

Language development and nation building in multilingual contexts¹

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Abstract

The paper argues that a typology of multilingual contexts that witness different kinds of development of languages and national identities has to be viewed as a cline. At one extreme lie Type A societies in which 'language' as an entity is anthropomorphized by its speakers, so much so that in some communities, it is revered and regarded as an object of worship. Language develops like an organ or a faculty among children of these communities and remains with them as long as they live. Their language becomes a matter of passion for which the community is ready to make sacrifices, and the history of nation-building is often written after such sacrifices. Bangladesh is an ideal example of this type.

At the other extreme lie Type Z communities that view 'language' as a tool or skill to perform some action, the nature of which depends on exigencies such as doing business, establishing links, using a medium of mass communication for leisure-time, or for utilitarian use like library language, or language of religion, etc. Type Z communities often use different 'tools' (e.g., languages) for different purposes, and are unable to be charged enough to use language as an instrument of nation building. Singapore with its four national language communities presents a picture that comes closer to this kind of postulation. Here we find a number of interesting strategies being used, including cultivation of new country-internal norms, like Singlish, for instance.

This paper discusses a number of situations in multilingual communities around the world to show that they are not all-or-none or mutually exclusive as was often assumed in earlier typologies. It is suggested that many of these situations show an overlap of features and pose an interesting challenge for language planning agencies. The paper shows that the planning models have to be eclectic and pluralistic to accommodate these differences.²

Introduction: Models of language development

To begin with, let's ask ourselves some basic questions: When do languages develop? What changes must come about for them to be called 'developed languages'? The standard response in the literature, as well as in the practice of Language Planning, has been that all undeveloped languages have creative capability but are not all put to use in certain advanced contexts. Putting the undeveloped language in writing or using them in school and higher education or in mass media would provide such contexts.

This leads us to another question: What changes must occur in the body of such languages for them to be used in education, mass media, and other advanced contexts? The standard response given by almost all is 'standardization'. There have been some additions to discussions about standardization, though. Examples are characteristics such as consistency or legitimacy or utility in intellectual domains. We are told that vernaculars require "a uniform and consistent norm of writing... widely accepted by its speakers" (Haugen 1994: 4340), or that they must also be "legitimized" as State languages (Williams 1992:24)³. Similarly, they must provide planners with "motivation for literacy"

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² To this extent, this paper is related to the pluralistic paradigm as presented in Singh (1992) *Language Development and Planning: A Pluralistic Paradigm*. Shimla: IIAS).

³ Williams, Colin H. (1992) "The Cultural Rights of Minorities: Recognition and Implementation." Discussion Papers in Geolinguistics No. 18. CS: Staffordshire Polytechnic, Stoke on Trent (England). Dept. of Geography and Recreation Studies. (Paper presented at the Symposium on Minorities in Politics, Bratislava, Czechoslovakia, November 16-19, 1991).

as well as “computerization” (Le Page 1997: 120-38)⁴. Such languages also need to be “intellectualized” (Garvin 1955)⁵. A combination of all these or some of these will provide occasion for others to admit these languages in the ‘privileged club’, as it were.

Primary vs. secondary standardization

In 1994, in *Meta* (39.2)⁶ I proposed a dichotomy of Primary vs. Secondary Standardization applicable to developing countries. Let me start from there: All developing countries have to resolve the problem of finding an appropriate model of development. The point was that early language standardization took place naturally, without models to follow whereas languages of today have a number of models of primary development before them. These languages are described as having adopted a ‘Secondary Standardization’ strategy. Obviously, when languages develop naturally, they take longer time to develop because of the lack of planned interventions. Depending on the degree of intervention by the planners, the secondarily standardized languages show a kind of cline or gradation. More often than not, in cases of the latter type, it is very difficult to differentiate between the periods of standardization and modernization. Both these processes go hand in hand because of the time constraints within which these latecomers bloom. It is more than a convention that when a language undergoes primary standardization, the processes of modernization follow it soon after, in course of time.

