil and Sanskrit, or Hindi and Urdu.

<sup>251</sup> See also Coulmas (1986: 111) who gives the 'wrong' reasons for the the divergence between written and spoken versions of South Asian languages.

to all sections of the population) were abandoned<sup>252</sup>. According to Chatterjee (1995: 52) in reference to Bengali, for example:

*... the new written prose of late nineteenth century Calcutta, in what may be called its post-Bankim phase, was distinct not so much as a "development" of earlier narrative forms but fundamentally by virtue of its adoption of a wholly different, that is, modern European, discursive framework. Recent studies have identified the ways in which grammatical models borrowed from the modern European languages shaped the "standard" syntactic forms of modern Bengali prose other studies have shown similar "modular" influences of rhetorical forms borrowed from English in particular.*

Languages 'lucky' enough to have been Sanskritized, as well as fixed through the print form, became languages of power within the larger linguistic communities. Nevertheless, less privileged languages or language variations continue to survive on the spoken level.

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<sup>252</sup> See also Shahidullah (1996) and Acharya (1996) on a discussion of the oral (mother tongue) transmission of book/manuscript learning for the purpose of learning to read and write in pre-colonial primary education in India.

## 7 The intervention of English as an exclusive link language

With the beginning of the twentieth century in India, English replaced both Persian and Urdu on all official levels. Most writers of Persian also realized that as a literary and an (elite) intellectual language for a wide audience, both in and outside of India, Persian no longer had a role to play. Indian scholars and thinkers now found English, a language *useful for quick communication*, to be the means for reaching out to a wide, powerful public, including their political masters (Das 1991: 224). From then onwards, the English language (as well as, to a much lesser extent, Hindi and Sanskrit) played two of the most important roles, formerly fulfilled by numerous Indian languages at various levels. English became the link language among those sections of the population from different language backgrounds, now exclusively considered to be ‘educated’<sup>253</sup>. Writers continuing to use their own languages as spoken or literary media, were educated and read literature in English (Trivedi 1991: 180-205)<sup>254</sup>. At all established levels, English also became the mediator of interaction between the Indian languages themselves. Texts from one Indian language were no longer translated directly into another Indian language, English became the intermediary. With time, *the habit of dependence upon an English translation became common*<sup>255</sup>. The relationship between Indian languages and other European languages, too, depended heavily on English.

The intervention of English in the multilingual scenario of India, also had an effect on the literary scene. Historically, Indian literature, whether ‘classical’ or ‘regional’ had been largely multilingual. The court language and prestigious literary language of numerous Muslim communities (also outside of India), such as Persian, for example, was used by numerous writers, side-by-side with other (mother tongue) Indian languages. In pre-colonial times,

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<sup>253</sup> See Dias’ discussion (1985: 148) on socially and economically privileged groups in ‘Third world’ countries, who went through the colonial school system to become ‘the educated ones’ in opposition to the ‘uneducated mass’.

<sup>254</sup> See also Tagore or Gandhi, for example, both educated through English.

<sup>255</sup> See also Krishnamurti et al (1984).

the dissemination of both written and oral literature depended on the involvement of all social and linguistic groups. The literary people producing written literary texts, depended on the oral transmission of these texts for distribution throughout the subcontinent. From the twentieth century onwards, the split between oral and written literature was reinforced by the increased importance attached to the written/printed medium. The change from local literary genres to new European or English ones also left its marks.

According to Das (1991: 35), other factors, such as the growth of the middle class, as well as their discovery of *the potentiality of the printed word*, created a new literature written primarily by the middle class for the benefit of the middle class<sup>256</sup>. The old literatures had been *the expression of the mass minds* of the people, they could be performed in the villages, accompanied by music, could be recited, performed as street plays, or could take place in the form of poetic contests or literary discussions, therefore, they excluded no one from becoming literature conscious. According to Mansingh<sup>257</sup>, in reference to modern Oriya literature, the newly evolved literature in the printed form failed to make an impression on the majority of Indian people:

*... the old Oriya literature served its purpose in a unique manner as the expression of the mass minds of the Oriyas ... It had filled Orissa's 50,000 villages with music, recitation, street plays, poetic contests and literary discussions. In a word it had made the whole of Orissan people, women not excluded, literature conscious.*

English did not only take over most of the official, governmental, and administrative roles in Indian society, or become the most recognized medium of literary expression, English also became the main medium of instruction. From then onwards, English can be said to have played a dual role on the Indian subcontinent (Das 1991:224). While, on the one hand, it became *a force of unification* for the new colonially grown middle class elite, it, on the other hand, became an act of displacement. For the oppressed

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<sup>256</sup> See also Acharya (1996) and Shahidullah (1996) on the role of mother tongue education in promoting creative/written and oral learning and literature.

<sup>257</sup> See Das (1991: 35) for discussion of Mayadhar Mansingh's ideas.

majorities, their languages and their literatures it became an *impediment*. According to the analysis of the English-educated, but Hindi language writer, Bharatendu Harishchandra from Varanasi<sup>258</sup>:

*The English by getting us interested in knowledge drew our minds to politics, not that they gave us true knowledge either, and this is the reason why we were entranced by their maya and could not see our own harm.*

The numerous and varied Indian languages that had, for example, fulfilled diverse literary, administrative, and educational functions before the advent of English, were displaced. During the Mughal period, the high status users of pre-colonial courtly, religious/ritual, or literary languages, such as Persian, Sanskrit or Arabic, had never denied other Indian languages their right to continue to exist, develop and flourish in the same, or in other, literary, courtly or cultural spheres<sup>259</sup>. Nor had the users of courtly, religious or literary languages denied other Indian ('folk') languages the right to call themselves 'languages'.

Macaulay's *class of interpreters* were automatically put in charge of regulating the growth of modern Indian languages (and 'vernaculars'), as well as modern Indian literature (as opposed to 'inferior oral culture'). Modern Indian literatures and languages came to be defined in relation to English literature and European civilization (Das 1991: 87). As British historians divided India into Hindu, Muslim and British periods of history, Indian history was also separated into a period of 'modernity' and a 'traditional' period (Thapar 1975). The newly evolved Anglicized middle class came to view their own creations as 'modern' and denigrated the creativity of the rest of the population as 'conventional, traditional, or medieval'<sup>260</sup>. There were also writers continuing to use their mother tongues as literary media, who went against such trends. According to Chatterjee (1995: 51) such bilingual / bi-dialectal writers among the middle classes

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<sup>258</sup> See Trivedi (1991: 191) for a discussion of his ideas.

<sup>259</sup> See chapter 1 i.

<sup>260</sup> See, for example, the discussion of the attitudes of Indo-Anglian or Anglo-Indian writers and literary critics in PART IV, chapter 8 i, 8 ii.

sought to revive the pre-colonial traditions of religious reformers and poets ranging from Buddha, Kalidasa, Kabir, the compilers of the Guru Granth Sahib to the Bhakti movement: whose major objectives were to reach vast local (literate and oral) audiences. In his writing, the Bengali religious reformer and philosopher, Ramakrishna, for example, created a ‘new’ language, by combining ‘the rustic’ style associated with the language of villagers, with the new sophisticated style associated with urban ‘high culture’, in order to counteract dominant trends discriminating everything rural as ‘parochial’.

Numerous Indian linguists have critically examined the ‘modernization processes’ of Indian languages, which have become exclusively associated with ‘Westernization’ or Anglicization. Such associations which allow for no adequate, organic acculturation processes or cultural growth to develop, instead continuing to connote European cultural ‘superiority’ and domination, have been rejected by some (Alisjahbana 1967: 6). Nevertheless, reality has shown, that the association of English as *the vehicle of scientific and technological know-how as also the language of the administration and various prestigious vocations* (Srivastava 1984: 43), continues to be the determining factor in contemporary developments of the lexis, syntax and semantics of all Indian languages<sup>261</sup>. In stark contrast, at university levels, for example, while Indian languages *have been confined to the subjects relating to the humanities* (Srivastava 1984: 43), English has become the technical, professional and scientific language.

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<sup>261</sup> See Krishnamurti et al (1984).

## 7 i     **The Anglicization of India**

Kochhar (1992: 2609) has succinctly summed up the colonial project of English education in India:

*English education was introduced by the British with the twin purpose of impressing upon the natives the value of western thought and of preparing them for taking up jobs to assist in the administration of the country. The first protégés were Hindus and there developed a Hindu middle class which began to demand concessions from the government without offering subservience in return. The British then began to encourage the Muslims to adopt English education in order to develop a counterpoise to Hindu middle class assertiveness. But among both communities English education was strictly an upper class affair in which the lower castes had no role.*

By the twentieth century, the English-educated (bilingual/diglossic) elite grappled with the ideological construction of an Indian nationality, partially based on the European traditions that dominated their thinking (Anderson 1991: 140):

*As bilingual intelligentsias, ... and above all as early-twentieth century intelligentsias, they had access, inside the classroom and outside, to models of nation, nation-ness, and nationalism distilled from the turbulent, chaotic experiences of more than a century of American and European history.*

In dealing with the *subalternity* specifically of the Bengali elite, Chatterjee (1995: 37, 72, 73, 74) emphasizes the middle class extension of the nationalist project. They formulated their *sanitized appropriation of the popular*, their *classicization of Indian traditions*, along with their critique of colonial rule. Their aim was not to criticize Britain's imposition of *alien institutions of state on indigenous society*, instead their voices of dissent pointed out that colonial rule was *restricting and even violating the true principles of modern government*. The 'moral ideals' taught to middle class Indians were not being adhered to by the British rulers themselves.

Indian identity was increasingly asserted and divided in terms of religion, language and history. The growing emphasis placed on (separating and categorizing) the linguistic, or religious identity of Indian communities culminated in the process of the linguistic reorganization of states in India, after independence. It was, however, also a reaction against colonial British divisions of India into princely states. Shortly before independence, in his *Report to the Bombay Presidency*, Ambedkar (1991: 15), leader of the Dalit movement<sup>262</sup>, as well as the movement for Indian independence, argued against one such linguistic reorganization, i. e. the planned separation of Karnataka from the Bombay Presidency. Instead of creating among the mass of people the sense of a common nationality, Ambedkar warned, this measure would harden local patriotism and group consciousness and emphasize people's identity as being primarily Hindus, Muslims, Sindhis or Kanarese. According to Ambedkar, the heterogeneous character of the Bombay province, which already provided *a common cycle of participation for a polyglot people which must go a great deal to prevent the growth of this separatist feeling*, would only suffer with further divisions.

The changes and reorganization of linguistic, cultural, literary and religious hierarchical power structures - superimposed by English - created new, but deep imbalances in pluralist Indian society. With the systematic expansion of English over the Indian subcontinent, the British further promoted such differences in order to stabilize their domination over an alien people. According to Thapar (1975: 14), political separatism between different communities in the colony was consciously encouraged by the colonial power. Historically, the differences inherent in Indian society, had not necessarily been divisive elements. Yet, under colonial rule *divisiveness* as a distinct colonial policy, i. e. the British *divide and rule* dogma, came to be clearly formulated as part of the colonial ideology.

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<sup>262</sup> Himself from a low caste background, during the Indian independence struggle, B. R. Ambedkar became a leader of the Dalit movement (comprised of people coming from the lowest castes of the Indian caste system). He took a leading part in the framing of the Indian constitution, which outlaws discrimination against Dalits. He became the first law minister of independent India, but resigned in 1951, disappointed with his lack of influence in the government (Encyclopaedia Britannica 1977: vol. 1, 317).

In 1813, an East India Company official<sup>263</sup>, in a speech given before the Parliamentary Committee, had argued that the security of the Empire rested on the *general division of the great communities under the Government ... while they continue divided in this manner, no insurrection is likely to shake the stability of our power*. Colonialism enhanced differences within the colonial community, and constructed them into divisive elements. The colonial ideologues then proceeded to argue for the necessity of replacing such ‘divisive’ *traditional indigenous (cultural, social or linguistic) structures* by ‘unifying’ *modern European ones* (Calvet 1978: 46). In this way, in the case of India, for example, European class divisions were either superimposed on to or completely replaced the local (caste) hierarchies of the colony. Having divided up the people, their multiple political, cultural and social systems, the colonials held out colonial assimilation as a *unifying* element. ‘Development’, via English education, was offered as a remedy for a divided nation. The colonials were prepared to ‘develop’ and educate a chosen elite, which, in turn, being bilingual/bicultural, were given the task of ‘developing’, ‘educating’ and ‘assimilating’ the ‘masses’ of Indian people. Such colonial attempts to *mediate* between different antagonistic communities and to *develop* their society into a modern and *better* world of Western values and codes, have been sharply criticized by critical postcolonial thinkers<sup>264</sup>.

In the colonial version of Indian history, and in the newly set up *classificatory grid* of Indian languages and communities, multilingualism came to be classified as a *phenomenon* otherwise *unknown* and was to be treated as a *puzzling problem*. It was considered to be the prime cause for the successful spread of the English language. The reclassification and recategorization of India, included a historical ‘translation of India’, and was constructed on the (only seemingly oppositional) theories of such ‘India experts’ as William Jones and James Mill. In retrospect, their analyses

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<sup>263</sup> For John Malcolm’s opinions see Ram (1983: 235).

<sup>264</sup> According to Alvarez (1992: 110), for example, such development can be described as just another term for plunder.

helped to legitimize colonial rule by hierarchically rearranging Indian events into their versions of a universal history. *Anarchical* India, opposed by a *superior* British civilization, as well as the ‘obligation’ of the latter saving the former, came to be seen as *a historical necessity* (Joshi 1991: 14). Even today, diversity, multilingualism, and pluralism are made responsible for India’s *easy* colonial conquest. In the words of the pre- and post-independence Indian English writer, Mulk Raj Anand<sup>265</sup> (1973: 42):

*We ourselves were so divided by the different languages for a thousand years that five hundred foreign militarists could always conquer large chunks of India and enslave us. The English language united us...*

Despite the social, political, and cultural divisions of Indian communities, ancient subcontinental ideas, structures and communication channels open to interactions between all communities, survived and played a vital role in the independence movement.

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<sup>265</sup> Anand is an eminent writer, known for his literary critique of Indian social conditions.

## 7 ii The asymmetrical Indianization of English

While ‘British versions’ of Indian languages became powerful and gained currency, Indian versions of English, even today, continue to be regarded with disapproval and dismay. Through translations, the writing of grammars or dictionaries, the British in India had forced Indian languages to change, in ways they considered to be *uplifting*. In the case of Indian languages this had meant Sanskritization as *purification* and Anglicization as *modernization*. Whichever way Indians made use of the English language, it was intended to be kept firmly under the control of its British donors. Though they themselves promoted English in India, British administrators became increasingly *worried* about the *standards* Indians would be able to uphold. Even for the contemporary linguist Crystal (1997: 2), such feelings of being the ‘proprietors’ of a particular language are quite ‘natural’ for mother tongue speakers of English:

*We are all sensitive to the way other people use (or, it is more often said, abuse) ‘our’ language.*

Seldom are middle class, standard, native speakers of English described as ‘abusing’ their language. This ‘task’ is left either to those considered to be lower class, or those not considered to be native speakers<sup>266</sup>. Nevertheless, as language change cannot be fully dictated, but is a *natural and inevitable* process, that needs to be endorsed by its speech community (Aitchison 1981: 234). Even politically subjugated users can continue to be linguistically creative or innovative (Calvet 1978: 75-84). According to Calvet (1974: 156), the struggle underground produces its own weapons: the dominated languages contain a number of ironic expressions, constituting the most subtle political analysis:

*Et ce maquis produit d'ailleurs ses propres armes. Les langues dominées regorgent d'expressions ironiques qui constituent l'analyse politique la plus fine.*

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<sup>266</sup> See also chapter 1 ii.

As the *peculiarity* of Indian social customs and linguistic habits had already become a recurrent theme for European anthropologists, sociologists, and historians, the English that a tiny minority of Indians had been taught to speak necessarily came to be labelled as *deviant*. When the British Crown administration took over from the East India Company officials in 1857, they argued that it was of utmost importance that any language used for official, administrative, judicial and bureaucratic purposes of governance, or for other such transactions, had to be fully intelligible to all those involved in processing the documents and ruling the Indian subcontinent thousands of miles away in Britain. There were to be no more problems of intelligibility between British officials in India (who could be either British or Indian) and their counterparts in Britain. Obviously such difficulties had occurred during the reign of the East India Company.

When the British first arrived on the Indian subcontinent, they had availed of the Portuguese lingua franca already in use among the other Europeans for their transactions. Already at that time, the Portuguese translators employed in Britain and other parts of Europe had complained that the variety used in documents and letters coming from India was unintelligible to them (Sinha 1978: 5, 6). Later on, the same problem arose in regard to the variety of English used by Company officials in India. The main problem, according to a British administrator (Wilson 1855: i, ii), was related to the fact that the majority of British officials in India *thickly studded* their Company documents and correspondence with terms adopted from Indian languages, *without any explanation of their purport*. This made the documents difficult to understand for the officials processing them in Britain.

The purpose of reference guides such as Wilson's Judicial and Administrative Glossary (1855) or Yule and Burnell's Hobson-Jobson (published in 1886), was to - etymologically or dialectologically - clarify to administrators in Britain, or those new in India, the variety of English used in India. Wilson's Glossary of Judicial and Revenue Terms (published in

1855) explained the Urdu, Persian and Hindustani items which confounded British readers of Anglo-Indian documents and correspondence. British administrators also availed of the Hobson-Jobson - the title of which is in itself based on the misuse of an Indian religious line - as a guide to words of Indian (Hindustani), or Portuguese Indian origin, that had no English equivalents. While even contemporary sociolinguistic theories consider English loan-words, or English hybrids in Indian languages the result of the colonized languages' incapacity to handle *the modern world*, the same credit was not given to indigenous languages for their generous supply of loan-words to the English language. On the contrary, British etymologists of the time stressed that the changes English underwent were in no way related to its inadequacy as a foreign language in the new Indian environment.

The authors of Hobson-Jobson, Yule and Burnell (1886: XV), for example, pointed disparagingly to Indian loan-words as having *insinuated* themselves into English and insisted on their *modern* uselessness:

*Considering the long intercourse with India, it is noteworthy that the additions which have thus accrued to the English language are, from the intellectual standpoint, of no intrinsic value. Nearly all the borrowed words refer to material facts, or to peculiar customs and stages of society, and, though a few of them furnish allusions to the penny-a-liner, they do not represent new ideas.*

Attempts were made to halt this *corruption* of the British English *motherland standard*, and to rescue English in India - characterized as this *collection of freaks of language* - from *a state of degeneration* (Goffin 1934: 20, Trevelyan 1838: 114). Such attempted purification processes were not an easy task. During colonial times, *the problem* seemed to have been just as much the language of British mother tongue speakers, whose English lexis and style had been greatly influenced by their new environment, as the English language of Indian speakers.

It has been widely documented, for example, that at the beginning of their sojourn in India, East India Company traders and officials adopted an excessively courteous style of English. Being eager to ingratiate themselves

to local rulers on whose hospitality their flourishing trade still depended, they addressed Indian dignitaries, in a style they assumed would give them the most favourable response. Developed by British agents communicating to Indian dignitaries, this style of speech has influenced the English used by Indians today. Examples of this style of speech in English, can be found in the letters written by East India Company agents to local rulers. The following citation is an extract of a letter written in 1711, by a British agent in Bengal and addressed to the Mughal viceroy<sup>267</sup>:

*...with the humblest submission ... dedicating at your feet the life wholly dedicated to your service ... (I present my petition) ... after kissing the ground on which treads the greatest and most powerful prince ...*

British styles of exaggerated language matched the exaggerated pomp of many of their *social functions*, including, for example, public examinations and disputations. In Calcutta, for example, *disputations in Indian languages were conducted in a large and stately columned (government) hall paved with dark grey marble and illuminated by costly imported chandeliers*. An onlooker to this ostentatiously ceremonial occasion made the following remarks (Kopf 1969: 62, 63):

*In a state chair covered with crimson velvet and richly gilt, with a group of aides-de-camp and secretaries standing behind him, sat the Governor-General. Two servants with state punkahs of crimson silk were fanning him, and behind them again were several Native servants bearing silver staffs. Next to him, on either side, were seated the examiners, and below them again, the most distinguished ladies of the Presidency. Next in an open space, were two small rostrums for the disputants, and chairs for the professors; the room behind these, and fronting the Marquis, was quite filled with company, and in the rear of all, the bodyguard was drawn up in full uniforms of scarlet with naked sabres.*

When British officials transferred the administrative work of running the colony to *armies of bilingual clerks*, they were also expected to adopt a *deferential* language of politeness when addressing their British *masters* (Parasher 1983: 40):

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<sup>267</sup> Wilson (1895: 22) cites as letter written by J. Russell to Azimus-shan Khan.

*...during India's long history of British colonialism, it was a usual practice among civil servants to address their superiors in an artificially polite style.*

At the beginning of the century, Gandhi (1965: 12) assumed he would be able to trace the excessive usage of such *meek words* in the English of Indians to Indian mother tongue languages. He felt that such *a large number of words denoting an excess of meekness* had developed under the colonial subjection Indians had been forced to live under for centuries. The only possibility for a revitalization of Indian languages had to come from the Indian people themselves. *Though covered with rust, courage would shine forth* both in the people and in their languages (Gandhi 1965: 11). He warned, however, that the mere *importing of words expressive of courage or compassion from other tongues will not enrich or widen the content of a language nor make its speakers brave and kind*. Courage had to come from within the people themselves.

What Gandhi realized is that positive 'development' or 'modernization' processes could not be forced upon a language, or its speakers. Nor did the use of 'modern' words, terms, or concepts enable a community to be modern. Gandhi was well aware that importing words or a whole language, however rich with particular concepts or ideas, did not establish a new character for the individual or community using this new idea or variety. A widely-held functional view on sociolinguistic causes of language change *involves the notion of need - need is certainly relevant at the level of vocabulary. Language alters as the needs of its users alter* (Aitchison 1981: 124). Nevertheless, Aitchison (1981: 127) points out, *sociolinguistic factors alone cannot set off a change: the language must be ready to move in that particular direction*. In regard to colonial relations between ruling and ruled languages, Calvet (1974: 90) points out the need to look for the systematic linguistic traces of political domination in the language itself. This could be to see how extensively a ruled language is forced to borrow from the ruling language:

*Les emprunts que se font mutuellement deux communautés linguistiques témoignent des types de rapports qu'entretiennent ou qu'on entretenus ces communautés ...*

The Bengali writer and educationalist, Tagore, also analysed the structure of the English language in India. Tagore (1996: 476) found that Indians had become dependent on the economic advantages English promised. They had become so obsessed with the correctness of their English language, that they disregarded the importance of content and concentrated only on correct grammar and style:

*We are always afraid lest we should lose some petty advantage in our attempts to acquire true learning, lest our preparedness for clerical work should be delayed, lest the English of our petition-writing lose its correct grammatical whine.*

Such tendencies towards hypercorrect behaviour have also been analysed in connection with socially and linguistically insecure, lower middle class speakers of a language<sup>268</sup>. Anxious to improve their low status, which they assume is betrayed by their social variation, they over-emphasize standard styles and pronunciations. Though part of their own society's privileged class, the international ranking of English-speaking Indians is not high, a factor that may well enhance their insecurity towards English. Their often *hypercontrolled language* seems to result out of a feeling of not being privileged enough to make free use of the language, for fear of their discourse being invested with a low social value<sup>269</sup>. In addition, a lack or inadequacy of modern textbooks in Indian schools, complemented by an even greater lack of spoken practice, has forced students of English at every level of their education, to use written standards of English while speaking, too many constricting grammatical structures, and ready-made phrases or fixed expressions. According to Pattanayak (1981: 162), fossilized English education has produced only prescriptive rules that have moulded this variety of English language comparable to *an animal in a zoo breeding in captivity and lacking the vitality and freedom of an animal in the jungle*.

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<sup>268</sup> See, for example, Aitchison (1981: 66), or Labov (1972).

<sup>269</sup> See Bourdieu (1977: 652, 655).

Although analysts of Indian English mock its exaggerated use of formal and polite registers<sup>270</sup>, this style continues to be representative of *elite* speakers in India today (Gupta 1987: 8). Criticized for being less a necessary medium of communication, and more a symbolic language full of *vagueness*, *non-committalness*, as well as *pompousness* (Das 1982), Mulji (1986: 19) stresses the ‘verbosity’ of Indian English:

*Indian English can be extremely verbose and repetitive. Once a person has the ear of an audience or holds a pen in his hand there is no knowing when he will surrender it.*

In order to prove that English in India has been used by various social classes, European scholars occasionally wrote about its regional or social aspects. At the end of the nineteenth century, the European philologist, Schuchardt (1891), distinguished between the *Indo-English* language the British used in India, and the English varieties the Indians used, which he classified as *creole dialects*. According to (Schuchardt 1909: 69) the English of the British was also affected by *language simplification* processes. When communicating to Indians, they often used pidginized versions of English.

Schuchardt (1891: 47, 48) also distinguished between different English variations used by Indians and determined by their educational background and type of employment under the British. ‘Butler English’ of Madras, for example, was a register used by Indians working in British households. The English spoken by such ‘butlers’ was also affected by the language of their masters, who believed *that to enable a native to understand English, he must be addressed as if he were deaf, and in the most infantile language* (Schuchardt 1909). Whatever other varieties of English (‘Babu’ or ‘Cheechee’ English) evolved in India, they all depended on the particular type of contact established by the British in relation to Indians during colonial rule. They were all relationships in which the dominant addressed the subservient, the latter being forced to learn as much as of the foreign language, as was required for his employment.