We all know that those days are gone when languages could develop on their own. One difference between the advent of modernism over the last two centuries and the post-modern situation prevailing today is that all languages in today's world advance and develop because of various internal and external pressures, and because of the ensuing tensions. As against this, there was a time when a language could develop as a consequence of either natural historical forces or chance emergence of a towering literary personality. These primarily standardized languages, however, had no model to follow. In comparison, languages of today have a number of models of primary development before them, and they have the option of following any one of these models (with suitable modifications, wherever necessary) or chart a completely new course by scrupulously avoiding the known courses of action.

For languages to develop today, therefore, there have to be policies that have already worked elsewhere which have to be re-implemented. Alternatively, there must be models that can be translated, if the elites that influence decision process of the state want it to be so. The options here are between being innovative and being *translative*. It would not take one long to realize that between these two options, translative is a better, surer and faster way to develop. Innovation (howsoever ideal it may be theoretically), like any act of creativity, runs the risk of being a failure and counter-productive. If nothing, it is surely more time consuming than any translative strategy. It is not surprising that many of the underdeveloped and developing languages today start from a point where they attempt at translating metaphors, myths, proverbs, terms, sciences, cultures, and language structures. Many, of course, end up translating attitudes and fashions first, which relegates the twin task of textual transference and language development to the background. Where this does not happen, and when a number of texts are actually transferred, the source and target languages show a tendency of ‘coming together’ or *converging*. I imagine that both linguistic *convergence* and massive amount of *Code-switching and Mixing* emerge from translative actions, which members of

⁴ Le Page, R. (1997) (Co-edited with Andrée Tabouret-Keller et al). *Vernacular literacy. A Re-evaluation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.(esp. 120-38).

⁵ Garvin, Paul L.; and Madeleine Mathiot. 1955, reprinted 1968. The urbanization of the Guarani language: a problem in language and culture. In Joshua A. Fishman (ed.), *Readings in the sociology of language*, 365-74. The Hague and Paris: Mouton.

⁶ Ref: ‘Translation as a way of growing’, *Meta*, 39.2: 94-99.

converging speech communities use as ‘gap-filling devices’ –techniques that erase distances. In the process, they also try to recreate certain language functions, triggered by bilingualism. In many other cases, it may also give rise to a kind of linguistic dominance or improvement of status of one language over the others in the same speech area. That is the reason why many languages of the Third World -- be it Hindi in India or Hausa in Nigeria -- very quickly learn the art of dominating over other indigenous languages, at least in formal speech functions. As it can be seen, there is scope for different configurations of languages to emerge in a multilingual situation.

Types of multilingual societies

I would like to argue here that the typology of multilingual contexts, each with different national identities and having different experiences in language development, could be viewed as a cline. At one extreme, are Type A societies where language is almost anthropomorphized by its speakers. In some Type A communities, language is revered and is regarded almost as an object of worship. In these societies, children learn the language when they are young and it remains with them as long as they live. Their language becomes a matter of passion for which the community is ready to make sacrifices. Bangladesh is an example of this Type A society.

At the other extreme lie Type-Z communities that view language as a tool or skill. Such communities may use different 'tools' (languages) for different purposes, for example, using a particular language for business or to establish linkages or associating one language with leisure activities or as a library language or a religious language or using it as the medium of mass communication. These societies are often (but not necessarily always) unable to be passionate enough about their language to use it as an instrument of nation-building. Singapore with its four national language communities offers a picture that comes closer to this kind of postulation. Here we find a number of interesting strategies being used, including cultivation of new country-internal norms such as Singlish. Analyzing other multilingual communities around the world and plotting them on the cline would show that this typology does not conceptualize language situations as all-or-none or mutually exclusive as was often assumed in earlier typologies. I suggest that the features of many of these types overlap with neighboring types and together present a cascade that poses an interesting challenge for language planning agencies. For this reason, I would like to argue that language-planning models have to be eclectic and pluralistic to accommodate these differences.⁷

Multilingualism in South Asia

In order to understand the extent of multilingualism in South Asia, let me present a profile of the region, which will clearly outline the challenge. Although South Asian nations offer remarkable similarities in many respects that have to do with plurality of languages and cultures, they vary in a number of other ways. Take for instance, the variation in density of population (and consequently, in “Physical Quality of Life”(PQLI index) in overall GNP, Per Capita Income, or in size. Also, the standard of living differs in each of these countries because of population density. Economics might depend on overall countrywide income, and the countries differ on that count, too. However, the common person in South Asia faces more or less the same predicaments in everyday life.