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<sup>270</sup> See, for example, Mehrotra’s references (1982: 151) to this style.

Once the British had established this asymmetrical type of linguistic contact through their colonial relationship, they set about correcting the grammar and style of English used by Indians. They ignored the fact, that the extent to which English had been learnt, adequately related to its limited functions and domains of use. The flood of English books published for Indians, at the end of the nineteenth century, mainly concentrated on grammatical *deviations*. The bulk constituted corrective teaching material in the line of Bradshaw's Madras Readers (1888), or Paul's Indian Student's Guide to the Use of English Idioms (1883), or McMordie's Studies in English (1880). Such readers taught Indians the English language mainly through English literary exercises, English proverbs, and English idioms. Whitworth's (1907) Errors of Idiom made by Indians in writing English, for example, *translated* the English written by Indians into standard British English, while minutely describing *common* Indian article, adverb, pronoun or tense *misuse*, as well as listing *errors* in word order, idioms, figures of speech, or compound expressions. According to the contemporary linguist, Gupta (1991: 20), English teaching methods fixated on such excessively correct usages of English in regard to the *once-colonized* peoples, only in order to keep them out of the powerful inner circles of standard mother tongue speakers of English:

*... the entire vocabulary of English language learning and teaching is loaded to suggest the 'difficulties' for the learner, and a major part of E.L.T. research is devoted to 'errors' and 'deviations'.*

In reference to the value of the Black English variation spoken by African Americans, Smitherman (1986: 185, 191) refers to the continued predominance of *the oppressive 'doctrine of correctness'*. Developed *from a long-standing tradition of elitism in American life and language matters*, this doctrine keeps alive popular misconceptions about 'standard' English and 'correct' speech. Despite the fact that linguists have attempted to dispel myths about languages in general, such as the supposition that there are 'primitive', 'underdeveloped' or 'inferior' languages, or that a 'standard' language is *governed by rules and regulations*, while a 'dialect' is *sloppy*

*and unsystematic*, Smitherman (1986: 191) points to the public school as continuing to be *the main institution perpetuating myths and inaccuracies about language*.

### 7 iii One globalized or many independent language standards?

In all their colonial contacts, the Europeans were confronted with a diversity of spoken and/or written languages. In some cases, such as Nigeria's (Awonusi 1983) or New Guinea's (Sankoff 1980), colonial domination resulted in the evolution of an English-influenced lingua franca, superimposed by an official, educated British variety of English. In some East African countries, English was supplemented by an indigenous link language (Swahili), in Indonesia's or Malaysia's case, by an ancient coastal trade language, now given the status of an official language. In order to take part in political, techno-economic and scientific-academic discourses, such heritages have required people of 'Third World' countries (as well as immigrants to the 'First World'), as opposed to the largely monolingual people of 'First World' countries, to supplement their already multilingual realities by the acquisition of yet another language, marginalizing all their other languages<sup>271</sup>. For postcolonial societies the ruling language(s) have remained the language of the previous colonizers', plus the indigenous language of the ruling class, plus the mother tongue.

From colonial times onwards, the status of English, used as an additional language by Indians, has not been equal to the status of the (standard) language used by (mother tongue) British, American, Australian, New Zealand, Canadian or even white South African speakers<sup>272</sup>. Today, contemporary Indian sociolinguists such as Mehrotra (1982: 151), Nihalani, Tongue & Hosali (1979) or Kachru (1996) criticize the use of standard British English as a continuing point of reference for the English variety used in India. Mehrotra (1982: 151) defines it as problematic, that Indian English continues to be labelled an *aberration* from British *norms*, full of *failures* and *inabilities*, a *deviant* rather than a *variant* form<sup>273</sup>. According to

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<sup>271</sup> See Jouhy (1985: 185) for a discussion on this.

<sup>272</sup> Still, in anthologies of English, such as for example, Cheshire's (1991) compilation of English around the World, South Asian Englishes are included.

<sup>273</sup> See also Parasher (1983: 41), Labru (1984: 78, 97).

such linguists, a more modern approach would be to analyse the sociolinguistic significance of the stylistic or lexical differences of these Indian variations. The important questions in this approach would relate to whether Indian variations hinder communication or not (Parasher 1983), and in which domains they frequently occur. For Calvet (1978: 84) the important question would be whether variations occurred in institutionally powerful domains, i. e. legal-political or academic domains or in other less powerful domains of use. For Gupta (1991: 20) it remains questionable whether it is worth gaining, the limited recognition available, by painstakingly acquiring the colonizer's language, as long as India's previous colonizers continue to retain the power to define themselves as superior, on so many international, political, economic, military and cultural levels:

*... English has to be learnt exactly and accurately, with extreme care and unceasing effort, though all this may finally prove to be futile, for in the ultimate analysis how can mere mortals (the black or dark race) acquire the language of gods (the white race).*

Sociolinguistic debates have centred around the issue of whether Indian English qualifies as an English variety or as an independent Indian variety. Though English in India is a language learnt in school, not as a mother tongue language, it is included in anthologies of *varieties of English*, side by side with mother tongue American or Australian English. The *common basis* of these disparate varieties is the fact that they were transported and developed thousands of miles away from their place of origin. This blurs major differences between mother tongue and foreign languages, however. Kachru (1983: 67) classifies all varieties of postcolonial Englishes as being *non-native, legacies of the colonial period, that have mainly developed in 'un-English' cultural and linguistic contexts in various parts of the world, wherever the arm of the western colonizers reached*. He does not distinguish between American and Indian English. Correctly speaking, however, only the now extinct language variety (the English spoken by the British in India) would have been comparable to *American* or *Australian* versions of English. The contemporary English variation adopted and developed by Indians as a foreign or additional language, even if heavily influenced by British English

(Kachru 1983), cannot be put in the same category as the English mother tongue variety spoken by Canadians, Americans, Australians or New Zealanders. In the Indian linguistic situation, first language(s) interference with English is very strong. The majority of those that use English in very specific formal circumstances, use their mother tongue/s in complementary informal situations. While English in India may be a displaced language, it is not the language of a displaced people, or of communities who have been completely forced to give up their mother tongues, such as, for example, African American speakers of English. Mohan (1982: 292) is one of the few contemporary sociolinguists who states this fact clearly:

*English in America (the US and Canada) and Australia is genuinely native-spoken English, transplanted there by the English themselves. These transplants have since taken on their distinctive characteristics by growing up with transplanted English populations who never had any other language - real natives, with native intuitions...*

The existence of regional or pidginized varieties of English in India has been taken as proof of the Indianization of English, which in turn serve to justify an independent status from a native Anglo/American standards. The *Indianization* of English is seen as a parallel process to the *Englishization* of Indian languages by linguists such as Kachru (1986: 31). Kachru refers to Britain's *earliest efforts toward the Englishization of India*, as being part of the *firm foundation laid for the acculturation and Indianization of the English language*. The distinction between a dominant colonial and a dominated colonized culture is not made. Processes of subjugation are not distinguished from processes of *acculturation*. While the Englishization of India was a process forced upon Indians, the Indianization of English was a voluntary reverse process initiated by Indians themselves. 'Real' Indian English, however, is a variety few established Indians would be proud to use.

According to Calvet (1978: 96), in the Indian context, English in India remains the dominating language over numerous dominated languages. It is the language of administration, of power, in short, the language of

oppression. The invention of the notion of the Indianness of English running parallel to Englishness or Americanness ignores the highly varying percentages of the British, American or Indian people who speak this language. In addition, no amount of *contextualization*, i. e. the collection of a certain number of lexical and cultural interferences, can alter the neo-colonial status of the language (Calvet 1974: 117):

*C'est pourquoi il est pour le moins curieux de voir certains linguistes tenter de présenter la situation indienne sous un jour largement différent. Ainsi, Braj Kachru<sup>274</sup> invente la notion d'indianité de l'anglais des Indes (indian english) qu'il met sur le même que l'anglicité de l'anglais britanniques et l'américanité de l'anglais des U. S. A. (indianness, englishness, americanness), sans se demander quel est le pourcentage de la population anglaise ou américaine qui parle anglais, et sans penser à comparer ce pourcentage à celui de la population indienne parlant cette langue: le résultat serait pourtant instructif. Accumulant un certain nombre d'interférences lexicales et culturelles, B. Kachru croit ainsi pouvoir parler de "contextualisation" de l'anglais. Mais cette "contextualisation" n'enlève rien au statut néo-colonial de la langue.*

Sociolinguists such as Hosali (1982), Nihalani, Tongue & Hosali (1979), Verma (1982), Mehrotra (1982), Platt, Weber & Ho (1984) have emphasized that the presence of English in specific official domains relates directly to the absence of Indian languages. The power of English depends on the powerlessness of Indian languages. According to these linguists, the *cline of bilingualism* runs parallel to a *cline of power*. The knowledge of English alone is not an advantage if the user is not a member of the right class. The social background of an individual determines whether English is a necessary qualification, what particular standard of English is to be expected. In what domains it is used, and for which particular functions. Without the necessary social background, knowledge of English alone is of little use. According to Bourdieu (1977: 652) *a language is worth only what those who speak it are worth*<sup>275</sup>.

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<sup>274</sup> Braj B. Kachru, "Indian English: A Study in Contextualization", *In Memory of J. R. Firth*, London, 1966, p. 255-287.

<sup>275</sup> See discussion further down on the globally and nationally most powerful varieties of English (Bourdieu 1977, Mohan 1986a, Pattanayak 1981, etc.).

Many of the English varieties used in India, such as, for example, butler, clerks', peddlers', shopkeepers' or taxi-drivers' English are functional *interlanguages* that depend on repeated contact with English speakers, and are best described as partially acquired foreign languages. The fact that they are to a large extent mixed with local languages, or even strongly influenced by them, does not necessarily point to *the indigenization of English*. The important aspect in regard to these functional variations is that Indian speech communities do not use these varieties among themselves, nor do they stop using their mother tongues when speaking English to foreigners. Such varieties are learnt for specific work purposes and have low rates of acceptability. They are used in asymmetrical, *deferential* and *formal* relationships, which characterizes relations between *master and servant*, or *inferior and superior* (Hosali 1982).

Another English variation in India, i. e. 'Babu' administrative English, fitted somewhere in the middle of the scale of acceptability, has remained a more written than spoken bureaucratic code. It continues to influence middle class Indians' notions of acceptable English, which have remained slightly dated (Parasher 1983). The variety of English formerly acquired by 'Eurasians' through English-medium schooling, and referred to as 'convent school English' during the colonial period, belongs to a different category. Hardly exposed to *the contemporary living idiom of English* or the colloquial range of the native speaker (Pattanayak 1981: 163), Indian students' primarily convent school acquired English continues to be modelled on English *literary classics* and other *scholarly works* (Labru 1984: 14).

This formally acquired variety of English continues to have a high acceptability rate among the educated upper / middle classes and is, at times, even complemented by increased use of English at home. According to Sheth (1990: 34), however, even today, this *English-only* system of schooling in India caters only to those that can afford it:

*One school system caters to those who can afford private schooling, the so-called 'public schools' in which English is the medium of instruction from the first standard. Even the*

*nursery schools belonging to this system use English as the first language. In these schools children are discouraged to use the language they speak at home even as peer group language.*

Sridhar (1977: 117) insists that for the development of an *Indian model of English* its use in education is necessary. Parasher (1979a) deems an educated Indian model of English intelligible to speakers of other educated varieties to be the most suitable model for teaching. Most linguists differ, however, on the question whether this model of 'educated' English has at all been Indianized. According to Daswani (1986), Kachru (1985), and Parasher (1983) the dominant minority of educated English-using Indians prefer to rely on external prestigious (international) British or even American *standards* of English. They do not intend their English to be Indianized (Nihalani et al 1979: 3). In this context, the usefulness of categorizing (and as a result teaching) English in India not as a foreign, but as a *second language variety*<sup>276</sup> and as a medium of instruction needs to be questioned. According to Phillipson (1988: 349), the *professionalization of English Language Teaching* (ELT) has led to the establishment of specific *key tenets* specifying the ways and methods of teaching:

- *English is best taught monolingually*
- *the ideal teacher of English is a native speaker*
- *the earlier English is introduced the better the results*
- *the more English is taught the better the results*
- *the more English is taught the better the results*
- *if other languages are used much, standards of English will drop.*

These dogmas of ELT<sup>277</sup> enjoy exceptional validity, despite the fact that they run contrary to recent research completed on first and second language acquisition. They also run contrary to the recommended policies of international organizations, such as UNESCO (1953), who support and promote the use of mother tongues in education - if only at primary levels of education (Le Page 1997: 4):

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<sup>276</sup> See, for example, Platt, Weber & Ho (1984b), Spencer (1985), Kachru (1976, 1983), who argue in favour of Indian models of English and/or English as an instruction medium.

<sup>277</sup> ELT = English Language Teaching.

*We take it as axiomatic ... that the best medium for teaching is the mother tongue of the pupil ... all languages ... are capable of becoming media of school teaching; some perhaps merely as a bridge to a second language, while others may be used at all levels of education.*

The categorical classification of Indian English as a second language (ESL), has not been systematically adhered to either. While some linguists argue that ESL encompasses better competence than speaking English as a foreign language (EFL), others argue the opposite. While some argue that children remain most competent in languages taught as mother tongues, others argue that second languages can be more important. Quirk (1985: 2), for example, bases his arguments in favour of categorising English as a second language in India on its *widespread use for what we may broadly call internal purposes, i. e. in administration, in broadcasting, and in education*. While Quirk admits that *the proportion of the population making competent use of English is in fact smaller than that in several advanced EFL countries, such as the Netherlands*, he insists that *English is not a foreign language in India*.

Other sociolinguists argue that in Asian or African countries, not the mother tongue, but English comes *first in importance* in a child's life, even if it may not be chronologically the first language a child hears. In regard to African children, *mother tongue* becomes a *problematic term* for Zuengler (1985: 251), *because the language first acquired is not necessarily the child's dominant language*. On the one hand, African or Asian languages become categorized as *problematic* mother tongues for African or Asian children. On the other hand, the problems faced by children who, at an early age, are forced to express themselves in an alienating language symbolizing success, wealth and status are not considered<sup>278</sup>. For Gandhi (1965: 39) the Indian linguistic situation could only be described as 'unnatural':

*... while among other nations the mother tongue enjoys pride of place, among us this place belongs to English.*

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<sup>278</sup> See Jouhy (1985: 187) for discussion on this.

While the globally - politically and economically - most dominant (mother tongue) speakers of English continue to determine what *international* standards are, the nationally powerful users of English continue to decide what criteria are to be valid in the Indian contexts. In both situations, globally and nationally, only particular groups of speakers are meant to benefit from the use of English, while others remain excluded. According to Tollefson (1991: 15), *one example of exploitation is the use of education to control access to the labour market:*

*In many countries, examinations in the educational system ensure that most people who enter school will fail ... Although national policy ostensible provides equal opportunity for education, in fact the limitations on the number of children admitted to secondary schools and universities favour middle- and upper-class families, who can spend more money on books, private tutoring, and other methods of encouraging study. Thus large numbers of people attempt to gain the education necessary for good jobs and reasonable salaries, but in fact some groups systematically benefit more than others.*

In contemporary India, according to Sheth (1990: 35) about 70% to 80% students graduating out of colleges and universities have studied through the medium of a regional language. The entrance examinations or qualifying tests they have to take for jobs in the private, governmental or professional sector are held in English, however. For the vast numbers of educated youths English has become a barrier to social and economic mobility. Mohan (1986a: 16) has described the Indian student as *a disadvantaged individual seeking a secure niche at the top of a shortages-economy in a ruling group largely defined by its mastery of English.*

Besides the financial cost or the time and effort needed in acquisition of a new language, there are other problems. The attempt of having to merge *into a new and unwelcoming social class* of English-speakers - with no room for further expansion - leaves even competent learners of English, coming from marginalized social classes, at a loss. The *content* of a foreign medium education system seems to pose another problem. Some educational

analysts<sup>279</sup> are convinced that, whereas students in ‘Third World’ countries can successfully manage dealing with instruction in a foreign *medium*, they are unable to cope with the foreign *content* of their education. The predominance of Euro-American theories, Euro-American practices of social communication and interaction in ‘Third World’ education system, which give little or no value to their own cultures - but form part-and-parcel of the use of Euro-American languages as instruction media - require students in ‘Third World’ countries not only to become bilingual, but also bicultural: a combination of feats they can have difficulty in achieving.

In the Indian context of use, English is more written than spoken, an exclusively learned and less informally acquired language. Bourdieu (1977: 664) has characterized such languages as *dead* languages, as the work of transmitting the language is limited to the school system and not shared with the family. Only the academic market ensures the value of such languages, which are otherwise *devoid of social use in ordinary life*. Sanskrit, also characterized as a ‘dead’ language, was different to English, however. It lived through and depended on the oral spread and adaptation of its multiply translated and variably interpreted literature. Its myths and legends were adapted and disseminated orally and through written manuscripts via all Indian languages to all levels of society. According to Tollefson (1991: 6), the difference between the need for a link language to be used in *traditional multilingual markets for communication among people with different mother tongues* and the contemporary requirement for knowledge of a common language variety to succeed in *the modern world economic system*, is that contemporary link language(s) are *typically* and *exclusively acquired in school* (Tollefson 1991: 6). *This shift to school-based language learning is a world-wide phenomenon*, which, according to Tollefson (1991: 6) excludes people who *do not have access to effective formal education* and limits their chance of obtaining jobs and participating in *decision-making systems* that use the formally acquired language.

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<sup>279</sup> See Jouhy (1985: 189) for a discussion of the Tunesian educationalist Fitouri, who voiced these concerns.

Linguists such as, for example, Pathak (1988: 12, 19, 21) have criticized English teaching methods in India for not taking into account the primarily instrumental and utilitarian reasons for which ‘Third World’ *students* learn English. According to Mohan (1986a) and research relating to language learning and teaching, only practical and realistic goals stimulate the motivation of those involved in the successful acquisition of a new language. Pattanayak (1981: 164) has argued against the unnecessarily early age and the unnecessarily lengthy period of time for which English is used as a medium of instruction or taught as a subject. Mohan (1986a) points out, that no amount of language planning or language education can enforce the acquisition of a code among those sections of the population, who not only have no appropriate use for it, but for whom the limited job-market has no use. This means that English provides a useable *tool* only to those who already belong to the educated elite. According to Tollefson (1991: 11), *the assumption that English is a tool for getting ahead - and that teaching English is empty of ideological content - is an example of ideology*. This belief, Tollefson (1991: 11) emphasizes, that *English is unrelated to power, or that it will help people gain power, is at the centre of the ideology of language education*.

Contradictorily, sociolinguists and ELT specialists favouring English as an *international* language tend to argue that English cannot be taught adequately ‘only’ as a foreign language, but must be used as a medium of instruction, if it is to remain as Indianized as it needs to be. As long as Indian or other ‘Third World’ languages remain underprivileged in powerful domains, or even become extinct, however - while English is used as a medium of instruction, on the basis of a warning that its ‘reduced’ status as a foreign language could lead to its disappearance - neither a sound knowledge of Indian languages or of English can thrive. The Indianization or not of English in India becomes a side-issue in the light of the colonial and postcolonial Anglicization of Indian education.

At the beginning of the century, Gandhi (1965: 19) insisted on *the adoption of the mother tongue as the medium of instruction*. For Gandhi (1965: 19) only the reinstatement of the mother tongues to their rightful status, far from having an adversary effect, would have a positive influence on the teaching and learning of English. Gandhi considered that it would never be essential *for all educated Indians to have a mastery of this alien language*. Nor did Gandhi feel that it was necessary to *create the desire for such mastery*. Even in a colonial India, Gandhi felt that mainly three classes of Indians needed to learn English:

- a) *public-spirited people with a special aptitude for languages, time on their hands, and a wish to study English literature in order to put their fruits of learning before the Indian people,*
- b) *people who used English as a means of communication with the rulers,*
- c) *people who wanted to use their knowledge of English for economic gains.*

For all three groups, even in an independent India, the teaching of English as an optional subject, along with provisions of all the necessary teaching facilities, would adequately cater to the needs of the three groups. Gandhi also insisted that even *in this arrangement the medium of instruction was to be the mother tongue*.

## **PART IV      Acceptance or Resistance?**

Indian Attitudes towards English in education

*Avoiding*

*the trap*

### **8            The status of English in India**

Review of attitudes of nineteenth & twentieth century Indian political thinkers and pressure groups

In the first half of the nineteenth century, as different states came under British rule under different conditions, the responses of the Indian people affected by colonial rule were also varied. Both patriotic and anti-British attitudes emerged, disappeared and re-emerged in different localities. According to Das' analysis (1991: 85), the ideology of colonialism was not produced *monolithically*, but developed out of different degrees of collusion and contradiction within the relationship of colonizers and colonized. Ahmed (1965: 200) insists, that colonial contacts changed both the rulers, as well as the ruled, while concessions had to be made on both sides. Joshi (1991: 10) proposes the importance of examining the *differences*, as well as *the overlaps* between colonial and indigenous interests. According to her, both the opposition and the affiliation of the colonized people towards their colonial rulers have determined the course of subsequent Indian history and cultural formation. In regard to education, Kumar (1988) discovers lines of affiliation between the colonized and the colonizer. He argues that even after the physical colonial confrontation has ended, colonial and Indian nationalist discourses on education continue to merge. Based on *a symbiosis of rationalist European and traditional Indian educational ideals*, such an educational discourse apparently emphasizes the *moral development* of the individual through education. While it fails to target or include the community or the society as a whole, in order to bring about social or economic change, it brings about the personal (moral) transformation of each individual. These are, in fact, the contentions Eurocentric/English education is based on.

The resistance of the Indian people against the British rulers, primarily determined by their own traditions of response, have also been coloured by colonial traditions. In general, resistance to colonial rule was also based on colonial perceptions of what forms of resistance were considered legitimate or not. The ‘appropriation’ or ‘Indianization’ of English may well represent such a ‘rational’ form of resistance on the part of the urban Indian middle classes. As Nandy (1983: xii) explains:

*It is possible today to be anti-colonial in a way which is specified by the modern world view as ‘proper’, ‘sane’ and ‘rational’. Even when in opposition, that dissent remains predictable and controlled. It is also possible today to opt for a non-West which is itself a construction of the West.*

## 8 i Pragmatic acceptance - the response of the Hindu elite

Separating European education from religious doctrines

Even before 1835, Indian spokespeople and their communities had been actively involved in British language policy-making. There were leading members of the Indian public, as well as diverse Indian pressure groups, who were able to influence the policies of British administrators and officials. Pattanayak (1981: 165) characterized the impact of Indian public opinion upon (British) government policy, even at *this early period of social consciousness*, as considerable. The colonial government could not ignore any opinion publicly expressed, and was repeatedly obliged to modify its policies in the face of public sentiment. Even before the British government decided to opt for English as the language of higher education and administration, there were some groups of Indians in Bengal, who were interested in the English language and the *Western civilization* it represented.

The Indian Hindu response to English education before 1835, has been broadly divided into three major streams: *conservative*, *radical*, and *reformist*. The Hindu intellectuals of nineteenth century Bengal, for example, whose attitudes towards English can be classified as being representative of (*elite intellectual*) Hindu communities throughout the subcontinent, were generally in favour of learning English (Ahmed 1965: 30). This group of Hindus, classified as *conservative*, had not hesitated in learning Persian and Arabic under Mughal rule, and were equally willing to learn English, for purely utilitarian and pragmatic purposes. They knew that learning the language of the rulers would bring them many advantages (Ahmed 1965: 22). Like the eminent Raja Rammohun Roy - who belonged to the *reformist* section of Hindus - *conservative* Hindus were impressed by certain aspects of European culture. As the Hindu Bengali intellectuals thought at the time, *mathematics, natural philosophy, chemistry, anatomy, and other useful sciences*, had been *carried to such a degree of perfection* by Europeans, as to give them grounds for superiority over others.

At times, even these Hindus from the more *conservative* faction launched private educational initiatives, with or without the help of the British. Their aim was to make the English language accessible to their own community and class. In 1817, for example, the Hindu College, Vidyalaya, was established in Calcutta (Mahmood 1895: 25), which also taught English. What such *conservative* Hindus, however, did not want, and they remained vigilant in this regard, was that their own religion or culture might suffer from any side-effects incurred by European education (Ramanna 1989). They objected to the attitudes of the younger, *radical* group of the Bengali Hindu public, who were in favour of throwing everything *Indian* overboard, and using English education as a weapon against Hinduism (Ahmed 1965: 52, 58).

The most renowned member among the third group, the *reformist* section of Hindus was Rammohun Roy. While he was interested in acquiring more knowledge about the West, he also remained affiliated, but critical of his own (cultural and religious) traditions<sup>280</sup>. What the reformist Hindu faction whom he led, hoped for, was the *moral and cultural regeneration* of Indians through *Western knowledge* (Ahmed 1965: 23). Roy was, for example, actively involved in campaigns against what he called the *superstitious practices* of the Hindu religion. At the same time, however, his polemics against the Europeans' Christian religion was equally unfavourable. Roy did not object to missionaries teaching Indians English, as well as *European learning and science and Christian morality*, but this they were to do *unmingled with religious doctrines* and without endangering Hinduism (Ahmed 1965: 45). For Roy, the English language, without religious dogmas, seemed useful in the *modernization* of Indian education, as well as for communicating with *the world outside*.

Roy encouraged the establishment of British educational institutions, which to him, represented *a more liberal and enlightened system of instruction* (Ahmed 1965: 159). He demanded that the British government employ *a few*

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<sup>280</sup> See Das (1991: 78).

*gentlemen of talents and learning educated in Europe, and provide a College furnished with the necessary books, instruments and other apparatus.* More than once, Roy took his own initiatives and, on one occasion, with the help of some English friends, he established an Anglo-Hindu school for boys. There are other examples of prominent Indians taking matters into their own hands in similar ways. In Bombay, for example, in 1827, money was raised in order to employ Professors of English for Elphinstone College (Ramanna 1989: 203, Mahmood 1895: 52). According to Ahmed (1965: 138, 166), *conservative* Hindus, though divided from *reformist* Hindus on issues of social and religious reform, generally supported Roy's faction's demand for the introduction of English education.

In a particular incident in 1823, Roy criticized the British government's decision to establish and fund yet another Sanskrit school in Calcutta instead of an English school. Roy's letter of complaint to the British East India Company administrators was ignored at the time, but was later on - without any credit given to Roy, taken as a basis for Macaulay's pro-English stance in his much-quoted Minute of 1835 (Ahmed 1965: 185). Some scholars have characterized Macaulay's initiative as having *sown his seeds on prepared soil* (Roy 1993: 43). Besides Roy's favourable attitude towards English education, the like-mindedness between Macaulay and Roy did not exist. After 1835, the colonial government actively sought to positively involve both the *reformist* and *conservative* Hindu elite factions towards the implementation of the Anglicist policy.

Linguists such as Kachru (1983a), have characterized Roy, and the group of Indians who stood behind him, as having wholeheartedly welcomed the English language and education into India. There is more to Roy than this. However positive Roy's attitude may have been to English, this did not in any way disrupt his active promotion of linguistic pluralism in Bengal. Roy remained a multilingual in his writings published in newspapers and periodicals. Besides English, he used, wrote in and promoted Bengali, Persian, as well as Hindi, and Sanskrit (Ram 1983: 57, Laird 1972: 53).

While his participation in Indian educational, literary or political debates was intimately rooted in Indian traditions, he also showed a great concern for the social problems of his time. His establishment of two Indian newspapers, one in Bengali, and the other in Persian successfully captured a large Indian readership. His English writings were directed towards a foreign audience, the colonials themselves or the English-speaking world outside. Those, like Roy, who wrote in English during the early part of the nineteenth century, did not necessarily record their feelings of *glowing patriotism* towards the British, but often enough, vented their *hatred for British rule in India* (Das 1991: 80).

Though a major part of the British-affiliated Hindu elite may have accepted English education, and may even have internalized colonial norms, minority views cannot be generalized into representing *a demand for English from the South Asian public*<sup>281</sup>. Even in regard to conservative Hindus, being pro-English did not necessarily entail being anti-Indian languages. By some critics, Rammohun Roy has been labelled as one of the *Indian founders of the British empire* for his pro-British attitudes. According to Pattanayak (1981: 165), however, Roy's approach to English was more complex. While he wished to benefit from English education, he also assumed that learning English would be a means to avoid suffering under British rule. According to Nandy (1983: 108) Hindus may have managed to protect their civilization not by being self-conscious about it, but by securing a mythopoetic understanding of it and thus neutralizing the missionary zeal of their conquerors.

There was, in fact, an even larger group of Indians, just about 99% of the *South Asian public*, who were not at all included in these pro-or-contradiscussions on English education, and whose attitudes towards English colonialism and English education have remained largely unrecorded. They did not *benefit* in any way from the establishment of English-medium schools. Their exclusion from the English language increasingly widened

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<sup>281</sup> See, for example, Kachru (1983: 21).

their distance from the British rulers, as well as from the Anglicized Indian middle class. They watched the growing economic usefulness of English education for a few, and suffered the economic consequences of having little or no access to this colonially-valuable education. According to Kochhar (1992: 2613), *the lower castes did not benefit from English education as far as their traditional bread earning was concerned*. In addition to *the number of new jobs being very small, the shift from traditional occupation was well nigh impossible* (Kochhar 1992). It was only in theory that English education provided an opportunity for improvement in status. In practice, however, a member of a lower caste group needed the support of the state, or the upper castes in order to *climb up the new ladder* of English (Kochhar 1992: 2615).

Some examples from Maharashtra or regions of South India have been recorded, where members of underprivileged communities, at first saw in English a potentially democratic force in their struggle for equal opportunities against the privileged elite, but continued to be disappointed at their exclusion from power. In most regions of the Indian subcontinent, however, English (along with its ‘Westernized’ system of education) can be said to have functioned primarily as an agency for the reconstitution of the Brahmin castes in relation to the other castes (Kumar 1968: 264 - 284). According to Ramanna (1989: 203), in her specific analysis of the social background of the educated in Bombay during the mid-nineteenth century:

*What emerges is that the English-educated were a homogenous group, showing common socio-economic origins and were not representative of all sections of the population, while those educated in the vernacular schools came from a wider range of castes and communities.*

The majority of English-educated came from *Hindu upper castes*, including *merchants, traders* and (fewer) *artisans*. As they were not from the wealthy aristocracy, they hoped to gain materially by acquiring better paid jobs and moving away from traditional occupations. Mainly Hindus also attended primary English-medium missionary institutions, which offered free English education as well as the teachings of Christianity. Some poorer sections of

the population also attended, but most of them preferred indigenous schools (Ramanna 1989: 205, 210). Similar situations of education linked to particular communities and castes existed in most provinces of India (Bihar, Orissa, Bengal, for example) and corresponded to the above findings (Goel 1969: 82, 83).

## 8 ii Popular resistance: A Muslim struggle and a people's struggle

British territorial expansion in the mid-nineteenth century correlated to educational expansion. The increasingly antagonistic reactions from Indians towards everything colonial strengthened anti-British reform movements. Counteracting the pragmatic acceptance of English education by the Hindu elite, who economically and politically stood greatly to gain from it, a resistance to English expansion into all areas of public life grew. The infringement of English in education and administration formed a crucial point of friction between prominent members of all Indian communities and their British rulers. The popular multi-dimensional, ambivalent and complex reaction against British rule, and its various, educational, cultural, social or linguistic manifestations also cannot be underestimated. The differing colonial reactions towards, from and between the newly created Anglicized Hindu elite, on the one side, and the majority of Muslims and the mass of people, on the other side, also began to deepen the divisions within Indian society.

Such divisions were particularly apparent in regard to colonial relations between Hindus and Muslims. According to Ahmed (1965: 19), *the parting of ways* between Hindus and Muslims, began around 1835, *when Persian was replaced by English as the language of official business*. The fact that Hindus and Muslims reacted very differently to English rule and English education, also in turn affected their respective communities' position in colonial society. According to Ahmed's (1965) analysis, while Hindus *welcomed English rule with enthusiasm*, Muslims *regarded it as a calamity*, and *refused to adjust themselves to the new situation*. The larger section of India's diverse Muslim communities could not be trapped into accepting the superiority of the English language or English education. While elite Hindus are characterized as having been receptive to English education, Muslims are regarded as largely having refused to participate in colonial rule. What Ahmed's (1965) analysis does not show, however, is the role the British

played, during the first half of the nineteenth century, in encouraging the Hindus while actively discouraging the Muslim communities from participating in education programs.

As a consequence, the social and economic position of Indian Muslims deteriorated sharply. In contrast, the position of elite Hindus improved, causing *the gulf between the two communities* to widen. It was English education, access to it, and refusal of it, that initiated a rift between Muslim and affluent Hindu communities. Having, in the past, established their own education systems as well as attending without destroying existing institutions (Shahidullah 1996), the antagonism of particular Muslim communities to the expansive imposition of the new English system of education was great. What was even more important, was the fact that, as Muslims *took a hostile attitude towards English education*, they also *failed to compete with the Hindus in economic and social advancement* (Kanungo 1962: 15). Their exclusion from English education resulted in their inability to acquire jobs or earn a good salary within the British Raj administration. Though the division of the two communities related a great deal to their differing attitudes towards English education, British involvement in furthering the separation, by economically and administratively favouring the elite Hindu community, cannot be minimized.

There were several quite deliberate policy-decisions through which the British succeeded in alienating Indian Muslims towards English. Besides the displacement of Persian by English, Sarkar<sup>282</sup> (1985: 64) has argued that the additional reasons for the exclusion of many Muslims from English education have not yet been fully explored. *The abolition of the Madrasa, the abolition of Persian as the language of judicial business, and the reorganization of the legal system, all implied in the policy of the Anglicists* only served to increase the genuine fear of the Muslim community that their interests in colonial Indian society were to be comprehensively curtailed (Ahmed 1965: 189). According to the educational research of Kochhar into

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<sup>282</sup> Sarkar is Professor of History at Delhi University.

British educational records (1992: 2612), before the colonial intervention, *love for Persian* did not only flourish among the Muslim population of India, but also among the Hindus. Muslim and Hindu communities were by no means educationally or linguistically segregated (Kochhar 1992: 2612):

*It was noted in 1827 about a school at Bareilly that „Hindus and Musulmans have no scruples about reading together“. In the Punjab of 1856 „The Persian schools are of course invariably kept by Muslim teachers“ and „generally held in or just outside the mosque ...; yet they are attended largely by Hindus more attracted by the Persian language than repelled by the Muhammadan religion“.*

The British took immediate steps to remedy this harmonious situation, indoctrinating the Hindus about their ‘glorious past’ and promoting antagonism towards Muslims by constructing accounts of *early Muhammadan invasions of India* (Kochhar 1992: 2611, 2613). Sarkar (1985: 64) also points to the European myth of the ‘Hindu renaissance’ as being another instrumental factor in the alienation of the Muslim community from Hindu communities.

A renowned spokesperson of Indian Muslims in nineteenth century India, Mahmood (1895: 147-189) stressed an all-round Muslim dissatisfaction with English education. Nor could the British afford to ignore their protests. As they did not wish to endanger their rule over the Indian empire, many already formulated Anglicist policies were not fully implemented, some were even completely withdrawn. The implementation of Macaulay’s expansive pro-English educational policy, for example, had to be severely curtailed due to pressure from Muslims (Ahmed 1965: 200):

*... Macaulay’s ‘Anglicism’ could not go very far. As a result of strong Muslim protest, the proposals contained in Macaulay’s Minute, for which Bentinck had expressed his warm support, were substantially modified.*

The British used the 1857 rebellion to drive the process of cleavage between Hindus and Muslims deeper. Looking for another scapegoat, besides the missionaries, on whom to blame the 1857 Indian uprising, the antagonistic

stance of the Muslims towards English education, came in handy for the British. Various middle class Hindu sources participated in these British accusations, distancing themselves and their communities from the ‘Indian Mutiny’, and pointing to a Muslim involvement. Even Hindus who could not see themselves as in any way collaborating with the British, who, in fact, identified themselves as a people subjugated by British rule, began to extend their history of subjugation backwards into the period of Mughal rule. Patriotic Hindu literature also subscribed to this myth, although it aimed at arousing anti-British feelings (Das 1991: 131). The Hindu revivalist interpretation of Indian history, however, did nothing to improve increasingly strained Muslim-Hindu relations.

The rejection of the ideology of English education, however, was by no means limited to Muslim communities. No Indian community completely accepted the *Western* content of English education in any part of the subcontinent. Many Indians, whether Muslim, Sikh, or Hindu, also feared that English would alienate them from their own languages and religions, and voiced their fears in the form of petitions or protest movements. In 1837, for example, a memorial in Sanskrit was signed by about 10,000 Hindus from Calcutta, demanding a continuation of their Sanskrit College, in conjunction with the cultivation of *pure Bengalee reading and writing* (Ahmed 1965: 195).

Also at the beginning of the nineteenth century, in the Calcutta district, 8312 (mostly Muslim) citizens signed a petition accusing the British Government of *their evident object to convert natives* to Christianity by discouraging Muslim and Hindu studies (Mahmood 1895: 53). They also protested against the government’s decision to make English the official language of all Government departments in place of Persian and Arabic (Ram 1983: 108). In 1852, some *natives from Madras* handed a petition to Parliament, protesting against European religious interference in education (Mahmood 1895: 60). They criticized the East India Company’s refusal to install government schools where private or missionary schools had already been established.

The Indian historian, Datta (1970: 31, 32), cites other examples from around 1855, mostly from northern India (Patna, Bihar), where missionaries were met with opposition from local people, who complained about *the preferential treatment being shown to the persons receiving English education in the matter of giving appointment in Public Services*. Local people argued that *knowledge and qualifications* could be acquired through any language, not only through English.

In retrospect, the sociolinguist Khubchandani (1977: 33) has criticized British Crown policies for having adversely affected all levels, communities and classes of Indian society. According to him, during the nineteenth century, British rulers arbitrarily favoured or discriminated against various local language pressure groups, through distribution of random language concessions or constraints. Pre-existing inequalities in Indian society were promoted by colonial education (Bhattacharya 1998: 4). English education became instrumental in separating Indian society into two main classes: an Anglicized elite and a non-Anglicized ‘mass’. Or as Kanungo (1962: 34) puts it, an *overwhelming* part of English education came *from above*, and was meant for the *intellectual elite*, while *vernacular education* was reserved for the *ignorant multitude*. This meant that local communities’ resistance to or acceptance of English, did not only create friction between them and the rulers, but also among themselves. Different communities became divided on issues of languages, as well as of religions, ethnicity or class/caste. According to some historians, the systematic expansion of English education on the subcontinent, turned the differences inherent in Indian society into oppositional and divisive forces. As the historian Majumdar (et al 1946: 818) explains in the case of Bengal:

*The chief defect of the system, as it worked out in Bengal, was the disproportionate attention paid to English education of the middle class gentry as against the education of the masses through vernacular schools ... the advantages of English were reaped mostly by the middle class Hindus, the Hindu aristocracy and the Muslim community generally held aloof from it.*

Those Indians who supported the 1857 uprising against the British proved that *a large-scale alliance between the Hindus and the Muslims against the British rule was possible*, and created *a tradition for a united nationalist movement of the Indian people* (Desai 1976: 312)<sup>283</sup>. The same date also marked the failure of their revolt. The division of the Indian people into an acquiescent elite and a revolutionary majority is echoed in the literature of the subcontinent. While the rebellion was memorably recorded in the folk poetry and the songs of the people throughout the Indian subcontinent, elite literature failed to reflect on it (Das 1991: 127). According to most historians, the 1857 uprising was supported by a religious, linguistic, and social cross-section of the Indian population (Chandra et al 1972: 45). While even feudals, as well as Muslim aristocrats, supported the militants, the educated middle classes in general, including a part of the Hindu intelligentsia, sided with the British. Though the revolt failed, it proved to the British that their divisive politics had not been completely successful in suppressing the unified struggle of Brahmins and Dalits, Hindus and Muslims. Against all odds the Indian peoples' common goal to overthrow the British Raj had become a reality to contend with.

The failure of the 1857 rebellion, also marked a turning point in the history of Muslim attitudes towards English education in India. It forced the Muslim community to resign itself to the establishment of British education, based on the 1854 Educational Despatch of the Court of Directors. Despite the aftermath of the rebellion, the movement for the dissemination of English in India culminated in the establishment of three universities in three major cities of the Indian subcontinent: Calcutta, Bombay and Madras. The Despatch also advocated the promotion of Sanskrit and Persian language and learning, unconnected with Hindu or Muslim religious instruction, as well as the improvement of the *spoken languages* of India: both these plans were never implemented. By the beginning of the twentieth century, however, the educational policies that were put into practice in India, were increasingly

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<sup>283</sup> In addition to a general alliance between Hindus and Muslims, according to Chandra et al (1972: 45), the Revolt of 1857 proved that the peasants formed the backbone of the civil rebellions which were often led by zamindars and petty chieftains.

formulated as instruments for consolidating British rule, on the basis of the colonial ideology of 'divide and rule'. While earlier the British had *cultivated the Hindus as a counterpoise to real or perceived Muslim hostility ... now, the Muslims were to be developed as a counterpoise to Hindu middle-class assertiveness* (Kochhar 1992: 2613). Goel (1969: 7) described the different phases of colonial British education as having *sown disaffection* not only between Muslims and Hindus, but also between upper and lower caste Hindus:

*In the initial stages of British rule, education was given as a gift to the already educated and privileged sections, and through them the British wanted to rule the country. When after about half a century, the newly educated Indians who were mostly upper-caste Hindus began to show signs of political awakening, the Government's policy of spreading education to less privileged communities served to sow disaffection between Hindus and other communities-Hindus and Muslims on the one hand and caste Hindus and Backward classes on the other.*

Despite several critical reports, describing British education in India as a failure, British Crown administrators passed resolution after resolution, without implementing, following up, or financing any of them consistently. Far from attempting to remedy certain ills, in 1901, Lord Curzon, the then British Governor of India, proposed that *as Indians can never have the same efficiency as the Englishmen, all superior posts in education should continue to be held by the British people*<sup>284</sup>. This suggestion again caused a major revolt, this time among the Indian intelligentsia. They complained about the exaggerated importance attached to English, and demanded a speedy Indianization of the Education Department, as well as the adoption of modern Indian languages as media of instruction.

In 1904, an Educational Policy ruled out English as the medium of instruction at the initial stage (Ram 1983: 187). In 1913, and again in 1917, educational policies encouraged the establishment of primary and secondary Indian language schools, but did not back up these policies financially. Despite Lord Curzon's proposal to employ primarily British people, the

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<sup>284</sup> See discussion in Sinha (1978: 105, 116).

1919 ‘Government of India Act’ instructed the transfer of the Education Department to Indian administrators. That same year, the Calcutta University Commission proposed a model for *sequential bilingualism* for university instruction was to be introduced after sufficient grounding in the mother tongue grounding. Between 1921 and 1937, numerous plans to adopt modern Indian languages as media of instruction and/or examination at secondary levels were formulated, but implemented (Ram 1983: 212).

In terms of India’s linguistic and educational situation, the disastrous consequences of British reign had already become clear. Scholars of the history of Indian education have pointed to the fact that the educational scene preceding the colonial period was characterized by greater educational equity than the colonial period (Bhattacharya 1998: 10, 11; Bara 1998). The effect of the schools run by missionaries, the government and local ‘English-educated’ gentry was the marginalization, exclusion and replacement of traditional indigenous *pathsala* systems of (particularly primary) education, which had promoted folk languages or *lok bhasha* (Bhattacharya 1998: 9, 10). Neither had English education been spread evenly among the Indian people, nor had any valuable education been imparted through Indian languages. The failure of the British *downward filtration theory* of education also became obvious. As the linguist Ram (1983: 181) puts it:

*... the foreign language had not been transplanted, the native languages had not been allowed to grow ... the system of education stood crippled ... everything: language, learning, mind, withered for want.*

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the power of the British imperialists decreased, as India’s fight for independence grew stronger. In 1905, the launching of the ‘Swadeshi Movement’<sup>285</sup>, a predominantly politico-economic movement in its origin and manifestation, was

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<sup>285</sup> The Swadeshi Movement began with the boycott of foreign goods, then developing into a movement opposing colonial domination on numerous economic, political and cultural levels.

accompanied by the launching of the ‘National Education Movement’<sup>286</sup>. Both movements originated in Calcutta and showed the Bengali middle classes’ extreme dissatisfaction with English administration, English justice and English education (Goel 1969: 1). Students, prominent individuals (including Tagore), as well as particular societies founded the ‘National Council of Education’, which emphasized the promotion of literacy, as well as scientific and technical education on a national scale<sup>287</sup>. By 1919, M. K. Gandhi actively entered the Indian political scene (Goel 1969: 13). By 1920, with the backing of the Congress, at a meeting in Calcutta, Gandhi had launched the ‘Non Co-operation Movement’<sup>288</sup>, which spread all over India. On the educational level ‘non co-operation’ resulted in mass withdrawals of children, pupils and students from Government schools, colleges and universities, particularly secondary English schools, or schools in which English formed part of the regular curriculum (Goel 1969: 17, 19). As a result of the movement over a thousand national schools and colleges were opened.

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<sup>286</sup> The ‘National Education Movement’ has been described as being essentially an expression of Bengal’s militant nationalism which had been developing since the middle of the nineteenth century (Goel 1969: 1).

<sup>287</sup> See Goel (1969: 5) for further information on participants, etc.

<sup>288</sup> The ‘Non Co-operation Movement’ was based on the lines of the ‘Swadeshi Movement’ and involved ‘Non Co-operation’ by Indians on all aspects of British rule: economic, political as well as educational (Goel 1969: 14).

## 9 Language and education in twentieth century political resistance

On the colonial British side, the period leading up to independence was marked by haphazard commissioning of educational reports and their equally haphazard implementation. On the Indian side, writers, educationalists, and political activists were gaining prominence in their analysis of the role of national, regional and foreign languages in a future independent India. In *The Contested Terrain: Perspectives on Education in India*, Bhattacharya (1998: 4) has emphasized *the uniqueness of approach of leading thinkers such as Gandhi, Tagore and Azad*<sup>289</sup>, as well as the *diversities within the nationalist fold* that their ideas represent. Bhattacharya (1998: 3) emphasizes that *the educational ideas of Indian nationalists were unlike the philosophy of 'national education' in many other countries where it had developed as an instrument of ideologization by the rulers of the new nation states, e. g. Bonapartist France or Bismarckian Germany or post-Risorgimento Italy*. In India, nationalist educational thinking was characterized by its critique of colonial approaches to education, as well as of state policies.

What is unique about Gandhi and Tagore, is that no ambiguity characterized their thinking. Being themselves *beneficiaries of 'English education' in the colonial regime*, and regarding it as a *means of economic advancement in the service of the state and its allied agencies* as well as a way into *the European world of ideas*, the analyses of many other Indian educationalists<sup>290</sup> tended to be more ambivalent (Bhattacharya 1998: 3). Tagore's contribution to Indian nationalist thinking was based on a historical and cultural approach to an (organic) India- and people-centred learning, which placed the folk elements of Indian culture side-by-side with its classical features, while the message of the social responsibility (of the

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<sup>289</sup> Azad's educational ideas have been characterized as forming a Muslim counterpart to those of Rammohun Roy. For a discussion of Azad's ideas see Datta (1998: 255-264).

<sup>290</sup> See previous chapter 8 i on Rammohan Roy's attitudes, for example, and also chapter 10 ii, for a microanalysis of contemporary thinking on the role of English in education.

middle classes towards the lower classes) remained highest on his and Gandhi's educational agenda (Bhattacharya 1998: 18, 19; Das Gupta 1998: 265).

Gandhi's national and political strength was his critical understanding of *the psychology of British colonialism*, which enabled him to defeat them (Sankhdher 1998: 290). Though Gandhi - not unlike Tagore in his educational institutions - largely succeeded in mobilizing the middle classes in his resistance movement (Bhattacharya 1998: 16; Singh 1998), his aim was to develop education as *an effective instrument for the realization of India's independence, besides achieving social justice and the eradication of illiteracy and poverty for all Indians, peasantry and elite* (Sankhdher 1998: 290). Gandhi's *radical approach to education* proclaimed British education to be *destructive and a trap* (Sankhdher 1998: 295). No other boycott in Gandhi's *basically subversive* non-cooperation movement was as successful as his *complete and unconditional* call for the boycott of schools and colleges (Singh 1998: 72, 73, 75).

From early on, the lawyer and political activist, Gandhi, and the writer, poet and educationalist, Tagore, had realized that a successful liberation from colonial oppression had to include a rejection of the colonial language. In comparison to other anti-colonial independence movements which tended to emphasize economic and political independence (Calvet 1978: 111, 128), this linguistic emphasis was unusual. Early leaders of the Indian National Congress, being mostly English-educated Indians deferential to their British connection had failed to develop policies of mass contact or address the issue of Indian languages in their struggle for self-rule. By 1925, however, the Indian National Congress, changed its official 'All India' language of business, from English to Hindustani (Ram 1983: 259). Having early on recognized the general discontent of the educated classes, Gandhi was instrumental in transforming the Congress Party from an elitist middle class forum into a mass-based political organization (Goel 1969: 13, 14). As Ambedkar (1946: 9) formulated it:

*The old Congress was purely a gathering of intellectuals. It did not go down to the masses to secure their active participation in the political movement, as it did not believe in mass action ... The new Congress changed all this, it made the Congress a mass organization by opening its membership to all and sundry ... It forged sanction behind its resolutions by adopting the policy of non-cooperation and civil disobedience and to court goal ...*

According to Chandra's analysis (1979: 127), Gandhi *based his entire politics on his immense faith in the Indian people:*

*He based his entire politics on their militancy and self-sacrificing spirit. He made the sharpest break with the Moderate tradition by reaching down to the masses, arousing them to political activity, and bringing them into the forefront of the struggle. This was the revolutionary aspect of the Gandhian period of the nationalist struggle. Moreover, Gandhi alone discovered a new and viable method of political struggle and mass action, thus enabling him to immediately capture the leadership of the movement and to retain it till the end.*

The gathering of strength of the independence movement, and the Congress' assumption of a leadership role, forced the majority of political leaders to avail of more languages than English, in order to connect their struggle to the struggles of the masses of the Indian population. With pressure from Gandhi, leaders such as Nehru (1981: 61, 165, 169) had realized that without the support of the people, Indian liberation from colonial rule would not be possible. In 1938, the Indian National Congress passed a resolution characterizing the colonial system of education in India as failed. Education had been confined to a small number of people and had left the vast majority of people illiterate. The Indian National Congress resolved to lay the new foundations for Indian education on a nation-wide scale and vowed to incorporate the mother tongue languages as media of instruction (Ram 1983: 263).