⁷ To the extent this is needed, it draws from the pluralistic paradigm as presented in Singh (1992 *Language Development and Planning: A Pluralistic Paradigm*. Shimla: IIAS).

Table #1. South Asia: A comparative chart

	Bangladesh	Bhutan	India	Maldives	Nepal	Pakistan	Sri Lanka
Independence	1971	1907 /1949	1947	1968	1816 /1951	1947	1948
Capital	Dhaka	Thimpu	New Delhi	Male	Kathmandu	Islamabad	Columbo
Area (kms)	144,000	47,000	3287,590	300	136,800	803,940	65,610
Population (millions)	131.26	2.049	1029.9	0.31	25.28	144.62	19.41
Religion	M 83% H 16% Other 1%	B-lama 75% H 25%	H 81% M 12% Ch 2% Sikh 2% Other 3%	M (Sunni)	H 86% B 8% M 4% Other 2%	M 97% Other 3% (Christian, Hindu, Sikh, etc)	B 70% H 15% Ch 8% M 7%
Main languages	Bangla 98%	Dzonkha 80%; Bhote, Tibetan, Nepali	Hindi & 70 major languages 96%; English & 96 other languages	Dhivehi 93%; English, Sinhala, Arab	Nepali 43%; 12 other languages; 20 dialects, English	Punj 48% Sind 12% Siraiki 10% Pashtu 8% Urdu 8%	Sinh 74% Tam 18%
Growth rate	5.3%	6%	6%	7.3%	3.7%	4.8%	5.6%

Facts and figures regarding languages in India are as follows:

- Total number of Indian languages: There are 1,576 rationalized mother tongues and 1,796 other mother tongues. 96% of the population speak only about 20 IA and Dravidian languages⁸
- Languages used in schools: About 58 to 69 languages are taught in schools, either as subject or as media of instruction.
- Languages of mass media: There are 3954 newspapers and periodicals in 35 languages with varying degrees of regularity and readership. There are 146 speech varieties and 24 “major languages” used in radio networks.

The danger of language loss and South Asia

With the above background on South Asia, let me address the important question of language loss in multilingual situations, and then compare them with South Asia.

Several plenary speakers in this Conference, beginning with Sheldon Schaeffer, have already mentioned the possibility that 90% of the world’s languages will disappear, a prediction about which we are all rightly disturbed. With the disappearance of these languages, their lexical rainbow, registral styles, textual ranges, knowledge bases and traditions will also disappear. At the same time, as David Bradley shows in the context of Yi and Lisu, there are ethno-linguistic minorities who have successfully braved the great challenges to maintain and promote their languages by linking the languages with education. This kind of language loss is a major concern in the developing world already as there has been erosion of multilingual base in countries such as Australia, Canada, New Zealand and USA already.