Unlike the Anglicized elite, many Indian writers and educationalists also voiced people's resentment against all forms of oppression, including their exclusion from all established political, cultural, administrative, judicial and educational spheres via English (Das 1991: 220). By the early part of the

twentieth century, Indian writers and educationalists, such as Rabindranath Tagore, voiced their dissent with the colonial representation of Western civilization as an essentially humane one. Like Gandhi, Tagore was clear on the issue of the centrality of Indian languages. While Tagore, as a poet, writer, critic, and educationalist from Bengal, dominated the cultural and literary scene of twentieth century India, Gandhi dominated the political. Their critiques of colonial culture, as well as their critical reformulation of Indian history are fundamental to an understanding of modern Indian society.

## 9 i Tagore and English: Liberating *the mouse in the trap*<sup>291</sup>

Tagore wrote critical essays, poetry and fiction primarily in Bengali, but also translated some into English. He (Tagore 1996: 559) bitterly criticized the fact that, in the whole length and breadth of India, not a single educational institution had been established where a foreign or an Indian student could *properly be acquainted with the best products of the Indian mind*. In order to learn anything about Indian culture, languages or literatures interested students had *to cross the sea, and knock at the doors of France and Germany*. Tagore characterised educational institutions in India as having been reduced to being *alms-bowls of knowledge*. By teaching only Western literature, science and language, they served to lower the intellectual self-respect of Indians and encouraged them *to make a foolish display of decorations composed of borrowed feathers*.

Tagore not only criticised the effects of foreign rule on India, but, particularly in his novels, also addressed the issue of sectarian Hindu nationalism, which formed a powerful part in the anti-imperialist politics of the Hindu middle class. He (Tagore 1996: 490) suggested ironically that *national* universities should be renamed for what they really were, exclusively *Hindu* universities. Those educational institutions had not been able to rise above divisive formulations of Indian culture, religious rites or social customs.

The colonial education system, according to Tagore's essay on The Centre of Indian Culture (1996: 473), offered Indians *the same kind of shelter as the mouse in the trap*. Once caught up in it, the most dangerous aspect of this trap was that it threatened to be *so awkwardly everlasting*. Tagore claimed that once Indians entered their English school, they were no longer *able to get out of it*. They were reduced to *permanently remaining school-boys*. Tagore protested strongly against the use of a foreign language as a medium

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<sup>291</sup> See Tagore (1996: 473).

of instruction. This *divorce* between the language of education and the language of the student could only lead to an artificial, a-historic, dead form of learning (Tagore 1996: 477)<sup>292</sup>. As Indian students were forced to rely on books, *not truly for their mental sustenance, but for some external advantage*, he warned that they were sure to become *anaemic in their intellects, like babies solely fed with artificial food*.

True education, according to Tagore (1996: 473), acknowledged the mind to be *a living thing*, and stimulated a person to consume less, while being more creatively productive. As long as education in India was taught through a foreign language it would remain sterile. A foreign language hampered freedom of thought and creation of those who were forced to use it as a medium of instruction (Tagore 1996: 481). For those *thousands of pupils who have no gift for acquiring a foreign tongue, but who possess the intellect and desire to learn*, all higher educational facilities, being English-medium, were out of reach. This to Tagore (1996: 479) was a *terrible waste of national material*. In 1901, Tagore founded a Bengali medium school followed up by the founding of a Bengali medium university in 1921. Both institutions were based on his own concepts of *true Indian education*. Other institutions based on partly similar, partly communalist concepts, such as the Hindi medium Hindu University of Varanasi, or the Nizam's Urdu medium Osmania University of Hyderabad, had been encouraged in their establishment by the 'Swadeshi Movement' and Tagore's initiative (Goel 1969: 92, 93).

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<sup>292</sup> See also discussion in Ram (1983: 262).

**9 ii Gandhi and education: *the best minds of the nation have become caged***

Undoubtedly, for the Indian people, M. K. Gandhi was the most popular person of the first half of the twentieth century, as well as the most popular leader of the Indian independence movement. Gandhi identified himself with what he referred to as *traditional* India. Not unlike Tagore, he challenged and denounced modern Western civilization and asserted the dignity of Asian values. Gandhi criticized the use of the foreign English language in India in no uncertain terms. According to him, the fact that English had enslaved Indian people was a *national tragedy*. Gandhi referred to people's excessive regard for acquiring English as *superstitious*. This *force of habit* of using English, as he described it, led to a segregation of the Indian intellect. It ignored *the culture of the heart and the hand*, and confined itself *simply to learning of the head*. In addition, English education had promoted the isolation of the educated elite from the masses:

*... the best minds of the nation have become caged, and the masses have not received the benefit of the new ideas we have received.*

Already in 1917, Gandhi (1965: 122) voiced the opinion that English, and its dominance both as a medium of instruction and as a language of the Indian nation, was unacceptable. Gandhi denounced the existing British education system in India as useless and *defective*, not merely because of *its association with an utterly unjust Government*. According to Gandhi, colonial education was *based upon a foreign culture to the almost entire exclusion of indigenous culture*. Similar to Tagore, Gandhi felt that *real education was impossible through a foreign medium*<sup>293</sup>. Gandhi (1968: 106) advocated the use of provincial languages as instruction media. He argued that *incalculable intellectual and moral injury* had already been caused to the nation by imparting higher education through the medium of a foreign

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<sup>293</sup> See Sinha (1978: 119).

tongue, and he proposed that the change over to *provincial languages*, as media of instruction, was to be initiated immediately, *at any cost*.

Gandhi recognized the economic and functional importance of English in colonial India. He saw that English was being studied *because of its commercial and so-called political values*, and because it offered young Indian men a career in government services. Nevertheless, he criticized the middle-class elite values that had begun to be attached to the acquisition of English. Too many Indians taught their children English *as a passport to marriage* and suffering from the fact that their relatives could not *talk to them and their friends in English*, they were even making English into their mother tongue. Gandhi did not share with *hundreds of youths*, as he put it, the belief that in order to fight the oppressors, their language had to be learnt. Neither did he agree that *without a knowledge of English freedom for India was practically impossible*. To Gandhi such arguments were symbolic of the *slavery and degradation* under which Indians were suffering<sup>294</sup>.

Gandhi made clear that he did not object to the literary tastes of particular young people, nor to the acquisition of English or any other world languages. While recognizing *the benefits* of English he argued that the benefits of learning in an Indian language would positively affect many in India, as well as in the rest of the world. Learning English, Gandhi added, should not induce any Indian to *forget, neglect or be ashamed of his mother tongue, or feel that he or she cannot think or express the best thoughts in his or her own vernacular*. What was *unbearable*, was the fact that English education had *crushed and starved the vernaculars*.

With his political ideas, Gandhi was able to win the support of men and women from different classes and castes, and to some extent also from different religions<sup>295</sup>. He not only used Indian languages extensively, but also

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<sup>294</sup> See Sinha (1978: 119).

<sup>295</sup> According to many analysts Gandhi became almost a mythical figure in India (Tagore was to coin the title of Mahatma - the Great Soul - for him). While Indian legends, myths, and histories of uprisings were used as the basis for the creation of new patriotic values,

availed of the myths, metaphors, symbols and idioms shared by Indians all over the subcontinent. In 1920, Gandhi's call to Indians to withdraw their support from colonial schools and colleges, achieved an overwhelming response<sup>296</sup>. During the next few years, while the popularity of English education suffered heavily, thousands of Indian-language-medium educational institutions shot up all over the country, as tens of thousands of students were enrolled (Sinha 1978: 121).

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what came to be referred to as Gandhian politics inspired writers from all communities to publish increasingly politicised novels (Das 1995: 70).

<sup>296</sup> See chapter 7 i for different anti-British movements.

### 9 iii Nehru and Gandhi: nation theories and Hindu-Muslim unity

Like Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru<sup>297</sup> in The Question of Language (1937: 4, 5) stressed the linguistic, cultural and ideological affinities between Indian languages, as well as their importance in the struggle for independence:

*There are many common words in all the languages of India, but what is far more important is the common cultural background of those languages, the similarity of ideas and the many linguistic affinities. This makes it relatively easy for an Indian to learn another Indian language.*

Nehru (1937: 4, 5) promoted the official recognition of all Indian languages in the constitution, as well as their reinstatement as (*provincial* and *regional*) instruction media and media of communication. On a national level, he considered Hindi or Hindustani to represent a necessary alternative to English<sup>298</sup>:

*I am anxious to prevent a new caste system being perpetuated in India – an English-knowing caste separated from the mass of our people.*

Both Gandhi (1965: 23) and Nehru were certain that English was not able to fulfil the requirements of a national language for India. They continued to see the need to specify and promote the official use of one Indian language, however, in central and provincial administration, government, legislature and court. This did not mean that other regional Indian languages could not be used. Though especially Gandhi gave utmost importance to all the languages spoken on the subcontinent, his emphasis on naming one sole language (i. e. Hindustani), as India's national or official medium, was based on his insistence that India represented one *nation*. According to Bhokta (1998: 212), in their drive to establish Hindi or Hindustani as a symbol of cultural unity, leaders of the national movement in India and also Gandhi, *failed to do justice to the lok bhashas of northern India*:

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<sup>297</sup> See Ram (1983: 262).

<sup>298</sup> See Jaiswal (1965: 79).

*In his basic education scheme, Hindustani became a compulsory subject, while medium of instruction was the language of the province. The exception was the whole of the United Provinces and Bihar, where he failed to see the existence of any language other than Hindi or Hindustani.*

While Nehru<sup>299</sup> explicitly stated the limitations of English as a national language, he was also clearly in favour of an *All India medium of communication*:

*Without infringing in the least on the domain of the provincial languages, we must have a common All India medium of communication. Some people imagine that English might serve as such, and to some extent English has served as such for our upper classes and for All India political purposes. But this is manifestly impossible if we think of the masses ... English cannot develop into an All India language, known by millions.*

According to Anderson (1991: 116), the bilingual literacy of the indigenous intelligentsia was central to their national leadership in colonial societies. Their access to *modern Western* education and *culture*, as well as European state models of nation-building, led many of them to imagine the possibility of incorporating the multilingual masses into their national project through one indigenous national language, on the ideals of monolingual Eurocentric nation theories. Gandhi's and Nehru's concept for a regional-plus-national language(s) policy for India, combining the use of all Indian languages in their respective, required, regional spheres with the use of Hindi/Hindustani<sup>300</sup> as an official 'All India' link language, can be described as an *indigenized*, but diglossic language policy model. Bhokta (1998: 213) has criticised the leaders of the national movement in India, however, for being *no more ready than the colonial rulers to give lok bhashas like Oriya, Maithili and Braj Bhasha their rightful place.*

Both for Gandhi and Nehru, Hindustani fulfilled the necessary criteria of a national language. It was the speech of a large group of Indians, it was easy to learn, and it was capable of serving as a medium of religious, economic

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<sup>299</sup> See discussion in Ram (1983: 262).

<sup>300</sup> See discussion of Hindi / Urdu / Hindustani in chapter 4 iii.

and political intercourse throughout India (1965: 40)<sup>301</sup>. In addition, Gandhi considered Hindustani (Urdu and Hindi) as symbolic of Hindu-Muslim integration, and proposed its complete disassociation from the religious traditions of either community. Gandhi (1965: 24) emphasized the fact that judged by the people's usage, Hindustani was one language. He made both the Hindu and the Muslim elites responsible for the division of Hindustani and its creation into two separate languages, Hindi and Urdu:

*Both Hindus and Muslims speak the same language in North India. The difference has been created by the educated classes. That is, educated Hindus Sanskritize their Hindi with the result that Muslims cannot follow it. Muslims of Lucknow Persianize their Urdu and make it unintelligible to Hindus. To the masses both these languages are foreign and so they have no use for them.*

Gandhi suggested concrete measures for counteracting trends separating Hindustani into Hindi and Urdu. The current usage of the majority of Indian people was to form the base of the lexical expansion of Hindustani. No importance was to be attached to selecting or rejecting new vocabulary according to foreign or indigenous origin, the only important criteria was to be the current colloquial usage patterns of both communities<sup>302</sup>. For extending the written idiom of Hindustani, both Urdu and Hindi writers were to be consulted. While no preference was to be given to Sanskrit, the Devanagari and the Arabic scripts were to be regarded as official writing systems of Hindustani. According to Gandhi (1956)<sup>303</sup> whichever script developed a greater range and enjoyed more popularity, would *naturally* become the national script. With his language policy, Gandhi (1956: 25) hoped to remove some causes for distrust between Hindus and Muslims, and to help dismantle the growing separation of the two communities. After 1947, the need to establish a linguistic basis for Hindu-Muslim unity, envisioned in Nehru's and Gandhi's language policy for a future independent India, was not implemented in regard to Hindustani. English

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<sup>301</sup> See also discussion in Ram (1983: 259).

<sup>302</sup> See also discussion in Sridhar (1987: 303).

<sup>303</sup> For further discussion see Ahmed (1941), also Sridhar (1987: 303).

remained as an additional language, becoming increasingly powerful on higher and more prestigious levels of education and administration.

Gandhi's, Tagore's, and Nehru's language ideology, including their arguments against the dominating status of the English language in India, was based on their firm belief in the inherent capacity of all languages to express whatever they wished to express, and to be extended in whatever way the users intended to extend them<sup>304</sup>. In other words, any Indian language(s) would be 'able' to fulfil the national, official, administrative, or educational role, for which English had been installed by the British throughout India. Linguistically and ideologically, Indian educational and political nationalists, such as Gandhi or Tagore<sup>305</sup>, in their struggle for liberation, represented what Chatterjee (1995: 37) has referred to as the *subalternity* of the middle class in *the secret history of nationalism and modernity*. 'Third World' national leaders such as Gandhi or Nehru did not arise out of the traditions of *European cultural relativists*, such as the linguists Sapir and Whorf<sup>306</sup>. Nevertheless, cultural and linguistic analyses of leaders of independence movements in 'Third World' countries tend to mistakenly bring together the theories of *African cultural nationalists* with the Eurocentric interpretations of anthropologists, who restrict the creative capacity of particular languages to a capacity to conceptualize their own world<sup>307</sup>. The political traditions of a Nehru or a Nyerere, their interpretation of language issues and nation theory, have also arisen out of long indigenous non-Western histories of struggle and cannot be exclusively embedded in European nationalist theory<sup>308</sup>.

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<sup>304</sup> Their arguments in regard to the universality of all languages are compatible with Chomsky's arguments in favour of 'language universals'.

<sup>305</sup> This would also be true of African nationalist traditions.

<sup>306</sup> Sapir and Whorf were American linguists who set up theories on the cultural relativity of languages, resulting out of the European encounter with exotic native American languages.

<sup>307</sup> Mazrui (1995: 163, 164, 165) falls into this trap.

<sup>308</sup> See discussion on Chatterjee's (1995) ideas on this issue, in chapter 3 i, 3 iv, 5, 5 i, also Bhattacharya (1998: 3). This issue is also discussed at the beginning of chapter 9.

**PART V      *Demystifying Colonial Myths?***

Review of Attitudes of Twentieth Century Indian Writers and  
Educationalists

*Falling into*

*the trap*

**10      Pre-colonial Indian literature and education: multilingualism  
and  
oral dissemination**

Indian literature before colonization, according to Tagore (1996: 561), was part of a people's system of education able to make its way everywhere, through all social, linguistic and geographic channels. The teachers were trained literary, religious or artistic people, much in demand in villages throughout the subcontinent, their meetings were crowded, their mode of instruction included the recitation of epics, readings from classical records of old history, performance of plays based on ancient myths and legends, dramatic narration, or singing. The oral and written literature of the pre-colonial era could be defined as consisting of the *memorable utterances of the Indian people* (Das 1991: 5). The methodology and the transmission of this literature culture, this folk-education was not only inclusive of the common people of India, more than that, it relied upon their participation. Literacy or illiteracy, the knowledge of one language or ignorance of another, did not include or exclude any community or social group from joining in this creative educational culture. Written literature was rarely disseminated in its written form, but relied on being popularized via oral culture.

There were links and parallels between the dissemination of literature and the dissemination of education. In reference to the teaching methods in the 'tols', or pre-colonial institutions of higher Sanskrit higher learning, Acharya (1996: 103) remarks:

*The importance of orality in the Brahminical system of education is implicit. There is no doubt that in the early period instruction was imparted orally and the Vedic teachers did not allow their students to study from written books ... The teacher would recite and explain while the learners would hear and commit to memory ...*

The teaching methods of the popular indigenous mother tongue elementary schools, the ‘pathsalas’ in Bengal were equally based on oral traditions. According to Shahidullah (1996: 121), *pupils were taught mainly through the oral tradition*, to read, write, learn arithmetics, letter composition, elementary Sanskrit grammar, etc. Exercises were *dictated by the teacher and learnt by dint of rote memory*. Emphasis was placed on oral traditions despite the fact that written materials were available and used in elementary education. While in the ‘tols’, *Sanskrit manuscripts were the mainstay*, in the ‘pathsalas’ *Bengali manuscripts predominated* (Acharya 1996: 109). In addition, it was from the education in these ‘pathsalas’ that the majority of (non-Brahmin, and, at times, Muslim) authors of flourishing medieval Bengali literature emerged.

In their analysis of the Indian literary or sociolinguistic scene European critics have tended to divide up Indian literatures on the basis of their language(s). Contemporary Indian scholars (Chatterji 1963, Das 1991) have, however, insisted on the existence of a subcontinental entity of Indian literature<sup>309</sup>. On the basis of their formal or informal education, the majority of literary people in medieval India were by definition multilingual. As a result their literature, at times even one text, was multilingual. The literary historian, S. K. Chatterji<sup>310</sup> (1963: 103, 104) points to the inter-relations between the different Indian language literatures as arising out of adaptations of each other, rather than direct translations:

*There was more often the study and adaptation of the original works in a particular language rather than regular translations. This led to a good deal of direct influence.*

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<sup>309</sup> For a discussion on multilingual Indian literature, see specifically Das (1991: 4).

<sup>310</sup> S. K. Chatterji was Professor of Comparative Philology at the University of Calcutta and Chairman of the Upper House of the West Bengal Legislature.

While works of particular writers travelled from one area to another, their language(s) and contents were modified, adapted and transformed *and the original writer at times came to be regarded as a writer belonging to the new linguistic area*<sup>311</sup>. The use of more than one language has been a typical linguistic feature of most Indian poetic works for at least two thousand years of subcontinental literary history (Das 1991: 5). Kalidasa's famous play Sakuntala, written in the fourth century, can be described as *a linguistic mosaic* using four languages (Sanskrit, Saurasheni, Maharashtri, Magadhi). Medieval religious texts such as, for example, the Guru Granth Sahib, created a new language by using many languages: ancient and contemporary, classical and colloquial, distant and neighbouring (Shackle 1981: viii). Such literary texts were primarily and widely disseminated through oral channels. They were products of complex multilingual situations, where different languages did not divide communities into exclusive groups, but, on the contrary, encouraged people from different linguistic backgrounds to interact. The speakers/users of powerful languages<sup>312</sup> used, patronized, respected and promoted 'non-ruling' languages<sup>313</sup> in numerous prestigious domains, such as courts, literature, and schools.

The pre-colonial linguistic and educational situation on the Indian subcontinent can therefore be described as truly multilingual. Severely fixed linguistic hierarchies such as those existing today in postcolonial diglossic/triglossic situations, where particular (powerless community/mother tongue) languages are exclusively confined to the private home sphere, while other (ruling) languages dominate in official domains, had not yet been entrenched in Indian society. The oral-plus-written traditions of the Indian subcontinent were so interdependent (particularly in their dissemination) that the contemporary wide divergences between the written and oral versions of a particular language did not apply<sup>314</sup>. The

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<sup>311</sup> See Chatterji (1963: 104) for numerous cross-regional examples.

<sup>312</sup> Such as, for example, Sanskrit or Persian.

<sup>313</sup> Such as, for example, Bengali, Tamil, Urdu, etc.

<sup>314</sup> According to Coulmas (1986: 111): In manchen Sprachen mit langer Schrifttradition ist die Distanz zwischen geschriebener und gesprochener Sprache unüberbrückbar und daß eine schriftsprachliche Varietät für Zwecke mündlicher Kommunikation verwendet wird, ist eine

separation between spoken and written standards of particular languages, characteristic for colonial and postcolonial South Asian linguistic situations, can be blamed primarily on the ‘Sanskritization’, ‘Persianization’, ‘Dravidianization’ or language ‘purification’ programs set in motion by the colonial power. Whatever language a particular author wrote or recited in, he or she had an awareness of the thoughts, the myths and the ideas of other languages and literatures. The unity of Indian literature was based on *the unity of thought, ideas, sensibility and imagination*, and evolved independent of a specific language or language standard. There is a crucial difference between the influence of (high) Sanskrit literature as compared to, for example, (high) English literature that is seldom emphasized. While Sanskrit literature formed an integral part of the imagination and knowledge of all the Indian people, illiterate or not, uneducated or not, lower caste or not, English confines itself to a particular elite social, English-literate and English-educated group. The influences of Sanskrit and Islamic thought on Indian consciousness has been best summed up by Chatterji (1963: xix):

*The real Integration of India into one Single Entity, inspite of some basic and fundamental racial, linguistic and cultural diversities, has taken place through the world of the Epics and the Puranas and the philosophical literature of Sanskrit (especially Vedanta as supplemented by Islamic Tasawwuf<sup>315</sup>) in the ancient and medieval times; and on this Integration stand the Cultural Oneness and the Political Unity of India.*

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Abnormalität. See chapter 1 i for further discussion on the multicultural, decentralized linguistic, educational and literary traditions of the Indian subcontinent.

<sup>315</sup> Vadanta = Hindu thought, Tasawwuf = Islamic mysticism.

## 10 i English as the defining criteria of postcolonial Indian literature?

Contemporary Indian literature, written in any language, essentially belongs to the middle classes, being more or less defined, produced and consumed by it. The uniqueness of *modern* Indian literature (in all Indian languages) as opposed to Indian literature of other periods, relates to its choice of subject matter, rather than any other criteria. According to Das (1991: 331) modern Indian literature is almost obsessively and repetitively concerned with the *torturous* conflict between indigenous and alien ideals, values and sensibilities. This fixation on themes of ‘cultural displacement’ has often blinded modern (urban) writers from turning to other pressing social and ideological issues (Joshi 1991: 24):

*The literary productions of the urban elite writers display the anxieties of fragmented subjectivities, a sense of cultural displacement or unbelonging, a search for an identity in the usable culture or tradition, but little engagement with the social and ideological issues pressing upon their own situation.*

This is even more true for Indian literature written in English. According to Sircar (1992. 1926):

*Indo-Anglian writing in general represents the culture of the dominant class, the strata which has the social power to enforce its definition of India as legitimate.*

In general, modern literary developments contrast with pre-colonial traditions. In relation to Bengal, for example, Acharya (1996: 109) points out *the mass moorings of medieval Bengali literature, the authors of the Bengali Ramayana, Mahabharata, Mangal Kavyas or Panchalis were predominantly non-Brahmins and also included Muslims, while even the owners of Bengali manuscripts were generally ‘backward’ or ‘uncultivated’ people.* The advent of printing, combined with the limited growth of literacy, turned modern Indian literature into an exclusive property of a specific literate class. This literature no longer depended on oral dissemination (Das 1991), nor translation or adaptation into other Indian languages. Though mother

tongue/regional oral literatures continue to exist, the values of orality have been overlaid by the establishment of the literate medium.

Contemporary Indian writers of English, being an integral part of English-educated middle class society, are also the greatest defenders of the English language, which still excludes the great majority of Indians. Fifty years after independence from colonial rule, the view from outside of India, lets the dominance of Indian writings in English - over writings in Indian languages - appear complete. Modern English literature in India, comparable to other postcolonial literatures written in postcolonial languages, entered the Indian subcontinent from 'the top' and has yet to connect itself to existing interactive channels of (particularly oral) creative communication. Introduced by the British into nineteenth century India as part of an English studies program, which consciously sought to legitimize colonial rule, English literature continues to have its historical legacy to contend with (Joshi 1991: 9). As Sircar (1992: 1926) also points out:

*... the institutionalized Indo-Anglian literary critical tradition reiterates the terms of a discourse generated by the socio-historical pressures of the 19<sup>th</sup> century western European metropolis.*

The indigenous bilingual, but English-educated elite, played their role in the perpetuation of their own, but also of colonial ideals. In the case of the nineteenth century Bengali intelligentsia, for example, their ambivalent attitudes towards English studies did not prevent them from availing of the new system of education. Their (diglossic) bilingualism, similar to the fading bilingualism of the neo-colonial elite turned out to be 'a side-effect' of their colonial education. It never was the aim of the colonizers to turn their subjects into bilinguals, in fact, their intention was to deny colonized languages their right to exist (Calvet 1974: 118):

*Car la glottophagie qui caractérise le colonialisme moderne et le néo-colonialisme ne consiste pas à rendre tous les colonisés bilingues, elle consiste simplement (si l'on peut se permettre ce terme) à interdire aux langues des colonisés le droit à l'existence à part entière.*

Sheth (1990: 36) also argues that *the new pan-Indian elite* have almost lost the kind of bilingualism Gandhi or Tagore depended upon in order to link them to their wider communities:

*... their (the new elite's) lifestyles and aspirations now being hitched to a global metropolitanism, they have almost lost the kind of bilingualism a Gandhi, a Tagore, or a Tilak represented during the independence movement. In other words, they lack the cultural basis to their political power – a primary requirement for running a modern nation-state in the multi-ethnic society India.*

With the consent of this elite *the formation of the bourgeois nationalist consciousness* was facilitated and *the new project of hegemonisation and homogenisation of the indigenous culture* was advanced (Bagchi 1991: 146). According to Joshi (1991: 22), in this context, the contemporary *English-knowing middle class*, who is *deeply entrenched in power*, sees itself as *the vanguard of the Indian nation*.

The 'modernization' or Anglicization of the literatures and languages of India first took place through the development of journalistic and pedagogical prose, and, to some extent also, through the growth of socio-religious<sup>316</sup> or socio-political prose<sup>317</sup>. In comparison, literary forms, such as nineteenth century Indian languages poetry or drama were not affected by English or the processes it initiated. During the colonial period, Indian writers tended to come from multilingual backgrounds. They were usually proficient in three languages: their mother tongue, English, Sanskrit and/or Persian. Many of them started their careers as journalists, writing either in their mother tongue, Persian and/or in English<sup>318</sup>. In contemporary India, however, knowing or writing in English does not necessarily include knowing or writing in another Indian language<sup>319</sup>. Vice versa, according to Trivedi (1991: 182) 'other' Indian language writers have rarely evaded knowledge of English:

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<sup>316</sup> See Aurobindo or Radhakrishnan.

<sup>317</sup> See Gandhi, Nehru, Subhash Chandra Bose, M. N. Roy, B. R. Ambedkar.

<sup>318</sup> See Das (1991: 77) for a more extensive discussion on such multilingual writers.

<sup>319</sup> See chapter 8 iii, microanalysis of contemporary writers and editors.

*... it seems hardly conceivable that the thousands of creative writers now writing in any of our 16 or 22 or 1600 odd languages, there is even one who does not know any English.*

The first visible influences of English on Indian languages occurred in newspapers and journals. Journalists and writers used large numbers of English, Sanskrit and Persian loan-words, in addition to creating their own neologisms. Their loans were not confined to lexical items only, but included innovations in syntax, or an increased use of reported speech. Journalistic creations primarily related to the use of technical words. Another important literate group, the writers of textbooks, complemented and extended journalistic coinages by use of their own loanwords and neologisms. All groups were, in general, able and willing to respond and adjust to changes taking place in their society, including the domination of a foreign civilization on their working and private lives (Das 1991: 78). Describing the role of the modern English-language press in India, Sheth (1990: 34) voices his concern:

*... the main thrust of the writings in the English-language press is to support the continued pre-eminence of English over all Indian languages, especially over Hindi ...*

While during the colonial period, the power of English grew, English education spread, and literacy in English increased, the power of Indian languages faded. By the middle of the nineteenth century, only a small handful of English-educated Indians distributed in the different urban centres of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras, began to dominate what had once been an immense diversity of literary activities on the subcontinent (Das 1991: 102). Contrary to many modern English-educated Indians, however, Indians of that period took an interest in the diffusion of 'Western knowledge' through English as well as through Indian languages. During this time, numerous textbooks on European sciences were written in or translated into different Indian languages.

The twentieth century saw the rise of poets and novelists writing exclusively in English<sup>320</sup>. Again most of them were journalists or teachers from different regional, cultural, linguistic or religious backgrounds. Similar to the Indian politicians of the time they came from urban, privileged, English educated, middle class or aristocratic backgrounds and English became their common language. There were many reasons for their choice of writing in the English language. As Anand (1975) saw it, writing in an Indian language was beset with problems. Lack of technical facilities for publishing in Indian languages were accompanied by other financial losses, such as the selling of books to a much poorer readership, in a much poorer market. Both in regard to pre- and post-independence India, the (Punjabi-)English writer, Mulk Raj Anand (1975: 25) complained that there were hardly any Punjabi or Urdu language publishers who published fictional works. After independence, Anand (1973) welcomed *the transition from foreign languages into the Indian languages*, but continued to write in English. For him, as he put it, *the question of immediacy of communication* remained most important. The fact that his English literature could hardly be read or disseminated within India paradoxically, at the popular or national level, made him marginal than ever before in the Indian context (Joshi 1991: 25). Nevertheless, this did not stop English writers, as part of the elite national intelligentsia, from becoming ‘representative’ of the whole of Indian writing outside the country.

This may precisely be the reason for Indo-Anglian critics to repeatedly try to prove *the Indianness* of their English literature. The linguist Mohan (1982: 29) points out, however, that, except as a medium of literature, *real* Indian English is not a language most Indians would take pride in using deliberately. Writers such as Raja Rao<sup>321</sup> insist on the *Indianness* of the language, arguing that efforts have to be made *to convey in a language that is not one’s own the spirit that is one’s own*. Rao argues that Indians *cannot and should not write like the English*, neither should they *write only as*

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<sup>320</sup> See, for example, Sarojini Naidu, Mulk Raj Anand, R. K. Narayan, Raja Rao, K. A. Abbas and Nissim Ezekial.

<sup>321</sup> See discussion in Kachru (1983: 44).

*Indians*. Anand (1975: 25) too, admits to having poured his energy into stylistically indigenizing this *foreign* language:

*All those who ever glanced at my writings, will see that I generally translate or interpret my feelings or thoughts from Punjabi or Hindustani into the English language, thus translating the metaphor and imagery of my mother tongue into what is called Indo-Anglian-Indian writing.*

The cultural alienation produced by such intellectual transformation and translation exercises can also, according to Sartre<sup>322</sup>, be seen in the context of a colonially enforced assimilation process:

*Es ist das Unglück der Länder, in denen der Kolonialherr den Eingeborenen die Assimilation seiner Sprache aufgezwungen hat. So hat er sie zur kulturellen Entfremdung verdammt, der schlimmsten, die ihnen widerfahren konnte, nämlich, sich selbst dauernd übersetzen zu müssen, gezwungen zu sein, sich selbst und die Welt über eine lexikalische und grammatische Semantik interpretieren zu müssen, die für sie mit dem ganzen Gewicht einer fremden Kultur belastet ist ...*

In reference to African writers Africanizing their English, Ngûgî (1986: 8) asks whether *all the literary gymnastics of preying on our languages to add life and vigour to English* will ever result in these varieties being accepted as *good English*:

*Why, we may ask, should an African writer, or any writer, become so obsessed by taking from his mother-tongue to enrich other tongues? Why should he see it as his particular mission? We never asked ourselves: how can we enrich our languages?*

The development of this new writing class was instrumental in creating a new readership, defined by the same social and educational criteria as the writers themselves. Das (1995: 44) has divided modern Indian English writers and their writings into two main ideological groups. The first group have remained a part of the multilingual, multicultural and socio-political realities of the Indian people. Similar to writers using other Indian languages, their literary efforts emerge out of an Indian experience, while

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<sup>322</sup> See discussion on Sartre's views in Jouhy (1985: 187).

their primary aim is to communicate to fellow Indians. The second group of writers Das (1995: 44) characterized as the embodiment of Macaulay's dream of an elite, who, though they are *Indians in blood and colour*, are more *English in tastes and morals*. This group's literary efforts are based on Western perceptions of Indian reality and mainly target a foreign audience<sup>323</sup>.

The second group of writers described, constituting a part of today's powerful elite, claim Indian literature in English to be the only 'national' and 'authentic' Indian literature. Unable to *critically engage with the local and the contemporary* they base themselves on a systematic suppression of the identities of various underprivileged sections (Sircar 1992: 1921, 1926). In their indifference to Indian language literatures they have perpetuated the colonial traditions of classifying Indian languages as unsuitable media for written, literary, or official expression. Though part of *the elite immigrant intelligentsia located more or less permanently in the metropolitan countries* (Ahmad 1992: 90, 91), and less categorizable as an Indo-Anglian writer, Rushdie's (1997a) survey and selection of fifty years of independent Indian writing from the subcontinent of his origin, i. e. The Vintage Book of Indian Writing: 1947 - 1997, proves to be a case in point. It *happens* to be comprised of only English language Indian writing. Rushdie (1997a: x) has this to say about modern Indian prose:

*The prose writing - both fiction and non-fiction - created in this period (50 years of Indian independence) by Indian writers working in English, is proving to be a stronger and more important body of work than most of what has been produced in the 16 'official languages' of India, the so-called 'vernacular languages', during the same time; and, indeed, this new, and still burgeoning 'Indo-Anglian literature' represents perhaps the most valuable contribution India has yet made to the world of books.*

In a country where 97% of the population do not speak English, while 39,94% speak some variety of Hindi (Sridhar 1996: 329), books in English make up almost 50% of all publications (Butalia 1991: 322). Judging the

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<sup>323</sup> See Sircar (1992: 1921-1926) for an extensive discussion on the monolithic cultural traditions of such Indo-Anglian literary critics.

number of books published in proportional relation to the Indian population, however, India has been called *a region of book hunger* (Butalia 1991: 322).

In an interview relating to the launch of his *Vintage Book*, Rushdie (1997b: 61) asks us to not only to *set aside all prejudices and long-standing rivalries and just look actually at the texts*, but also to *just forget mother tongue and social class*. In selecting his ‘representative’ Indian texts’, Rushdie also seems to have *set aside* issues of style, content, mythology, sensibility, imagination, a closeness of relationship to an Indian environment or to an Indian community, or any other analyses relating or defining ‘other’ Indian (language) literatures.

It is a fact that, from the middle of the twentieth century, major national Indian leaders, journalists and academics depended increasingly on English. It is mainly their academic, political, and journalistic prose according to Das (1995: 254) which deserves praise for its power, variety and authenticity. Such ‘fine achievements’ of English in Indian writing are no longer being ‘adequately’ communicated to the people at large, 97% of whom do not speak English. To prioritize only one *pan-Indian language* over the *regional* languages, without the one engaging with the other, can only lead to the latter’s total eclipse. Such an imbalanced situation may well lead to a loss of *the richness and variety of Indian literature produced by the Indian people through ages* (Das 1991: 10).

For Rushdie (1997a: xv) *parochialism* continues to be *the main vice of the vernacular literatures*, while he stresses that an *important dimension* of literature must be its ability to hold *a conversation with the world*. This leaves little room for the eligibility of any ‘other’ language besides English. Rushdie (1997b: 61) connects his literary theories *to the wider experience of the planet in this half-century*, Devy (1990: 353) argues that the language of a great literature must be grown *organically from people’s experiences piled together for generations*. For Devy (1990) ‘a great literature’ must have *free access to the collective unconscious of its society, its own mythological*

*network*, and *its own range of idiom*. While Rushdie (1997b: 61) declares *the cosmopolitan experience* and *the metropolitan experience in India*, reflected in Indo-Anglian literature to be of the highest priority and the most interesting, Devy (1990: 353) criticizes Indo-Anglian literature for continuing to *operate within a severely limited social space*. By confining itself to the metropolitan experience and to a narrow social power base, English literature has, in fact, marginalized itself. Nevertheless, it continues to define itself (exclusively) as being *universal*, *national* and *cosmopolitan*. Its failure to capture an Indian audience of any size continues to slow its processes of indigenization (Das 1995: 46).

In many ways, rather than promoting, the indigenous English-educated Indian elite has hindered the growth of modern Indian literature in Indian languages. By aligning themselves to British educational institutions, even after independence they continue to enjoy a special prestige in India. Postcolonial English writers prefer to uphold standards of a *neutral* variety of *international English*, which practically means adhering closely to Anglo-American norms. Whatever the efforts of some Indians to *nativize* English, their writings have remained firmly entrenched in Anglo-American cultural and linguistic traditions, and less a part of a popular Indian heritage. This contrasts strongly with, for example, African-American or Afro-Caribbean writers, who have long ago thrown all notions of what is *official* white English overboard, be it related to the content, the style or to the form of their writing. Few Indian writers of English have felt similarly free to appropriate or manipulate English in their own way. This may well be due to the traditionally British-based formal education system, in addition to the wide currency of archaic British grammar books, dictionaries and guides to proper English usage - on which English learning in India is forced to rely - and which may well have stifled any enthusiasm for innovation in Anglo-Indian writing. Neither have the over-proportionate use of English as a written rather than a spoken medium, or the craving to remain intelligible to *the world*, helped to accelerate processes of Indianization<sup>324</sup>.

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<sup>324</sup> Whereas the African-American or Afro-Caribbean writers could develop their own varieties of English through their struggle for survival and their struggles against their

Meanwhile, the economic power of English education has marginalized the existence of (bi-/multilingual) Indian language writers, journalists, literary and educational performers, readers and audiences (Trivedi 1991: 183, Das 1991: 136). In contemporary India, for Trivedi (1991: 182) the existence of (established) writers not knowing or using any English, can only be characterized as *outstanding exceptions to a seemingly irresistible historical process*. Any attempt, however, to identify Indian people with only one language-literature is a misrepresentation of the diversity of the traditions of the subcontinent (Das 1991: 10):

*To identify any one language-literature as the sole representative of the Indian people is essentially wrong because the Indian people speak in many languages, and all attempts to overlook that fact stem from the ingrained perception of the language-literature-nation equation.*

Indigenous cultures continue to survive in multiple people-based literary and oral forms, and act as a counter-force to the subcontinent's complete submersion under a homogenous neo-colonial (literary) hegemony (Trivedi 1991: 182, 183):

*... there still undoubtedly exist and flourish among us creators and exponents of forms of oral and folk literature who may be entirely illiterate in terms of formal, written literature.*

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oppressors, Indian writers in English, in general, because of their collaborationist attitudes towards the greatness of their master's speech, developed into Tagore's imitating parrot.

## 10 ii Microanalysis of contemporary attitudes towards English

Combating *the fatalistic logic on the unassailable position of English*<sup>325</sup>

According to sociolinguists, such as Rickford (1985: 145) or Aitchison (1981: 232, 234), the study of language attitudes, i. e. *how people feel about the language varieties in their speech community*, must be taken into account by those involved in language planning, those studying language variation, language change, or first and second language competence. Conscious language planning programs can only be successful if they are based on the positive reactions of those who are involved (Aitchison 1981: 234). In relation to the pluralist Indian subcontinent, attitudes relating to *variations* of one particular language, or to diverse *languages* are important, as well as attitudes towards multilingualism itself.

In the following chapter, the language attitudes, the ideas and opinions of a specific group of writers, journalists, and editors from Delhi, involved in writing in English in India, are presented, discussed and systematically analysed. Based on attitude studies of other sociolinguists, this microanalysis presents a range of representative attitudes voiced by the following English journalists, creative writers, and editors: Nayantara Sahgal, political, English creative writer, journalist and civil rights activist; Vijaya Ghose, writer, editor of an English language children's magazine; Sujata Patel, English and Marathi social science writer; Vishwapriya Iyengar, English and Tamil creative writer and journalist; Ruth Vanita and Madhu Kishwar, English and Hindi journalists and editors of a women's journal; Urvashi Butalia, writer and editor of an English language women's press; and Peggy Mohan, English and Hindi linguist, writer and children's television series producer<sup>326</sup>.

<sup>325</sup> See Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1986: 7).

<sup>326</sup> All my eight interview-partners quoted in PART IV, 9 iii, agreed to being named in conjunction with the opinions voiced at the interviews taken with them in Delhi in 1988. Nevertheless, rather than judging what they say personally, their opinions should be seen as representative for different attitude trends towards the use of English in India. Their names are as follows: Nayantara Sahgal, Vijaya Ghose (Target), Sujata Patel, Vishwapriya Iyengar, Madhu Kishwar and Ruth Vanita (Manushi, A Journal about Women in Society), Urvashi

Judging from the interviews, and the analyses on the position of English presented, it is possible to map out a continuum of attitudes towards the dissemination, the status and the style of English writing in India. The social class, as well as the written domains in which the interviewed use English are similar and therefore comparable<sup>327</sup>. The linguistic and educational socialization of those interviewed are also outlined and similar. The individually expressed attitudes that are presented here, can be seen as being symbolic and representative of those of the minority of urban English-educated middle class people in India - especially those involved in writing. Those interviewed have all passed through English-medium education and - for this reason - usually write in English.

For many English writers in India it was and still is not entirely a matter of personal choice to write in English. According to Mohan (1982: 291), however, a debate on the use of English in India should not focus on *exceptional individuals and their freedom to use the language they know well*. Instead, the important issue to be discussed here is the question of *our reaction as a society to this alien language we cannot fully possess* (Mohan 1982: 291). For Patel (1988: p. c.<sup>328</sup>) English is, after all, *the language that expresses best the alienation educated Indians feel towards their own cultural and linguistic environment*.

Pattanayak (1981: 165) has outlined *four distinct attitudes towards English since the days of its implantation in India*. These are mainly positive attitudes towards English. They include:

- a) *welcoming English education to fight British imperialism,*
- b) *spreading English for administrative convenience,*
- c) *creating a generation of clerks and interpreters and*
- d) *attributing a civilizing influence to English learning.*

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Butalia (*Kali for Women's Press*), Peggy Mohan. I take full responsibility for the analysis of their attitudes, as well as for any misrepresentations of the opinions they voiced.

<sup>327</sup> These two aspects Rickford (1985) points out as being of major importance.

<sup>328</sup> p. c. = personal communication.

Such attitudes, whether useful in resisting or in assimilating to Western civilization, can also be ascribed to the contemporary English-educated middle class urban elite. In regard to the promotion of an indigenous standard of English in India, as opposed to the upholding of *international standards*, it appears that those supporting the institutional and official functions of English in India, primarily worry about its standards being on the decline, and therefore have little time to see the Indianization of the English language in a positive light (Pattanayak 1981: 165). There are, in addition to the pro-English attitudes outlined by Pattanayak, increasingly unfavourable contemporary attitudes towards English. In general, however, attitudes towards English in India can be characterized as ambivalent, as the following analysis of the interviews conducted clearly shows.

The person representing the first trend on the continuum of attitudes is the prolific writer, Sahgal (1988: p. c.). Her attitude towards English can be described as one of relative surprise that her use of this particular language should be questioned at all. Born before independence, schooled in English, and in spite of her mother tongue being Hindi, she states that she *never thought about the fact that she writes in English*. English is the language many of Sahgal's generation and class have appropriated even more fully than their mother tongues, in terms of speaking and writing. Her attitude seems to be connected to that of many Indians who, mostly before independence, felt that they must more or less *wrench* this exclusive medium from the hands of their colonizers, it was somehow a verbal means of fighting British imperialism (see Pattanayak 1981).

In Rickford's (1985: 255) analysis of attitudes towards English and Creole in Guyana, this attitude towards English as an instrument of liberation from colonial oppression also exists. As a result of English hegemony in Guyana, Creole speakers themselves did not view the promotion of their powerless creole language in the public school system favourably, instead they saw it as being part of the *attempts to keep (them) subjugated by preventing them*

*from becoming educated and informed.* If a language is completely excluded from all spheres of power, its use as a medium of education cannot, on its own, be regarded as beneficial. A Guyanese newspaper editorial from the 1960's explained this view even more clearly. For these particular Guyanese people who *advocated the upholding of standard English in the schools and society as a kind of trophy of war*, English had been *wrested from the imperialists who had sought to deny slaves and ex-slaves the right to learn, live and speak as those in power did.*

As a writer of English novels, as well as of political journalism, Sahgal (1988: p. c.) feels that the two genres that she uses to express herself in, have little in common, in terms of purpose, content and/or style. As a fiction writer she *writes for the sake of writing*, not to get a message across; as a journalist, however, she is *definitely trying to reach an audience*. Although she feels that she is completely bilingual, Sahgal regards English not as a second, but as (one of) her first language(s). An activist in civil rights movements, she does some public speaking in Hindi, but no written work. She sees English as *a key to advancement, more than a tool, a way to reach people, and a language more widely and more badly spoken in India since independence*. To publish in English also means for her the possibility of being read all over the Commonwealth, as well as North America, and Canada.

The second trend on the continuum is characterized by the children's magazine editor, Ghose (1988: p. c.), or the creative writer, Iyengar (1988: p. c.), who, though they are aware of the contradictions inherent in using and communicating extensively through English, feel that it is a language *somehow unalterably* belonging to the Indian subcontinent. In describing similar neo-colonial (African) attitudes towards the colonial language, the literary critic Ngûgî (1981: 7) characterizes such views as being based on *the fatalistic logic of the unassailable position of English in our literature*. Ghose, in particular, feels that English, which she characterizes as *a neutral language*, has *no negative influence on regional languages, instead it*

*encourages a healthy competitive atmosphere.* Though she is fluent in Bengali, Hindi and Telegu, she admits to not reading as much as she would like to in these languages, while her editing/writing work is restricted to English. For her, English is part of contemporary Indian culture, as Indian as any other language. Nevertheless, she does feel *sad, that she doesn't use her own languages as much as she could*, and does think that somewhere along the line, she's *missing out on a rich cultural heritage*.

As an assistant editor of the English language children's magazine, Target, Ghose feels that this is more challenging and more creative than editing a magazine for adults. She does not question the appropriateness or the consequences of using English in a children's magazine, for children whose mother tongues may be other Indian languages and may also need to be promoted. Clearly for the middle class, learning to read and write means learning to read and write in English, there is no question about another language choice. Children's literature whether in English or in Indian languages, according to Das (1995: 33), is, to a large extent, based on British or European models. The social reality projected is therefore mediated by the ideology and attitudes comprised in the models themselves. Das (1995) has divided children's literature in India into two clear categories. The stories that fall into the first category promote the values of a colonial education, while the literature of the second category protest against such values, and, according to Das' research, appear to be more popular with children.

Being an English-language middle class children's magazine Target follows the line of thinking of writing in the first category. As to the style or variety of English used in the magazine Ghose edits, as long as writers write *grammatically* about India and an Indian environment, Target magazine editors feel confident that Indian thinking automatically influences and innovates their English. To know only English, however, is not considered enough: Ghose (1988: p. c.) feels that *a lot of what happens around you comes through the language that people speak* - without knowing any of their languages, their feelings and their thoughts remain remote. Knowing an

Indian language is typically a passively required knowledge, i. e. for someone like Ghose there are few occasions to use it - particularly in regard to education and being literary.

For the much younger journalist and creative writer of prose and poetry in English, Iyengar (1988: p. c.), the problem is slightly different. As English is the only language she momentarily feels capable of writing in, she invests all her energy in moulding it with her *own rhythms and sensuality*. She does not rule out the possibility, however, of one day returning to her regional state of origin and using her childhood language as a medium for her writing. Iyengar, originally from Bangalore, speaks a mixture of Tamil and Kannada as a mother tongue. She was first taught English by French nuns in a boarding school(!), whose style she remembers as being *flowery, pompous and grandiose*. Having learnt to write only in English, she still at times feels *cramped like hell* in this language, in which she has had to learn *to say things properly*. Nevertheless, she is aware that knowing English gives you so many opportunities, makes you *elite, erudite*. Part of the politics of growing up for her has been to learn to say things in English, which still is, as she calls it *a foreign language*. In her writing, she grapples with trying to reproduce language as it's spoken. According to Iyengar, Indians are too self-conscious about writing in English, and are not able to break through the *formality that is freezing them*. To be able to be creative in English, Indian writers must feel free to be *impudent* in it, to show some *real cheek*, and maybe refuse to read British or American English, as she herself did for a long time. She still misses a particular wit, a sense of humour, an expressiveness suited to her contexts - inherent in her knowledge of Tamil and Kannada - that she cannot find in the English language.

Vanita, an editor of Manushi, and Patel (1988: p. c.), a social science writer, can be taken as examples further along the spectrum of even more critical attitudes towards English. Though proficient in Indian languages - Vanita also writes in Hindi, while Patel uses Gujarati, Marathi, or Hindi for public speaking - their first language is undoubtedly English. While Patel feels

*weak in languages in general and uprooted from Indian society*, she shares with Vanita the certainty that Indians can live without English and can communicate without it. Vanita points out the danger, however, of simply substituting Hindi for English, without attacking the structures of the language hierarchy, as she feels that not everyone that speaks Hindi is by definition non-elite. Vanita also points out the problems involved in publishing a journal simultaneously in English and Hindi. As most material for the journal is produced in English, not in Hindi, the Hindi edition was to a great extent translated from English, giving it a certain quality, that didn't always *make it ring true*, and that readers complained about. Vanita felt that there was something about the style or format of the Hindi journal that did not appeal to its readership. The recent discontinuance of the Hindi edition is a positive step in the right direction, she feels, as it has left the editors free to bring out original Hindi books, pamphlets, and booklets, with plays, poetry, activists reports, or fiction, geared more specifically to a Hindi readership.

Having grown up speaking English at home, as her parents came from an *interregional background*, Vanita (1988: p. c.) is also a university lecturer of English. The majority of her students, unlike herself, feel uncomfortable with English, although it is one of their compulsory subjects. This basically means that if they are unsuccessful in English, they are unsuccessful in their university career. Most of Vanita's classes are spent in translating Dickens or Hardy into Hindi. According to Pattanayak (1981: 161), the teaching of English in India has traditionally meant teaching English literature. This is reminiscent of the early modern period in Britain, where education meant literary education. Today this leaves Indian students completely unprepared *for the use of English as a medium of other science and humanistic studies*.

Another important point that Vanita makes relates to the position of Indian English literature in English departments in India. Not only is this literature seldom part of the curriculum, but the majority of Indian students actually prefer American or British English literature to Indo-English literature, which they argue is easier to follow. In fact, Vanita's primarily North Indian

students prefer Dickens, for example, to the South Indian English writer Raja Rao: they find it impossible to remember the South Indian names he uses in his novel, and they complain that they are unable to keep his characters apart. Here English can hardly be seen as a unifying factor between North and South Indians. The mostly privileged educated class of university students also prefer to learn languages like French or German, their primary motivation for learning these languages being the same as their primary motivation for learning English, i. e. economic gains or wanting to go abroad. Compared to the majority of less privileged uneducated Indians - who, without much ado, learn whatever language(s) are used in the regions they happen to live in or be transferred to - and for whom English is never a choice as a link language within the Indian subcontinent, the much-quoted pan-national function of an indigenous type of English on the Indian subcontinent appears questionable. Vanita still feels that in most Indians' minds there continues to be a certain dichotomy, a love-hate relationship, not just towards English, but towards all of the Western culture that comes with it.

Patel (1988: p. c.) sees the entire dynamics of power reflected in the role of the English language in India. For Patel, in this power dynamics, the distinction between a creative writer and a journalist is not necessarily as clear-cut as for Sahgal. She characterizes her own scientific writing as her interpretation, her understanding of what is happening in Indian society - a kind of historical sociology, ranging from academic and highly technical writing to more generally comprehensive articles. Patel's home language is Gujarati, while she has good colloquial knowledge of Marathi. At school she learnt Hindi and Sanskrit, and she has, over the years, acquired a passive understanding of Kannada and Bengali. Nevertheless, Patel feels she has learnt to know herself primarily through the *foreign language* English. Language for her is not just a matter of grammar, but also a carrier of culture. For Patel, *there is something the English language cannot understand about the Indian society*, which Indian languages can. Once you know one Indian language, it's easier to know other languages of the

subcontinent. What is important is the experience that comes with a language. A complete lack of knowledge of Indian languages, can limit the understanding India's English-speaking elite have of their own people and environment.

Patel (1988: p. c.) not only feels alienated from the rest of India in terms of her language, but also in terms of her class. For Patel it is difficult to speak about a society, which cannot understand what you are saying about it, because of the language barrier. In addition, Patel feels that behaviour being determined by class, sets the English-speaking elite apart from the rest. This brings about what Patel refers to as *double alienation*. English has been maintained in India, because those who control the dissemination of cultural or technical information, need English. The choice becomes one of operating at an international or at a personal level. The international level limits its operators to a certain class discourse, a certain culture, which is learnt automatically through the (educational) system. According to Patel (1988: p. c.), as long as language and class are integrated in India, the elite strata in this hierarchical society encounter the rest of the population intellectually, not with any emotional affinity. Ngûgî (1981: 17) relates the schizophrenic personality to the schizophrenic education system initiated by the colonial rulers. In such a system *learning, for a colonial child, became a cerebral activity and not an emotionally felt experience*. For Patel, this lack of emotional affinity between the elite and the majority of the Indian population has yet to be bridged.

Patel, like Butalia (1988: p. c.), who has recently started a Hindi and English women's publishing company in Delhi, feels strongly about the fact that certain important issues must be publicized as widely as possible. For this, only oral traditions and oral forms of communication (such as street theatre, posters, dialogue) can transcend the barriers of the written word. Contrary to Sahgal, however, Patel insists that everyone who writes knows who they are writing for, or at least who they want their readership to be. For Patel it is important, for example, that not only The Times of India readers are familiar

with her papers. Dialogues with those that do not speak her dominant language, English, are of utmost importance to her, as that is the only way she can see a positive change taking place in society. Like Vanita, from *Manushi*, Patel feels that it is a fallacy to say that English in India is necessary for the technical knowledge it brings with it, according to her *languages develop because phenomena exist*. According to Patel, particularly Bengali, Tamil, Malayalam, Kannada, and Telegu, as well as other Indian languages, have already transcended the *technical knowledge* barrier, and have good social science literatures to offer. As most societies, such as Japan, for example, have been able to solve their problems of having to create technical terms for their rapidly industrializing economies, Patel sees no reason why Indians should be unable to do so.

Butalia, co-founder of *Kali*, and Kishwar, editor of *Manushi* and an English university lecturer, represent very much the opposite end of the continuum to Sahgal or Ghose. Both feel just as much at ease, if not more so, in their mother tongues (Punjabi) and home languages (Hindi), despite their English schooling. Butalia (1988: p. c.) describes English as *a language thrust upon her, that she had to learn to live with, and turn to it's best advantage*. The same is true for many of her class and generation. With her feminist publishing company she aims to redress the Eurocentric imbalance present in so much of the research about women from 'Third World' countries. *Kali* encourages and commissions translations from Indian languages into English, in order to complement the Anglo-American viewpoint, which the editors feel, is the most present and the most accessible of all (English) viewpoints in India.

In addition, the editors of *Kali* are also aware and critical about the fact, that translations of writings from one regional language into another hardly exist, and that whatever there is, is not widely available. The most available literature in Indian bookshops is written by British or American authors. Vanita (1988: p. c.) refers to the high literacy rate in Kerala (70%), and the active publishing companies there that distribute scientific material in

Malayalam throughout the state. Although this is widely appreciated in Kerala, little impression has been made on the rest of India, to reinforce the mother tongue reading traditions of other states. Like Vanita and Patel, Butalia does not classify herself as a defender of English, which she feels is neither essential nor important in the Indian context. Butalia feels that for most Indians English is neither a primary nor a sole language of interest. For her, writing in Hindi has also meant fighting political battles on the homeground in order to reach a public that could not be reached through English.

Madhu Kishwar (1988: p. c.) expresses her antagonism towards English in India even more strongly. For her, *teaching what I teach is a crime*. Like so many Indians, she has little choice, however, but to continue using - primarily for economic reasons - what she calls *a language of tyranny and slavery for most Indian*. For her the important issue can no longer be the achievement of better quality English teaching (as Sahgal or Ghose at the other end of the spectrum seem to imply), instead she feels that English as a medium of instruction has to be abandoned, if any breakthrough is to occur. Uncomfortable with writing in English, for Kishwar, like for Patel, English has been a liability in many ways. Though sometimes an asset as a foreign language on the international level, this has cost many Indians the feeling of being rooted, grounded, of having a base in their own language and country. For Kishwar, English is not an Indian language.

A linguist, writer and at present producer of a Hindi children's program on television, Indo-Caribbean-born Mohan (1988: p. c.) sums up the issues in regard to English succinctly. What those in India who say they know English are basically saying, is *that there isn't anything else they know as well - which does not mean that they know English well enough to play with it*. Going through the *right kind of education*, you learn to use English through, what Mohan calls, *a certain amount of avoidance behaviour*, where *creativity finally gets erased out of your language*. Once you've learnt the *formula of how to write properly in a school language, it's boring*. For

Mohan, the important thing is to get beyond that, to begin to take a language for granted, in order to be able *to do things with it*. Indians, however, have not felt free to do with English what they want - maybe because of the powerful, continuing presence and traditions of their own languages, parallel to their strong colonial heritage.

The predicament of - as Mohan refers to them - the semilingual Indian elite is that, on the one hand, they only self-consciously feel comfortable with their formulistic English, but, on the other hand, they have also let go of a complete grip on their mother tongues, or home languages. Mohan (1988: p. c.) feels that English in India shows all the characteristics of a foreigner's approach to language. There is, for example, an obsession with proper grammatical forms, that lead to a lack of variation while judging what alternatives exist between a *right* or *wrong* choice. According to Mohan (1982: 292), what characterizes a native speaker's attitude to their language is precisely the existence of such a tolerance towards a range of utterances that could be appropriate in a given situation.

The problem with Indian writers' is their adherence to two conflicting trends: on the one hand, they subscribe to what they like to call a *neutral* style of English - which is basically standard British English with a few Indianisms thrown in - on the other hand, they voice a passionate desire to Indianize the language inflicted upon them. Neither of these preoccupations with form or style can be a reflection of, or relevant to, the promotion of Indian contexts or contents. The *rub* for the linguist Mohan, lies in the fact that the literary form (the novel, the prose format) chosen by so many Indian English writers typically belongs to a European cultural and literary tradition. Only in poetry, Mohan can glimpse an escape from *constricting forms*, a certain *honesty* creeping into the writings.

As soon as journalists, humour column writers, or cartoonists throw all caution to the wind, and try and depict themselves less self-consciously, their use of English becomes more genuinely real, sarcastic, ironic, or funny.

According to Mohan, the fear of experimenting with language, content and style, which has become a predominant characteristic of English writers in India, confirms that neither English, nor Hindi, nor the ancient literary, written and oral heritages of the subcontinent any longer are a part of Indo-Anglian writers. She sees this condition as a form of paralysis, of linguistic displacement, of fear of using, taking apart, or even *manhandling* both Indian or English literary traditions. In his essay Decolonizing the mind, the postcolonial English language critic, Ngũgĩ (1981: 106), describes the main problem of the English writers in postcolonial societies as their failure to consider a *quest for relevance* as a central issue to their writing. As he puts it, questions on the relevance of *what literature, what art, what culture, what values, for whom, for what?* have to be constantly asked. According to Ngũgĩ, these questions, combined with the language question, *cannot be solved outside the larger arena of economics and politics, or outside the answer to the question of what society we want.*

In practical terms, analysts such as, for example, Mohan (1982: 292), have warned against the exclusions, traumatizations, and defeats suffered by middle class children, who, though they have access to schools and other institutions, have to grow up to deal with the fact that their mother tongues are ignored in all the formal sectors of society. Even those who manage to acquire some knowledge of English, such as *the schoolgirl who frantically crams her class notes, word for word, because she can't grasp the meaning, or the poor steno who is made to feel stupid just because he can't work fast or correctly in English, or the village child who, despite his brilliance, will never get anywhere as an intellectual - poor thing, where will he learn English* (Mohan 1982: 292): all three end up being considered and feeling more than inadequate. Justifiably, Mohan (1982: 292) asks whether we are *talking about a language, or something more?* For her, the exclusion of most of Indian society is too high a price to pay *for just a medium of literature.* The problem lies not simply in the promotion of the English language as such, but in the exclusive position insisted on by educationalists and government language planners. Mohan has turned to Indian television and

grappling with the Hindi language, style and form to express her ideas. For her, those Indians using English in India today are, if not physically, then at least mentally displaced from the majority of the people around them, whose cultures have remained relatively untouched by Anglicization. This has left Indian English literature to being presented as *a case of isolated individuals playing with a foreign language* (Mohan 1982: 291).

At one end of this continuum of attitudes, Sahgal (1988: p. c.), representing the middle class who are rooted in experiences connected to pre-independence times, takes the existence of English in India for granted. Sahgal opts for writing only in English, while she occasionally uses Hindi for public speaking. Next along the continuum of attitudes towards English in India, there are those who - like Ghose (1988: p. c.) - are theoretically capable of reading and writing Indian languages, but actively only use English. Ghose can be said to represent a second group of Indians, who similar to the first group, continue to feel that English is necessary as a technical instrument for advancement. Then there are those further along the continuum, clearly belonging to India's post-independence generations, who feel alienated from the majority of their compatriots, because their primary language is English. While Iyengar (1988: p. c.) continues to write in English, she hopes to - one day - return to her mother tongue Kannada and use it for her creative expression. The openly anti-English group who, like Kishwar and Butalia (1988: p. c.), are completely fluent in written English, still prefer to write in their mother tongues, in which they feel more at ease. Nevertheless, Kishwar and Butalia write primarily in English, though Hindi has definitely become an alternative choice. At the other end of the continuum, Vanita and Patel (1988: p. c.) have become actively involved in trying to overcome the isolating tendencies of English. They can be seen as being representative of Indians who make the effort of getting their work translated into (to them) relevant Indian languages. Simultaneously, they have begun to familiarize themselves with writing in their own respective regional language. Lastly, Mohan (1988: p. c.) has consciously opted for

Hindi, though not for the written, but for the oral and visual communication medium, i. e. television.

The complexity of the interviews, and the attitudes and problems expressed, when ‘choosing’ to write in English, speak for themselves. For English-speaking Indians, as for many other postcolonial privileged classes, there are tremendous educational, social and economic pressures, as well as potentially huge professional and material benefits available, to produce creative, academic, or journalistic writings in English for the national elite Indian, and international Anglo-American market. There are certain contradictions, however, in simultaneously looking for an indigenous identity and an international culture through a foreign language and its colonial heritage, exclusively for the benefit of the English-speaking world (Mohan 1982: 293). This attitude under the guise of *benign internationalism* continues to breed a class that feels unsettled in its own country and leaves most local problems unresolved. Though the scarce finances of postcolonial countries are heaped on the handful of privileged English-educated, but alienated semilingual *midnight’s children*, the gap between their Eurocentric ideals and their *immediate lived reality* continues to grow (Joshi 1991: 23). If they and English aim to be an integral part of India’s subcontinental and historical patterns of diversity, they must locate themselves within multiple collective local contexts, before appropriating the role of becoming India’s only delegates in addressing ‘the world’.

## 11 Debating English in postcolonial educational policies and language planning

Though sure of Indian independence, in his last public speech in 1941, Tagore (1941) openly voiced his long-standing disillusionment with British rulers, as well as his extreme anxiety about the India the colonizers had helped to create:

*The Wheels of Fate will some day compel the British to give up their Indian Empire, but what kind of India will they leave behind, what stark misery when the stream of their two centuries' administration runs dry at last, what a waste of mud and filth they will leave behind them!*

The dates set for the official independence of the colonized countries may be common knowledge to most of their inhabitants. The 'complete' ending of colonialism, similar to its beginning, however, must be seen as a process. According to Chandra et al (1972: 3), the basic character of British rule and colonialism was greatly influenced by *the changing patterns of Britain's own social, economic and political development*, passing through several stages in its long history of nearly 200 years in India. Such a long period of (physical and mental) domination cannot be abruptly ended on all levels by a treaty. According to the postcolonial critic, Nandy (1983: xvi), depending on what angle is taken, different points of the beginnings and the endings of colonialism can be set. In the case of India, if the subcontinent's colonization is said to have begun in 1757, when the Nawab of Bengal, Siraj-ud-Daula, was militarily defeated by the English East India Company in the 'Battle of Plassey', then, in this line of thinking, colonization ended in 1947, when the British physically, militarily, politically and officially 'quit India'.

After the initial commercial then military conquest, British rule in India entered its second phase during the (early) half of the nineteenth century. The Industrial Revolution had taken place in Britain, and *the British Government* had become the real power behind the East India Company,

acting primarily *in the interests of the British capitalist class as a whole* (Chandra et al 1972: 6). During this phase, India under colonial rule *had to be changed and transformed to be able to play its new role in the development of British economy* (Chandra et al 1972: 8). Another (third) phase of British rule began in the mid-nineteenth century, when, among other expansionist economic, technological, trade and industrial developments, an imperialist ideology developed, which sought to justify colonial rule to the colonized. This ideology also served to defend (Western) European and US American upper class interests against the rise of democratic movements of workers and peasants in their own countries (Chandra et al 1972: 12). Within these phases, the British can be said to have formulated their colonialist ideology and their racist theory of world history and culture, which they implemented in colonial policies (Nandy 1983: xiv).

Among other consequences of British rule in India, such as the stagnation of industrial and agricultural development, the underdevelopment of a colonially dependent economy, the uneven distribution of infrastructural facilities, or wide regional disparities in income patterns and in social stratification, the *prevalence of extreme poverty among Indian people most of whom lived below the margin of subsistence in normal times and died in lakhs when droughts or floods hit the land* became a defining feature of the subcontinent (Chandra et al 1972: 15, 23):

*While further extension of colonial exploitation required some internal development, the very process of this exploitation made further extension impossible by keeping India backward.*

The fundamental contradictions in the ideology of colonialism, as well as in the implementation of its policies, not only actively promoted agricultural, infrastructural, or economic underdevelopment of the Indian subcontinent, but brought about widely spread organized struggles and resistance movements to British domination (Chandra et al 1972: 15). The very process of modernization that became necessary in order to turn India into *a paying colony*, simultaneously *endangered colonial rule* by producing *the social*

*groups and forces* of nationalism which opposed colonialism, imperialism and its *mechanisms* of the *exploitation of India* (Chandra et al 1972: 15).

On the educational level, different colonial phases have also been identified. While traditional systems of education were ruined, the development and spread of substitute ‘modern education’ during East India Company/British Crown rule was slow and limited. Formulated in specific educational charter acts from 1813 onwards, policies tended to ignore primary and secondary school education, while partially promoting existing higher Sanskrit and Persian learning institutions. The neglect of modern technical education hindered the growth of modern industry. The attempt to replace Indian languages by English as a medium of instruction socially and economically divided Indian communities. Not only the spread of education was prevented, but *a wide linguistic and cultural gulf* between *the educated and the masses* was created (Chandra et al 1972: 26).

The British government in India was increasingly unwilling to adequately fund education. Fees were introduced both for schools, as well as colleges, which turned education into *a virtual monopoly of the middle and upper classes and the city and the town dwellers* (Chandra et al 1972: 26). After 1858, British administrators sought to extensively curtail higher education. Educated Indians, however, having begun to use their newly acquired knowledge *to analyse and criticise the imperialist and exploitative character of British rule and to organise an anti-imperialist movement*, kept up public pressure in favour of the continuance of higher education. They were unable to halt the general qualitative deterioration of educational institutions (Chandra et al 1972: 25, 26):

*If the educational system acted as the carrier of nationalism it did so indirectly by making available to its recipients some of the basic literature in the physical and social sciences and the humanities and thus stimulating their capacity to make social analysis. Otherwise its structure and pattern, aims, methods, curricula and content were all designed to serve colonialism.*

Nandy's analysis (1983: xiv) primarily deals with the period of the mental colonization of the Indian people and Gandhi's mobilization of their resistance by the 1930s. By the end of 1929, Nehru had announced at a public meeting that the aim of the freedom movement was to be 'Purna Swaraj', full and total independence. People throughout the subcontinent pledged to join in the fight for Indian independence. By March of the same year, Gandhi *deconstructed* colonial ideology (Nandy 1983: xiv), with his walk 200 miles through Gujarati villages to the sea coast, breaking the colonial law on salt<sup>329</sup>. According to Chandra et al (1972: 160):

*National consciousness, in general, was electrified when Gandhiji began his Dandi march.*

Several factors finally made independence possible in 1947. While the British were weakened by their successful intervention in the (World) war against Germany, they lost their hold over India. In addition, they were no longer able to counter or subdue the scale and strength of the independence movement, comprised of nationalist revolts, trade union strikes, militant demonstrations and peasant uprisings, which had succeeded in mobilizing all sections of the population against colonial rule (Chandra et al 1972: 185, 217, 218). According to Sarkar (1983: 446, 447) a '*peaceful*' transfer of power was purchased at the cost of the partitioning of the subcontinent into Pakistan and India *and a communal holocaust*. The winning of political independence and the achievement of freedom, though based on a *compromise plan* (Chandra et al 1972: 218, 219), was an essential prerequisite to the beginning of a process of decolonization that is continuing to the present day. The initiation of a foreign-policy based on non-alignment, the establishment of a broadly democratic constitution, the realization of the old ideal of the linguistic reorganization of states, the implementation of planned industrial growth, and an increase in food production were all changes that did not come automatically, but developed

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<sup>329</sup> The colonial law on salt had turned a basic, daily necessity into an expensive imported luxury item. By publicly, but under British rule 'illegally' manufacturing salt from the sea, Gandhi broke this law openly in Dandi, on the coast of Gujarat.

in the course of the following years, not least on the basis of popular struggles (Sarkar 1983: 453, 454).

The year 1947, however, can be seen to have been the beginning of yet another type of colonialism, i. e. neo-colonialism<sup>330</sup>. Up to today, resistance still continues against the far more invisible structures of this neo-colonialism. The same year also marked *the beginning of yet another struggle more pervasive and more prolonged* for the millions of Indian people, who did not belong to the Indian intelligentsia. All over the Indian subcontinent, they continued to be involved in peasant movements, uprisings, guerrilla warfare, or just the arduous task of surviving<sup>331</sup>. Even on the eve of his assassination in 1948, Gandhi warned that the country still had to *attain social, moral and economic independence in terms of its 700, 000 villages*<sup>332</sup>. These majorities of Indian people are still waiting to come to power, with their languages, their philosophies, their sciences and their cultures.

After political independence, the colonial language, its writing system, its media, its bureaucratic, administrative and its educational institutions largely remained installed to serve the interests of a minor section of the society (Jouhy 1985: 185, 186). The triumph of the colonial education system over the traditional has produced elites as much bound to the Euro-American education system, as they have lost touch with indigenous systems of socialization, education or language. Access to higher national (mostly secondary and higher) educational, economic, political or military institutions is still dependent on successfully learning the colonizer's language and its educational content. In Jouhy's (1985: 185) words:

*Bei der Ablösung der traditionellen, durch die neuen Eliten, die 'die Entwicklungsstrategie' der Industriekultur verinnerlicht haben, spielt die Aneignung der jeweiligen Sprache der*

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<sup>330</sup> Neo-colonialism has been described by postcolonial African leaders as the survival of the colonial system in spite of formal recognition of political independence in emerging countries, which became the victims of an indirect and subtle form of domination by political, economic, social, military or technical (forces) ...(Brown 1974: 256).

<sup>331</sup> See, for example, Chandra et al (1972: 39).

<sup>332</sup> See Sarkar (1983: 453) for a discussion of Gandhi's disappointments with independence.

*früheren Kolonialherren, und damit der Zugang zur internationalen Kommunikation in Wissenschaft, Technik und Technologie, Diplomatie und Wirtschaftspolitik die entscheidende Rolle. Die 'neuen Eliten' sind weit mehr Produkte der Sekundar- und Hochschulen nach dem Muster der euro-amerikanischen Bildung als Träger der pädagogischen Tradition und Sprache der Völker und Nationen, denen sie entstammen.*

This internal hierarchical system is complemented by the fact that access to international communication relating to science, technology, diplomacy and economic policy is linked to the colonial language to an even greater extent. According to Herriman and Burnaby (1996: 2) particularly the English language has managed to consolidate its power in the world:

*During the second half of this century, English has consolidated its power as the major lingua franca in the world at least for business, science, communications and technology, and for other purposes as well.*

While no economic or political decolonization is possible without the inclusion and initiation of processes of linguistic decolonization, language can not either be the exclusive issue or only means of national liberation (Calvet 1978: 128). In comparing the colonial period in history to the contemporary post-/neo-colonial phase, Phillipson (1988: 341) points out the transformation of ideological structures, including processes of *ethnicism and linguisticism*:

*And just as colonialism has been superseded by more sophisticated forms of exploitation, the crudely biological racist ideology has been superseded by ethnicism and linguisticism. The "higher and better view" of the West is now less represented by the gun and the Bible than by technology and the textbook. Western products still come wrapped in a Western language and in Western thought.*

For Gandhi (1964: 337) too, without the achievement of independence in all spheres of life, the realization of *self-government* would remain incomplete. *However benevolently or generously Self-Government may be bestowed upon us, Gandhi felt, Indians would be unable to fully implement a self-governing nation, if there was no respect for the languages our mothers speak.*

## 11 i Language and educational rights in government policies, reports and commissions

The Indian Constitution of January 26th, 1950, guarantees every Indian community full cultural and educational rights. In the Appendix A, Minutes of the Meeting of the Drafting Committee, the following laws were formulated (Ambedkar 1991b)<sup>333</sup>:

24. (1) *Any section of the citizens residing in the territory of India or any part thereof having a distinct language, script and culture of its own shall have the right to conserve the same.*
- (2) *No minority whether based on religion, community or language shall be discriminated against in regard to the admission of any person belonging to such minority into any educational institution maintained by the State.*
- (3) (a) *All minorities whether based on religion, community or language shall have the right to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice.*
- (b) *The State shall not, in granting aid to schools, discriminate against any school on the ground that it is under the management of a minority, whether based on religion, community or language.*

Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson (1989: 10, 11) have made comparative studies of linguistic rights in different countries, and have classified laws relating to language on an evaluative scale, according to whether they are more *assimilation-oriented* or *maintenance-oriented*. In relation to language rights, assimilation-oriented laws of *prohibition*, *toleration* or, in the middle of the scale, *non-discrimination prescription* laws towards minority languages are considered negative. Positive language maintenance-oriented laws range from *non-discrimination prescription* to *permission* to actual *promotion* of powerless languages. Article (3) (a) in the Indian Constitution can be categorized as a law directed towards *overt maintenance-oriented permission*. Article (3) (a) tones down the *overt non-discrimination prescription* of Article (3) (b). If (3) (b) were to stand alone, it would be a radical law not only prohibiting, but proscribing practices of non-

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<sup>333</sup> See these same laws under Articles 29 and 30, in Part III of the Indian Constitution (Kumar 1985: 27).

discrimination. The complete Article (3) (a) and (b) as it stands together, has been classified as representing a progressive attitude of *covert maintenance-oriented promotion*, close to the overt end of the continuum, as explicit mention is made of minority languages.

On the basis of their research, Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson (1989: 19) have come to the conclusion that it is a myth that the Western world is any way progressive in promoting the linguistic rights of minorities. Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson (1989: 11) have categorized the articles relating to language and education rights in the Indian constitution as fairly progressive, particularly in comparison to similar ‘policies’ in the USA<sup>334</sup>, which covertly prohibit the official use of minority languages. In the context of the USA, Herriman and Burnaby (1996: 9) have stated that the demand for overt English language policies that have arisen in conjunction with anti-immigrant movements can only be described as demands for potentially (even more) repressive measures towards the rights of minorities:

*Since English clearly is the dominant language in the USA, declaring it official can only serve to repress minorities’ rights.*

Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson (1989) have emphasized that all types of *covert* or *overt* educational, political, social or cultural minority or majority laws can either promote, tolerate or prohibit the right of existence for powerless languages. The term ‘policy’, according to Herriman and Burnaby (1996: 3), becomes problematic in many real contexts, as it cannot be defined monolithically or clearly. Policies can be understood as *either being deliberate and planned, the result of crisis management, or not a consequence of planning but rather of accepting things as they are*. In Britain or the USA, for example, language policies are *of the unstated kind and in this respect are consistent with the constitution ... based on precedent rather than statute* (Herriman & Burnaby 1996: 3, 9).

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<sup>334</sup> In terms of US American language policy, Herriman & Burnaby (1996: 9) refer to federal funding programs and implications of court cases, which have created policies addressing language issues for those who do not speak English.

Coming back to the case of India and its explicit constitutional laws on the educational and linguistic rights of minorities, it is 'easier' to examine the encoding or implementation of multilingual rights. The official language named in the Constitution is Hindi in Devanagari script only (Part XVII of the Constitution, Article 343). The President of India has the power to authorize the use of Hindi for official purposes at anytime. The necessity for the growth and development of Hindi (Article 351) is recognized, along with a plan to set up a Commission to oversee its formulation<sup>335</sup>. The Commission installed officially promoted a 'modern' Sanskritized version of Hindi in India. This (primarily written) Sanskritized version of a still extremely popular Indian language<sup>336</sup> has distanced itself from its (spoken) variations, as well as from Urdu. In addition, this Sanskritized Hindi variety, which dominant sections of the Hindu elite helped to promote within the official arenas introduced through British rule, i. e. the educational system, the press, the publishing industry and the government itself (King 1989: 179 - 202), has increasingly come to symbolize a reactionary type of Hindu nationalism<sup>337</sup>. In the Indian Constitution, fifteen regional states and recognized languages were enumerated (today the official number has grown to 17), 12 official languages of the states, 2 interstate languages (Urdu, Sindhi) and Sanskrit.

The concept of a *national language* was not discussed, probably in order not to arouse linguistic tensions or controversies. In reality, however, Hindi has been given the status of a pan-Indian language. English was given the prominent position of an additional official language, with the idea that it would be phased out after fifteen years (Satyanarayana 1977: 29). In comparison to the status of other minority languages in contemporary India,

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<sup>335</sup> The same necessity existing for other Indian languages, too, was not specifically stated at this point, nor where there Commissions set up to oversee the formulations of modern versions of other Indian languages.

<sup>336</sup> According to Sheth (1990: 36) and Pattanayak (1988) Hindi (or varieties of Hindi) is spoken by the largest majority of people in India. Hindi has been adopted as the official language of six Indian states, comprising about 43% of the population.

<sup>337</sup> See chapter 4 iii.

and their presence in administration or in education, English seems to have benefited extensively from its constitutional rights<sup>338</sup>.

After 1947, Indian Constituent Assembly/Government reports and commissions<sup>339</sup> continued to be based, to some extent, on colonial ‘nation’ models<sup>340</sup>. The writings, theories and analyses of the subcontinent’s foremost thinkers, particularly regarding the role of English in education, (such as Gandhi or Tagore<sup>341</sup>, for example) were never fully implemented (Sheth 1990: 34-37). On the basis of the report of the University Education Commission of 1948, which considered English to be indispensable, the members of the Constituent Assembly<sup>342</sup> concluded that English had to be retained for a period of fifteen years *for all the official purposes of the Union* (Sinha 1978: 131, 145). During this same period the President was given the authorization to use the Hindi language *in addition to the English language*. *After the said period of fifteen years*, Parliament was given the authority to *provide for the use of the English language ... for such purposes as may be specified in such law*. In regard to the official language or languages of a state, the language of the Supreme Court, the High Courts or of bills, acts, and ordinances, it was decided that English would be retained<sup>343</sup>:

*... all orders, rules, regulations and bye-laws; issued under this Constitution or under any law made by Parliament or the Legislature of a State shall be in the English language.*

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<sup>338</sup> In this context, it may also be interesting to discuss Lenin’s ideas from 1913 (1964: 71-73) on the necessity of a national language for a multilingual nation. According to Chatterji (1973: 49), Lenin was not convinced of such a necessity, neither was he in favour of a compulsory official language. Lenin felt that the population of a multilingual country had to be provided with schools which used all the local languages as media for instruction, while a constitutional law would have to declare invalid all privileges of any particular group, as well as safeguarding minority groups against any violations of their rights.

<sup>339</sup> See, for example, the University Education Commission’s Report, 1949, whose policy did not favour the speakers of minority languages, and was replaced by The Secondary Education Commission, in 1952 (Sridhar 1996: 334).

<sup>340</sup> On the 1944 Sarheen Report, for example.

<sup>341</sup> Both Gandhi and Tagore favoured mother tongue education from the primary level up to the university level, with the option of English as a an additional subject, if desired (see chapter 7 i and 7 ii).

<sup>342</sup> Before the first Indian parliament was elected, the Indian Constituent assembly was formed, between 1947-50, in order to – among other tasks - write the Indian constitution.

<sup>343</sup> Articles 301. A. (1), (2), (3), see also discussion in Sinha (1978, chapter 6).

All the resolutions of the Constituent Assembly were passed by the Parliament, with only minor changes in their wordings, not in their fundamental content, and today form an integral part of the Indian Constitution (Sinha 1978: 133). In the case of any regional state choosing another language than English in which to draw up its bills or acts, an English translation would be required, constituting *the authoritative text* under this article<sup>344</sup>.

The Central Advisory Board of Education of 1948-49 and the All India Education Conference reviewed and discussed the positions of regional Indian languages and English in colleges and universities (Sinha 1978: 134). They stated that efforts were being made to replace English with regional Indian languages. They recommended, however, that no *sudden change* was to be made to replace English as a medium of instruction at the university level<sup>345</sup>:

*A period of five years should be utilised to prepare for the gradual replacement of English by an Indian language. This would mean that from the sixth year, replacement of English would begin, and after seven years, English will no longer be required to be the medium of instruction in the Universities.*

Somewhat reminiscent of British Anglicist policies, the numerous commissions the Constituent Assembly/Government of India appointed to examine the language issue, concentrated their discussion on the future position and role of English in (higher education) in independent India. According to Sridhar (1996: 334) debates after 1947 addressed primarily two issues:

- (i) *what should be the medium for minority language speakers at the early stages?*
- (ii) *for how long should English continue to be the medium at the university level?*

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<sup>344</sup> Article 301. F3, (b), (i): Official Report of the Constituent Assembly Debates, Vol. IX, No. 32, 1949, see Sinha (1978: 133).

<sup>345</sup> Indian Ministry of Education. 1952. Education in India (1947-48), Part A. Delhi: Manager of Publication.

The completed reports of the different commissions did not all turn out to be favourable towards English. Some criticized English for being an instrument of division between the governing few and the governed mass<sup>346</sup>, others credited English for having become a part of Indians' *national habit*, a language completely free of *local biases and entanglements* (Ram 1983: 274). Some commissions supported the teaching of English as a first language, others as a foreign language, while again others wanted to see it being promoted as an international contact language (Ram 1983: 272). The Radhakrishnan Commission of 1949 recommended the regional languages as media of education, and the federal (official state) languages or Hindi as substitutes for English (as an additional language)<sup>347</sup>.

The Report of the Secondary Education Commission of 1952, which argued that the study of the English language and literature had united and liberated India, suggested a retention of English for secondary schools and for universities (Sinha 1978: 135, 145). It recommended a 'Four Language Formula'. The suggestion was that at the secondary stage of education, the mother tongue, the state or regional language, the link language Hindi and any classical language (Sanskrit, Pali, Arabic, Persian) should be studied (Sridhar 1996: 334)<sup>348</sup>. This formula did not gain wide currency. In 1953, the 'Three Language Formula' was recommended by the Secondary Education Commission. Disappointingly, this 'Formula' was, to some extent, based on the East India Company administrator Auckland's colonial language experiments of the 1840's, which had recommended the use of 'vernacular' languages as teaching media, with *knowledge* drawn from English, and their *suitability* improved by Sanskrit (Ram 1983: 157).

This formula leaves children, whose mother tongue does not correlate with any of the three specified languages, disadvantaged in terms of the number

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<sup>346</sup> See the discussion of the Radhakrishnan Commission of 1949 (Ram 1983: 269).

<sup>347</sup> The Radhakrishnan Commission did not, however, consider English a hindrance either (Sinha 1978: 145).

<sup>348</sup> For those whose mother tongue was not the official language of the regional state this would have meant being confronted with five additional languages in school.

of languages they have to learn. Those children whose mother tongue corresponds to more than one of the mentioned languages become privileged. In addition, the positions of Hindi and English become greatly strengthened by this formula, leaving other Indian languages constitutionally, educationally and administratively unaccounted for (excepting as instruction media at primary school stages). According to Sheth (1990: 36), for example, Hindi has evolved to a *supra language*, *overriding several dialects and cultures*<sup>349</sup> *within the so-called Hindi belt.*

The States Reorganization Commission set up *to rationalize the administrative structure of the country* in the early 1950's, recommended the addition of Articles 350A. and 350B. as measures to safeguard the role of minority languages (not listed in the constitution) in primary education (Sridhar 1996: 333):

*350A It should be the endeavour of every State and of every local authority within the State to provide adequate facilities for the instruction in the mother tongue at the primary stage of education to children belonging to linguistic minority groups: and the President may issue such directions to any State as he considers necessary or proper for securing the provision for such facilities.*

In addition, a Report of the Commissioner for Linguistic Minorities in India (1971: 81)<sup>350</sup> specified a conditional number of pupils necessary for the availability of mother tongue instruction:

*... arrangements must be made for instruction in the mother tongue by appointing one teacher provided there are not fewer than 40 pupils speaking the language in the whole school or 10 such pupils in a class ...*

Article 350B. established that it would be the responsibility of a special officer, the Commissioner for Linguistic Minorities, to safeguard educational and linguistic rights of minorities:

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<sup>349</sup> Such as Avadhi, Bhojpuri, Braj, Marvadi, Haryanvi, Maithili, or Urdu, among others.

<sup>350</sup> The Twelfth Report of the Commissioner for Linguistic Minorities in India. New Delhi: Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India.

350. B. *There shall be a special officer to investigate all matters relating to the safeguards provided for linguistic minorities under this Constitution and report to the President upon those matters at such intervals as the President may direct, and the President shall cause all such reports to be laid before each house of Parliament, and sent to the Governments of the States concerned ...*

By 1955, the states of India were reorganized on linguistic lines<sup>351</sup>. The largest language(s) in each regional state was/were made the main official language. Each state was given the choice of either adopting a recognized regional language or Hindi for official purposes. The ‘minority’ communities speaking constitutionally non-specified languages were left to face the danger of being marginalized. Nevertheless, including the 17 recognized languages, altogether about 58 languages are being used as media of instruction or are studied as subjects (Sridhar 1996: 336). In addition, the Census of 1961 recognized 1652 languages within the subcontinent as mother tongues, therefore theoretically ‘qualified’ for use in education (Khubchandani 1991: 47).

Already before independence, in a Report on Bombay Presidency, Ambedkar (1991: 14, 15) had warned against putting into practice the principle of one language - one province, in the particular instance of discussing the separation of Karnataka from the then Bombay Presidency. As Ambedkar put it, *the number of provinces that will have to be carved out if the principle is to be carried to its logical conclusion shows, in my opinion, its unworkability*. Choosing particular languages as official state languages on the basis of their being *distinct cultural languages with a past and a future*, or on the basis of having a *strong linguistic consciousness*, represented unworkable choices for Ambedkar. For this he had a *simple reason*, in fact: *that every language which has a past, if given an opportunity, will have a future and every linguistic group of people if they are vested with the powers of government will acquire linguistic consciousness*. Under the dominance of the additional language English, the officially dominant language Hindi, as well as the regionally increasingly

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<sup>351</sup> See Report of States Reorganization Commission (Sridhar 1996).

dominant languages of the states, numerous linguistic groups in India have not been able to fully endorse their constitutional rights. Sinha (1978: 138) argued that the redistribution of states on a linguistic basis *filled each region with a zeal to boost up its own regional language, even at the cost of the national language*. According to Khubchandani (1991: 13) the linguistic reorganisation of Indian states, which was finally enforced in 1956, was based primarily on the language identity of the dominant pressure groups. It brought about a *coercive homogeneity in communications in favour of the language identity of dominant groups*, even generating *insular tendencies* within a plural society such as India.

During the 1960's, numerous sections of Hindi or regional language communities formed political pressure groups. In 1961, for example, besides particular left organizations, opposition to English culminated in the formation of an All India Angrezi Hatao Sammelan<sup>352</sup>. This organization criticized that *the entire law of the land was written in a language of which the general people were ignorant* (Sinha 1978: 136). Its resolutions included the boycotting of members in parliament or in assemblies using English, the replacement of English with Hindi or the regional languages as the language of the courts, as well as the following propositions (Sinha 1978: 136):

- (d) *to impress upon the educational authorities to make the study of English optional, and substitute the same with an emphasis on the teaching of Hindi and regional languages, also making these the medium of instruction;*
- (e) *to consider the students having failed in English only, as having passed and suitable for promotion to the next higher class,*
- (f) *finally to urge the Government to introduce Hindi in the Army, Railways, Postal Departments, etc.*

Other pressure groups from non-Hindi speaking communities, objecting to the official promotion and dominance of Hindi, put pressure on the Indian government to indefinitely extend the additional/official use of English. This meant that the substitution (and dominance) of English by the official Hindi

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<sup>352</sup> Also referred to as the Akhil Bhartiya Angrezi Hatao Sammelan (All India Remove English Convention) see Sinha (1978: 136, 154).

variety was not completely successful. While leading Hindi-speaking spokespeople wished to replace English and promote Hindi on a national scale, Bengali-, Tamil-, Marathi-, Malayalam-speaking (etc.) pressure groups sought to promote their own languages plus English. In sociolinguistic terms, such political groups primarily aimed to replace the dominantly diglossic colonial model (English as a ‘high’ language plus regional languages on ‘lower’ levels) by a local official diglossic/triglossic model (English and/or Hindi and/or one dominant regional language as ‘high’ languages complemented at ‘lower’ levels by – less powerful – regional languages).

In 1965, due to large scale riots in Madras State, the Prime Minister of India, Lal Bahadur Shastri, indefinitely postponed the phasing out of English *except when the people agree*. He emphasized that the agreement of people in non-Hindi speaking areas would be particularly important (Sinha 1978: 139). A Working Committee of the Indian National Congress was set up to study all questions relating to language policy. In June 1965, they re-endorsed the ‘Three Language Formula’. This basically trilingual model obliged the states of India *to introduce the three-language formula in their educational curricula, extend it to the University stage and to apply it strictly* (Sinha 1978: 140). This formula still applies to almost all Indian states<sup>353</sup>. According to Pattanayak (1988: 389), *India has accepted the Three Language Formula as a basis for its language education*, which consists of the following policies:

*Each child is expected to learn three languages in school: the state language, Hindi and English. In those states where Hindi is the state language, another Indian language is taught instead of Hindi.*

According to Ram (1983: 292) the regional languages were to be *media of instruction* at primary levels, Hindi and English were installed as *link*

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<sup>353</sup> With the exception of Bengal, for example, where the ‘One Language Formula’ (Bengali or English medium only at the primary level) was introduced in the 1980s, arguing that the pupils energy does not get diverted towards learning too many languages (Bagchi 1981, Datta 1981).

*languages*, and English was specified as *a library and international link language*. Sinha's interpretation of the formula also emphasized the study of South Indian languages (1978: 142):

*The three-language formula includes the study of a modern Indian language, preferably one of the Southern languages, apart from Hindi and English in the Hindi-speaking States, and/or Hindi along with the regional language and English in the non-Hindi speaking States.*

All examinations for entry into the Indian Civil Service, i. e. the Union Public Service Commission (U. P. S. C.) examinations, were to be conducted in English, Hindi or in the other languages specified by the Constitution, including obligatory papers in English and Hindi. For those whose medium was Hindi, one paper would be set in another Indian language. The aim to introduce the official language of every state as a medium of administration, as well as a medium of instruction at the university level was upheld. The standards of teaching Hindi were to be raised, while English was *to continue to be taught as a language which has an important role* (Sinha 1978: 140). The general development of Hindi and its progressive use as the official language of the Union and the link language for the country was also reaffirmed, while the other constitutionally recognized languages were promised programs furthering their development and implementation.

The Education Commission installed between 1964-66 reiterated that while the goal was to adopt the mother tongue or the regional languages (Sridhar 1996: 334, 335) English would not be eliminated. Teachers and students in higher education were to be able to use the regional languages (extensively in the undergraduate courses), as well as English as a medium of instruction (extensively in the postgraduate courses or in cases where students came from different language backgrounds). The Indian Government continued to impress upon the state governments the promotion and implementation of the 'Three Language Formula'.

In some states, the defeat of Congress in the 1967 elections also implied a nationally incomplete acceptance of trilingualism<sup>354</sup>. In their National Policy on Education of 1968<sup>355</sup> the Indian Government further specified their attitude to English:

*Special emphasis needs to be laid on the study of English and other international languages. World knowledge is growing at a tremendous pace, especially in science and technology. India must not only keep up this growth but should also make her own significant contribution to it. For this purpose, study of English deserves to be specially strengthened.*

In the metropolitan centres of the Indian subcontinent, as well as in those of the African continent<sup>356</sup>, a major part of the (still) bilingual/diglossic ‘Western-educated’ neo-colonial classes, continue to strive towards the monolingual ideals and theories of European nations. They continue to favour the colonial education system, and along with it the colonial culture, as well as a language policy which sees the neo-colonial language to be ‘necessary’ as an exclusive instruction medium at higher levels of education. In contemporary India, the dominance of English continues to be perpetuated, as English remains economically linked to the prospect of lucrative careers. English-medium secondary and college education continues to be sought after by the upwardly mobile educated middle classes.

Though the use of major Indian (mother tongue) languages as media of instruction at initial stages of education (Sridhar 1996: 336) has been implemented, English continues to present an obstacle to those wishing to study at higher levels<sup>357</sup>. According to Sridhar (1996: 336), English in India is still used, mostly as a medium of instruction, in national and state-level education, while *most parents are anxious to send their children to English-*

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<sup>354</sup> According to Sinha (1978: 154) in states where the United Front formed the government (such as in Kerala or Bengal), the ‘Three Language Formula’ was not completely implemented.

<sup>355</sup> Ministry of Education, Government of India, see also discussion in Sinha 1978 (142).

<sup>356</sup> Particularly those regions once colonized by the British.

<sup>357</sup> English continues to an obligatory subject, as well as the language of examinations for entering government, professional or private sector employment.

*medium schools*. Private English-medium schools even for primary levels continue to flourish, while, for those who can afford otherwise, *the mother tongue is not perceived as the most viable medium of instruction* (Sridhar 1996: 336)<sup>358</sup>. This continues to reinforce a hierarchically ordered marginalized status for numerous regional Indian languages (Ram 1983: 217).

Different trends of teaching English continue to conflict with one another. While certain language planning programs promote the widespread dissemination of an ‘inadequate’ knowledge of English, other programs only emphasize the need to teach the language *properly* and *correctly*, particularly at higher levels (Daswani 1986). Despite anecdotal evidence of Indians’ *phenomenal ability to pick up new languages* (Trevelyan 1838: 111, 112), and despite their widespread multilingual capabilities, research has shown that Indian students tend to respond less well than total foreigners to English teaching (Mohan 1986a). This points to a necessity for revising the teaching methods of English, the consideration of teaching English through the mother tongue, in addition to a generally improved quality of mother tongue education.

In regard to the controversy over the place of English or Bengali in primary school courses in West Bengal in the 1980s, Datta (1981: 619) argues that the debate over the ‘*abolition*’ of English has become a *political scare and also a political scoring-point*:

*The most distressing feature of the high-pitched acrimony in West Bengal on the place of English in the primary school course is the almost complete indifference of either side to the real problems of schools – teaching facilities, teachers and teaching. A fourth equally important element is the quality of textbooks.*

The West Bengal government’s introduction of a unilingual formula for primary education, requires primary schools to teach either only through English or only through the Bengali medium (without the teaching of either

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<sup>358</sup> For a specific discussion on the status of English in India today, see chapter 5 iii.

Bengali or English even as a second language). According to Bagchi (1981: 993) this policy has generated panic mainly among *the most articulate section of our community which has enjoyed the lion's share of our educational expenses since 1947*. Bagchi (1981) points out that it is only the *urban educated middle class which is likely to feel the negative aspect of this (new) system*. For *the large base of primary school-going children* in the state of Bengal a unilingual Bengali mother tongue primary education, may signify a positive reinforcement and recognition of Bengali as opposed to English (Bagchi 1981: 994). The possibility to later go on to acquire English as a special communicative skill is not eliminated by the need for mother tongue education. The abolition of the teaching of English at the primary level (except for outer state pupils, or private institutions) for the vast majority of primary school children will primarily abolish the *illusion that they know a second language which supposedly links them to the larger world outside* (Bagchi 1981: 993). English alone may not be held responsible for the high drop-out rates between lower primary and higher primary, and then again between higher primary and secondary levels of school education (Bagchi 1981: 993), there is also the extreme poverty of the rural population and the general failure of primary education to generate a sense of motivation and purpose in the urban slum. *The burden of failure, however, has to be shouldered by a system of education which has been teaching English at every stage* (Bagchi 1981: 993):

*English has failed to act as the magic wand which was to awaken the illiterate masses to the wonders of the modern world of science.*

During the decades after independence, Indian educational policy has ignored the country's 70% illiteracy rate. Hindi, the most powerful regional language, has one of the lowest literacy rates in the country. According to Sheth (1990: 36), for Hindi, or any regional language, to become a vehicle of scholarly discourse, *it will have to acquire a much larger literacy base*. During the 1950s, 60s, and 70s, for example, the primary education budget was lowered from 56% to 28%, and the higher education budget raised from 8% to 18% out of the total allocation to education. So, while primary

education grew three-fold, higher education grew six-fold (see Pattanayak 1981: XIII). Colonial language teaching models still treat the English language as a ‘superior’ medium for a ‘superior’ education, while allowing Indian languages, according to their places in the hierarchy of their communities, to transmit ‘lower’ education for ‘the masses’. This complementary *diglossic* distribution of functions and domains of use between the mother tongue and English has been euphemistically described by the linguist Parasher (1979) as one of *stable bilingualism*. The linguist Mohan (1982: 29), however, refers to it as an *incomplete* type of bilingualism, while Ram (1983: 211) criticizes it as being a *sequential* and *divisive* bilingualism: sequential at school and divisive at university, both on an individual and on a national level.

Looking back over the few hundred years of massive promotion of English education in ‘Third World’ countries, the results seem somewhat meagre<sup>359</sup>. Tollefson (1991: 7) refers to *the failure of millions to speak the language varieties they need to survive and prosper in the modern world*. According to him (Tollefson 1991: 7), *while vast resources are directed toward language teaching and bilingualism, especially involving English, it remains a fact, that more people than ever are unable to acquire the language skills they need in order to enter and succeed in school, obtain satisfactory employment, and participate politically and socially in the life of their communities:*

*The great linguistic paradox of our time is that societies which dedicate enormous resources to language teaching and learning have been unable - or unwilling - to remove the powerful linguistic barriers to full participation in the major institutions of modern society.*

In India, in 1901, for example, 0.04% of Indians spoke some English (Mathai 1951). In 1969, Das Gupta (1969) allows for less than 2% English-speakers in India, while in 1983 and in 1986, Kachru (1983, 1986: 31) puts his estimate for those who use some form of English at about 3% of the

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<sup>359</sup> See the longer discussion on the number of English speakers/users in India or other ‘Third world’ countries in chapter 2 ii.

Indian population. Other linguists have given various figures, such as, for example, in 1986, McCrum, Cran and MacNeil (1986), but they omit any reference or source for their estimated 10% of Indians speaking English. The same year, Daswani (1986) puts the figure at 2.5%. Out of the 20 million or so using English, Daswani estimates 0.5 million to be native speakers. Pattanayak's estimate (1988: 383) lies between 2-4%, while Joshi's (1991: 5) refers to those *who have a knowledge of English* in India, being no more than 2 or 3%<sup>360</sup>.

Daswani (1986) quotes the 1981 Census for his All-India literacy figure of 38%, meaning literacy in all Indian languages. In most schools, English is taught from 5th to 6th grade, at least as a subject, but most children do not even get that far. Though English medium schools have become popular in smaller towns, from the 85% of the children that actually join school, 70% drop out by 3rd grade, and only 20% finish primary school, i. e. 8th grade. According to Daswani (1986), it is also a fact that the largest number of teachers in India are English teachers (about 1 million). For the English-educated minority community in India, at the higher education levels, English is, on its own, a sufficient qualification. While, in order to study any subject or follow any discipline at university, knowledge of English is required, English studies require no systematic knowledge of any Indian language or Indian language literature (Joshi 1991: 29). Today, as much as in the past, teaching or learning English in 'Third World' countries is not an added skill, or even just a medium to transmit *European knowledge*, it has become the focal point in itself.

The global subscription of particular privileged classes from all countries to accept English as an international and a national (European) link language, has led many language and education policy analysts to promote the use of English in 'Third World' countries as the only *suitable medium of*

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<sup>360</sup> In no statistics on users of English in India - or, for that matter, in other 'Third world' countries - is there a definition of how extensive English competence is, whether it is used more as a spoken or a written language, in what domains it is used, and for what specific functions.

*instruction* – particularly at higher levels of education<sup>361</sup>. Teaching English as a foreign or an additional language is by no means considered to be adequate<sup>362</sup>. In fact, linguists insist that English medium instruction should be *compulsory for all students, irrespective of specialization, region, or language background, with a nation-wide consensus on proficiency*. While, comparably, in European contexts, the importance of the (European) child's mother tongue as a medium of instruction in education is increasingly stressed, in 'Third World' countries, mother tongue languages as media for instruction are rejected for 'economic' or 'political' reasons. Or as, for example, political analysts or sociologists see it, the 'problem' with African or Indian languages is that they seemingly even lack the *complete acceptance* of their own speakers<sup>363</sup>. In comparison, the eligibility of English as a universal high-level medium of instruction, and communication does not need to be proven.

According to Herriman and Burnaby (1996: 9), both explicit and implicit policies towards the existence of an official language in a particular country affect the status and role all other languages used:

*Explicit or implicit policies regarding the status of the official or standard language, by their mere existence, affect the viability and stability of other languages used in the community.*

In the case of India, on the basis of its progressive constitutional language, educational and minority policies – but less progressive record of implementation of such multilingual rights - another positive step forward, in terms of official language policy, would be to declare and treat all languages of India as national languages<sup>364</sup>. In terms of (re-) developing lingua francas, the need to equally promote all Indian languages, irrelevant of their political

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<sup>361</sup> See, for example, Sridhar (1977: 116) or (1996: 337).

<sup>362</sup> See discussion in chapter 5 iii.

<sup>363</sup> See, for example, Ugandan president Milton Obote's public statements in 1967 (discussed in Mazrui 1975: 211) or the sociolinguist Sridhar's analysis (1977: 116) or (1996: 339).

<sup>364</sup> Pattanayak (1988: 379) has made this declaration as well as asserting that there is no such thing as an 'anti-national language'.

power or numeral strength, must first be met. Only after the primary need has been met, can the secondary goal be achieved. For any language to aspire to become even one of many possible lingua francas in such a multilingual country as India, *it will have to develop a capacity to incorporate, and draw sustenance* from all languages of the region, *the literacy frame will have to expand*, such that the increasing ranks of the literate coming from different regions and cultures are freely able to enrich the language *by bringing with them usages and idioms of their various mother-tongues* (Sheth 1990: 36)<sup>365</sup>. If, in the postcolonial period up to now, the (re-) establishment of multiple mother tongues in education and administration has not been successful, it is not, as Gandhi (1965: 13) remarked, due to any fault of the language, or the futility of the (attempted) exercise, but more directly related to the incompetence of the implementers:

*Thus, we see that the failure of the movement to impart education through the medium of Bengali in Bengal does not show any inherent imperfection in that language or the futility of such an effort ... If anything, it only shows the incompetence of those who made the effort, or their lack of faith in it.*

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<sup>365</sup> Sheth has said this in particular reference to Hindi as a lingua franca, but his statement is valid for the development of any lingua franca.

## Conclusion

### 12 *Multilingualism for all*<sup>366</sup>: *Promoting Popular Genius and Creative Autonomy*<sup>367</sup>

*... before Asia is in a position to co-operate with the culture of Europe, she must base her own structure on a synthesis of all the different cultures which she has. When, taking her stand on such a culture, she turns toward the West, she will take, with a confident sense of mental freedom, her own view of truth, from her own vantage-ground, and open a new vista of thought to the world. Otherwise, she will allow her priceless inheritance to crumble into dust, and trying to replace it clumsily with feeble imitations of the West, make herself superfluous, cheap and ludicrous. If she loses her individuality and her specific power to exist, will it in the least help the rest of the world? Will not her terrible bankruptcy involve also the Western mind? If the whole world grows at last into an exaggerated West, then such an illimitable parody of the modern age will die, crushed beneath its own absurdity*<sup>368</sup>.

The historical example of India and its peoples' fundamentally positive attitudes towards multilingualism and multiculturalism as a basis for subcontinental unity is a useful and an inspiring example for the formulation and implementation of pluralist language planning. As Pattanayak (1987: 18) put it:

*Both unitary and plural societies have their brand of inequality and their own brand of a conflict resolution mechanism. The tension resolution mechanism in a plurilingual society can be reconstructed from the historical experience of a country like India.*

In independent India (and the world over) the strength of this diversity has come under pressure from the globally dominant colonial and postcolonial ideology of monoculturalism and monolingualism, which has been accompanied by a promotion of English in education and administration as the economically, politically and culturally only 'valid' model. In contrast, the promotion and use of Indian languages – still upheld by the larger part of the Indian people - is increasingly becoming marginalized in the higher established realms of politics, the media, education, society and culture. The

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<sup>366</sup> Skutnabb-Kangas (1995).

<sup>367</sup> Pattanayak (1981: x, xii).

<sup>368</sup> Tagore (1996: 558).

public prestige and domination of English has relegated Indian languages to becoming additional languages (a status constitutionally designated to English), private, low-status languages, hierarchized in relation to the political, social and economic strength of their speech communities.

In addition, the dominance of particular speech communities over others, such as the English-educated over the rest, the Hindi speakers over the rest or all the speakers of constitutionally recognized languages and their speakers over those not recognized<sup>369</sup>, is breaking down the multiple links and interactions necessary for the survival of pluralism. The global trends towards centralization and uniformization, of which the English language and English education form an integral part, continue to be promoted by the (dominantly monolingual) majority cultures of the Centre as well as the (bilingual/diglossic) urban middle classes of the Periphery. They serve to perpetuate increasingly segregationist and exclusive attitudes among all the communities of a particular society, based on privileging specific social groups over others, or substituting one culture (or language) by another. These attitudes will continue to lead to irreparable divisions between diverse communities, not only on the Indian subcontinent. Monolingual, monocultural Eurocentric ideals have to date affected the English-educated, as well as the (fundamentalist) Hindu-plus-Sanskrit-Hindi classes, the advocates of Sikhism-plus-Punjabi, the promoters of Urdu-plus-Muslim-plus-Arabic, etc.

In order to reverse such dominant trends, Pattanayak (1987: 9) has called for a *healthy intercultural communication* between diverse and different communities, meeting each other on equal grounds, as a positive step *towards national integration*. In addition, according to Pattanayak (1987: 10), the *radicalisation of education*<sup>370</sup> has the potential to promote *multidirectional 'assimilation', intra-ethnic and inter-ethnic 'consolidation'*

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<sup>369</sup> See Sridhar's (1996) discussion of minority languages in education.

<sup>370</sup> See also the concept of "Kritische Pädagogik" (Freire 1997: 9) including: Hoffnung auf Veränderbarkeit, Interdisziplinarität, Politisierung der Erziehung, Aktualisierung des Traums (entgegen dem Fatalismus der Unveränderbarkeit, Anerkennung der Problematiken des Jahrhunderts, Hoffnung im politisch-ethischen Handeln begründet) ...

as well as *integrated 'pluralisation'*. This process of re-education, or multicultural/ant-racist/multilingual education, *to become the foundation of an understanding society, must become education both for the majorities and the minorities* (Pattanayak 1987: 47). In relation to minority education, Skutnabb-Kangas and Cummins (1988: 3) have also criticized that proposals and analyses for such alternative systems of education have generally overlooked the perspectives of their (minority) target groups<sup>371</sup>:

*The individual and collective voices of those at the wrong end of the power relationships have (predictably) not been heard and have consequently had minimal influences on the policies and programmes being developed "to meet their needs".*

Yet, as Pattanayak (1987: 10) emphasizes, the trends aiming at a *unidirectional assimilation* of minor and minority groups, their cultures and languages into the majority group must be countered by *multidirectional assimilation*. Both majority or powerful groups, as well as minority or powerless groups need to be targeted by a *radicalisation of education*.

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<sup>371</sup> See also Dias (1997: 318): Perspektive der Menschen und Gesellschaften der sog. Dritten Welt als Ausgangspunkt unseres wissenschaftlichen Diskurses zu nehmen, um die im Norden vorherrschenden Vorstellungen mit einem dekonstruktivistischen Ansatz anzugehen.

## 12 i Multilingualism and Popular Genius

Multiculturalism has been a pan-social, subcontinental feature of Indian history, culture and society for several thousand years. For the sociologist Devy (1990: 345) ‘multiculturalism’ constitutes India’s oldest and most lasting feature, encompassing *over a hundred languages, literatures in 20 different languages, large-scale social migrations ... and no monolithic religious creed*. In presenting the multiplicity of Indian languages or literatures, social scientists<sup>372</sup> tend to overlook the underlying relations of ‘unity in diversity’. India’s intellectual unity (like Europe’s) has been based on a common sense of civilization, not on the uniformity of external political or cultural structures (Tagore 1996: 480). According to Sheth (1989: 624), *for centuries* different ethnic, linguistic, regional, caste, religious and tribal groups *were interconnected by webs of a civilisational order and only partially and intermittently through the political order*. Nehru (1981: 61, 63) also stressed a sense of commonality among all Indians:

*The diversity of India is tremendous; it is obvious; it lies on the surface and anybody can see it ... Yet I think that at almost anytime in recorded history an Indian would have felt more or less at home in any part of India, and would have felt as a stranger and alien in any other country.*

According to Pattanayak (1987: 44), multiculturalism is best understood through multilingualism: language, *the flowering of popular genius*, carries the most precious load of culture, as well as being a part of it:

*Multiculturalism is best understood through multilingualism, because language as a vehicle carries the most precious load of culture of which it itself is a part. Language is the most important among all identity markers.*

Fanon (1967: 17)<sup>373</sup> stressed the central importance of every language as representing not more - nor less - than a view of the world, a culture carrying

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<sup>372</sup> See for example Sridhar (1996).

<sup>373</sup> Fanon was a medical practitioner and a psychotherapist. Born in Martinique, he fought for Algerian independence from 1951 till his death in 1961. He wrote several books on racism and colonialism

*the whole weight of a civilisation*<sup>374</sup>. On the Indian subcontinent the existence of many languages spoken by many communities constantly interacting on diverse social, cultural, literary and educational levels - while still maintaining their characteristic differences – serves as an example for the possibility of several groups and their languages sharing ‘a common view of the world’ as well as ‘the whole weight of a civilization’. The traditional Indian reality is also the (suppressed) reality of the majority of the world’s communities. The multiple social, cultural and literary channels of communication that existed, leaving no particular class, regional or linguistic group completely isolated from another, have come under increasing attack from yesterday’s colonial and today’s neo-colonial Centre majorities and Periphery minorities. Still, multilingualism continues to be a *fact of life*, a *condition of existence* and a *conscious choice* both for powerless minority or majority communities (Pattanayak 1981).

In regard to regional, cultural and social fluidity on the Indian subcontinent, scholars have also pointed to the linguistic links. While the uniqueness of each of India’s multiple languages, often formalized in different writing systems, with long independent oral and literary traditions (Apte 1976) cannot be denied, it has also been found, that adjacent regional or social languages merge gradually into one another, making it hard to pinpoint the exact place where one language begins and the other ends (Pandit 1979). Even today, to move slowly *between Kashmir and Kanyakumari*, stopping every five or ten miles, one would easily realize *that there is no break in communication in any two consecutive points* (Das 1991: 23).

Devy (1990: 346) points out that most Indians can be characterized as being inevitably (and at least) bicultural within a bilingual / multilingual cultural idiom. They are well able to switch culture code according to the social situation they are in. Only at regionally, culturally or socially extreme points inter-regional, inter-cultural or inter-social communication may break down. For the majority of Indians, the use of English, a language restricted in terms

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<sup>374</sup> See also the discussion in Calvet (1974: 171).

of domains of use, confined to specific social classes of participants, and constricted by the narrow range of its registers or styles can lead to numerous such breakdowns in communication (Devy 1990: 352). In addition, the increasing use and choice in favour of English correlates to a decreasing use of numerous other possible (i. e. multilingual) choices. While on local, regional ‘lower’ status levels, bi- or multilingual choices are favoured (Pandit 1979), on more prestigious urban (written) levels the tendency to use English has increased.

In multilingual situations, even for distant cultural or social groups, accommodating strategies, ways, means and places make communication possible. The interlinking medium chosen depends on a variety of factors, such as the circumstances of the meeting, the social, educational, and linguistic background or repertoire of the participants, etc. The choice of link language also depends on how well established or not, how officially powerful or not, the interactive participant’s mother tongue or additional language is. This factor will decisively influence a speaker’s/writer’s willingness or ability to accommodate their language or their language variety towards their partners, or even to change over to their partner’s language.

In pre-colonial India, the arrival of new communities and their diverse languages, religions and cultures did not restrict the maintenance or the extension of the old, or the development of new inter-languages. With time new languages (along with their speakers) came to be integrated within the *common core of metaphors and symbols, myths and legends, conventions and norms*, often by simply extending the *core* in existence (Das 1991: 9)<sup>375</sup>. The advent of English, however, caused disruption on numerous levels of Indian society<sup>376</sup>. For the newly evolving powerful minority group of English-oriented people, English itself, embedded in the colonial administrative, political and educational structures, became the only ‘nationally’ valid *common core of metaphors*, the unifying *myth*, the

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<sup>375</sup> See chapter 3 i and 3 iii for a more extensive discussion on this.

<sup>376</sup> See chapter 7, for example.

powerful *convention*. Part-and-parcel of its centralizing, monocultural ideology, English education encouraged those who subscribed to it, to perceive themselves and their new culture as ‘superior’ to all others.

Linguists such as Pattanayak (1981: 169) are convinced that the powerful national and international linkage represented by English cannot compete with or replace the multiple local Indian choices of languages or inter-languages:

*... while English links the elites of different regions of the country and also links them with their peers elsewhere in the world, the dominant regional languages and Hindi provide linkages at different levels for defined purposes within and outside the country. To claim exclusive linkage through English is therefore both impractical and unreal.*

In a pluralist society, then, only multilingual inter-linkages can provide adequate channels of communication and mirror the multicultural identities of its members. In numerous contexts of Indian culture, while *the sense of a community* remains visibly present, but *multilayered*, people of diverse backgrounds constantly negotiate their different particularities with each other within larger civilizational complexities (Joshi 1991: 22). Indian languages can be said to have fluid identities, cutting across cultures, religions and social groups. Those who speak only one Indian language can therefore interlink or accommodate by choosing one of the numerous (cultural, social or religious) levels. Diverse examples of reciprocal linguistic accommodation correlating with ethnic non-accommodation have been recorded. Mehrotra (1986: 4, 5) has examined the Indian market-place to give one such example:

*In a country as diverse as India, the bazar provides a neutral meeting place where distinctions of caste and ethnic background remain suspended in social interaction ... it (the bazar) provides a striking example of reciprocal accommodation in speech co-existing with non-accommodation in ethnic values.*

In the case of English, interlinkage exclusively occurs on the basis of sharing the language, not on any other basis. In contrast, in regard to Hindi,

whatever its dominance in postcolonial Indian society, whatever its religious divide, cultural, regional and/or social interlinkages continue to exist (Das 1995: 358). These interlinkages are particularly visible among the literary sections of the Hindu and Muslim communities that continue to counteract the official separation of ‘Muslim’ Urdu and ‘Hindu’ Hindi and the divisive processes of Persianization and Sanskritization. Hindi-language (Hindu-religion) writers, for example, still enrich Urdu literature by their Urdu poetry, or even produce or edit literary Urdu-language magazines, thereby promoting the mutual intelligibility of the two varieties (Das 1991: 13).

Historically, attitudes of diverse language groups on the Indian subcontinent towards one another have been maintenance-oriented, as well as accommodating, but never assimilationist. Again, under the impact of the English colonizers in India, the traditionally pluralist political, cultural, social, literary and linguistic picture, though continuing to exist, has been superseded by the development of powerful structures towards centralization and uniformization, on levels of administration, media and education. Though the multiple languages and literatures of the subcontinent continue to represent parts of a huge cultural, literary and linguistic complex, though they continue to adhere to their distinct regionally and culturally unique characters, the power of English has superseded them all.

Whereas up to now, all the different languages or literatures together presented more than a *conglomeration* of different elements, as their diverse parts were *controlled by an overall pattern* (Das 1991: 7, 8, 9), the dominance of English education and English literature has tended to curtail the ‘horizontal’ relations of Indian speech communities and their languages towards each other, while ‘vertically’ focussing all their attention towards English. As the centralizing force becomes exclusively English, and links among all other forces fade, there is a dangerous subjugation of the traditional subcontinental culture based on ideals of heterogeneity, in favour of a development towards increasingly unlinked, hierarchical additions of one culture on top of the other. Joshi’s plea (1991: 27) is not in favour of a

*celebration of simple pluralism which is the sum of separate parts, but favours a cultural heterogeneity that is grounded in differences of social relations and modes of perception of various collectivities.*

## 12 ii Multilingualism and *Creative Autonomy*

In their struggle for unity, the individuals and communities participating in independence movements in colonized countries realised the political uniformity of the colonially imposed culture, and successfully threatened centralist rule by pushing forward multiple local cultures and local languages (Pattanayak 1981: XI). It was, in fact, the recognition and use of their pluralist social and linguistic structures that helped them gain independence from their rulers. For the *unheroic Indian coping with the might of the West*, all parts of a larger repertoire, *the classical and the folk, the pure and the hybrid*, have been used *in the battle of minds* in order to survive (Nandy 1983: xviii).

According to Pattanayak (1981: x) *builders of nation-states* always feared a *multiplicity of languages* (literatures, cultures) among those they ruled, as they could not easily establish their centralizing authority over all of them, in order to manipulate them into acquiescence. The British colonizers realized this factor at every step of their commercial, political, cultural and educational advance into India. The East India Company Orientalists or the early missionaries still tried to grapple with (their own perception) of India's multilingual communities, for their own (more limited) purposes of commercial or religious enterprise. The British Crown Anglicists, however, entering into the colonial enterprise at a point where its commercial objectives had been expanded into political, social and cultural realms, sought to establish their necessarily far more expansive authority by creating an administratively and educationally centralized, uniformized and exclusive superstructure, with the help of the English language. This superstructure was imposed upon the pluralist Indian subcontinent.

The people's continued cultivation of the diversity of their own cultural, social, and economic systems and structures, including their languages,

constituted their autonomous creativity<sup>377</sup>, climaxing in the achievement of political independence in 1947. For independence leaders, such as Gandhi or Tagore, there was no doubt that India's progress and liberation, in all spheres of public and private life centrally depended on a system of education *organically* connected to the Indian people and their environment, the revival of their languages and the re-establishment of mother tongue education. According to Tagore (1996: 469):

*... our education should be in full touch with our complete life, economical, intellectual, aesthetic, social and spiritual; and our educational institutions should be in the very heart of our society, connected with it by the living bonds of varied co-operations. For true education is to realize at every step how our training and knowledge have organic connection with our surroundings.*

As Gandhi (1965: 22) put it:

*When the mother tongue is better esteemed and has been restored to its rightful status - that of an official language - it will reveal powers and capacities undreamt of at present.*

Under the influence of the political leaders of the independence movement, Indian constitution writers secured the linguistic and educational rights of primarily 15 (later extended to 17) officially named linguistic majorities, their rights to mother tongue education, and the use of their languages in regional administration. The constitution also established the (linguistic and educational) rights of all minorities (not specified in the Constitution). The rights of all minorities and majorities were complemented by an additional constitutional sanction for the continued use of English in (higher) levels of central administration, the judiciary and university education. This sanction was to be withdrawn by a phasing in of the Hindi language and/or other regional Indian languages. The blanket/all-inclusive reinstatement of all Indian minority or majority languages, at an equal level, as well as their oral and/or written modes of transmission, the respect for their value and usefulness, has yet to become visible in the implementation of these comparatively progressive policies.

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<sup>377</sup> See also Jouhy's analysis (1985: 1869).

### 12 iii Multilingual Language Planning

According to Herriman and Burnaby (1996: 13), *language is manipulated by groups and individuals to gain advantage in power struggles. As a great deal of language policy is not about language at all, policy-makers are required to first disentangle what really relates to language in a policy and what is actually based in some other issue, in order to achieve a more egalitarian language policy. To be able to do justice to the reality of pluralist societies, only the re-positivization and conscious promotion of multiculturalism and multilingualism, occurring on a local and a global scale, can deconstruct the politically, socially, and culturally pervasive forces of centralization and uniformization. Public acknowledgement and governmental implementation of multicultural solutions and multilingual rights at administrative and educational levels can still effect both on local and global perceptions of the world's innumerable powerless languages. According to Alexander (1989: 5) and the importance of the language question in the struggle for national liberation and national unity:*

*... if approached from a historical point of view, language policy can become an instrument to unify our people instead of being the instrument of division which, for the most part it is today. We need to make a democratically conceived language policy an integral part of our programme for national unity and national liberation.*

Such changes in established attitudes, based on changes in the universally dominating power structures of Eurocentric political and cultural ideologies, and combined with positive language(s) legislation - could bring about educational, social, and economic improvements in the multicultural and multilingual realities of the world's diverse communities. According to Skutnabb-Kangas and Cummins (1988: 390):

*Power is, after all, what it is all about. The education of minorities is organized the way it is, by others, precisely because the minorities lack the power to decide themselves. But minorities do not want "power-over-others" ... only "power-over-oneself".*

Ricento (1996: 153) stresses the powerful role of the USA, from where changes in people's dominant perceptions of their own past could successfully link up with a change in their dominant and dominating vision of the world around them:

*If the United States cannot come to terms with its multicultural/multilingual roots, with its own history as a country once populated by peoples who were not willingly subjugated, with its legacy of forced servitude of Africans who were unwilling 'immigrants', then it will be difficult to move beyond multiculturalism as a stigmatized slogan.*

Though, contrary to the USA, in the Indian case, multilingualism has been accepted as *a fact* in society in every phase of its history, and even, affirmatively legalized in its constitution, the neo-colonial superstructures imposing English in education and administration from above, have yet to be deconstructed in order to bring about radical changes to the lives of over 50% of the people. For this it is also necessary to strengthen all the elements in Indian culture, not to resist Western culture, but truly to accept and absorb it, to use it for sustenance, not as a burden, to master it, not to live on its outskirts.

Linguists such as Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson (1989: 69), for example, have argued in favour of *enrichment-based theories* of language, rather than *deficiency-based ones*, located in terms of each individual's or each community's right to their language(s). In relation to *a responsible and feasible language education policy* and in terms of *equality of educational opportunity*, Spolsky (1986: 188, 189) has outlined two basic principles, the right to learn the mother tongue language added to the right to learn the standard/official/link language:

*The first is the right, wherever feasible, to be educated in the variety of language one learned at home, or at a basic minimum when this is not feasible, to be educated in a school that shows full respect for that variety and its strengths and potentials. Such a principle then supports either mother tongue education ... or some form of additive (not replacive) bilingual education. The second is the right to learn in the best way feasible the standard or official language or languages of wider communication selected for the society as a whole. A mother tongue education programme which denies access to the standard language ... is no more acceptable than a submersion programme that rejects the mother tongue.*

Given that the majority of the world's communities are multilingual, the adjustments in societal structures that will need to take place, decisively relate to dominant uniform systems of education, government and mass media. Despite the official 'legitimization' of English as an additional language in India, despite its intervention in the cultural, educational, literary and administrative practices of the subcontinent, its overwhelming practical use is limited to external international purposes: a reality that needs to be reflected in most 'Third World' education systems (Devy 1990: 348). The central change that has to occur is the withdrawal of English *as a medium of instruction* in areas and for communities where it is not the mother tongue, and the re-instatement of the local mother tongue languages of the diverse communities as media for instruction. While proficiency in the mother tongue language positively affects proficiency in one or more other language(s), the opposite is equally true: deficiency in the mother tongue language reinforces difficulties in the learning of other languages.

Teaching English as a foreign language on all educational levels - while using mother tongue languages as media for instruction - would adequately service the needs of various members of the community to use it for purposes of outside/international communication, or even as an additional language in particular domains of public Indian life. The training of teachers locally, and the development of localized instruction materials, and the equal power of all Indian languages, would necessarily lead to independent models and varied standards of English. Teaching English as a foreign language would benefit a larger number of people, including those whose (social, cultural) background has not allowed for any prior knowledge of the language.

Attempts to *adjust* a multilingual people to suit existing monocultural, centralized political structures, can only have negative consequences on the whole of society, while new models for a *viable political order* must suit the given conditions of cultural, ethnic and linguistic diversity. Both Devy

(1990) and Pattanayak (1981) stress the fact that, from the point of view of those majorities of people with a multicultural socialisation, it is a *nuisance* to suffer restrictions on their choice of language, just as it is *uneconomic* and *absurd* to try and replace their mother tongue(s) with any other language. Scholars such as Das (1991: 10) have argued in favour of a shift from the focus on (one) language to a focus on (diverse) people. The reality of the Indian linguistic situation demands that attention is centred on the joint achievements of Indian people in their multiple linguistic manifestations, while the categorisation of India as a multilingual subcontinent, cannot be allowed to undermine the uniqueness of individual languages. As Mazrui (1995: 173) argues, despite independence, it has remained important for the majorities of the communities of ‘Third World’ countries to gain control of and authorize their own choice of what will be their means of communication and their medium of education. While monolingual/scientific imperialism must be successfully countered, argumentation in favour of minority rights has to be developed both on the political, economic, and cultural level, and implemented in the legal, institutional and educational domains. As the linguistic discriminations faced by individuals and communities in education or in other spheres of public life cannot be solved on the basis of language alone, a *multidisciplinary approach* is unavoidable<sup>378</sup>. As Calvet (1974: 136, 137) has argued, today, in our order of priorities, the issue of colonial languages - characterized by their power to linguistically exclude and dominate - may not be the major problem: nevertheless, the liberation of a people from colonialism and neo-colonialism *also* consists in the liberation of their languages:

*Le problème des langues n'est sans doute pas prioritaire ... mais ... face au champ d'exclusion linguistiques qui accompagne le colonialisme, face à la langue exclusive, la langue dominante, la libération d'un peuple consiste aussi à libérer sa parole.*

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<sup>378</sup> See Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson (1989: 69-71).

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Ich versichere, daß ich die Arbeit in allen Teilen selbständig verfaßt und keine anderen als die angegebenen Hilfsmittel benutzt habe.

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