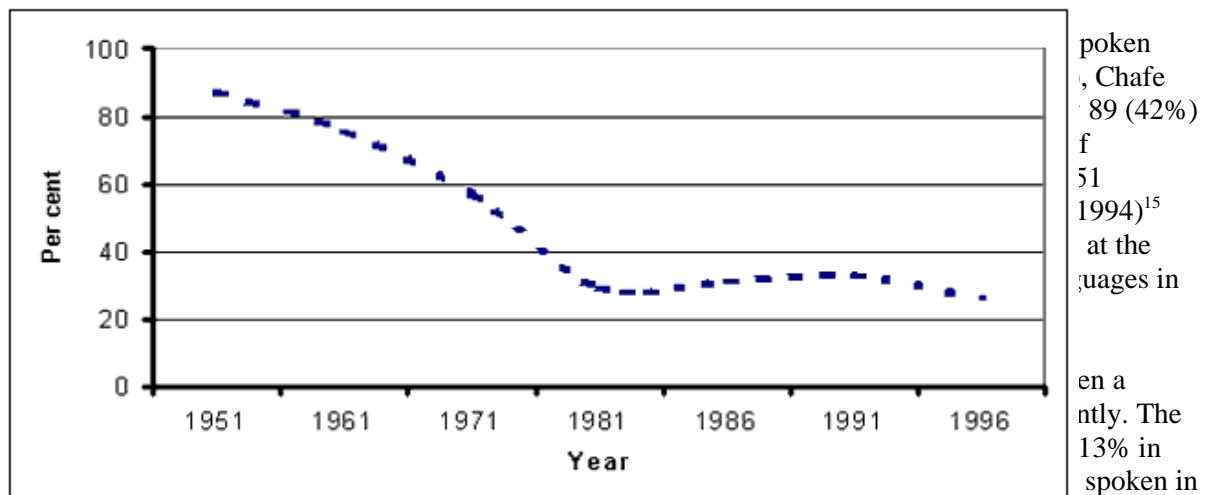
⁸ Census of India, 1961, 1971, 1981, 1991. New Delhi: Office of the Registrar General of India.

Theodore Wright⁹ compares a number of cases across the globe and shows that contradictory forces are at work. In some nations, former languages of power have lost to others and hence are facing some kind of endangerment: Manchu in China, Coptic in Egypt, Gaelic and Latin in the British Isles, Quechua in Peru, Arabic in Spain, German in Eastern Europe and Urdu in India. In some cases the colonial languages won over. They all lost the link with power as dynastic states or colonial powers were overthrown. But there are other cases where, even after political changes, former languages of power became even more successful. For example, Spanish and Portuguese in Latin America, Afrikaans in South Africa, or French in Canada, or English in many countries.

We can plot the decline in the percentage of speakers of indigenous languages among the Indigenous populations of Canada in the following manner:

Table 6. Percentage of indigenous population that speaks an Indigenous language, Canada

1951	1961	1971	1981	1986	1991	1996
87.4	75.5	57.1	29.3	?	32.7	26



Australia by 2050.

⁹ Wright, Theodore P. 2003. 'Strategies for the Survival of Formerly Dominant Languages.'

http://www.urdustudies.com/pdf/17/16_Wright.pdf.

¹⁰ Bright, William. (1994) Native American Indian languages. *Native North American Almanac*, ed. by Duane Champagne, 427—47. Detroit: Gale Research. Repr. in *Native America: Portrait of the peoples*, ed. by D. Champagne, 397—439. Detroit: Visible Ink, 1994.

¹¹ Mithun, Marianne. (1999) *The Languages of Native North America*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

¹² Chafe, Wallace. (1962) Estimates regarding the present speakers of North American Indian languages. *International Journal of American Linguistics* 28: 162-171.

¹³ As reported in McConvell, P. and N Thieberger (2001) *Australia State of the Environment Technical Paper Series (Natural and Cultural Heritage)*, Series 2. Government of Australia: Department of the Environment and Heritage, 2001 (<http://www.deh.gov.au/soe/techpapers/languages/global2.html>)

¹⁴ Zepeda and Hill (1991:136) Zepeda, O. and J.H. Hill, 1991. The Condition of Native American Languages in the United States. In R.H. Robins and E.M. Uhlenbeck, Robins (editors). *Endangered Languages*. Oxford: Berg Publishers.

¹⁵ Campbell, Lyle. 1994. Language death. In R.E. Asher, ed, *The encyclopedia of language and linguistics*, vol. 4, 1960-1968. Oxford: Pergamon Press.

¹⁶ Campbell, Lyle and Marianne Mithun, eds. 1979. *The Languages of Native America: Historical and Comparative Assessment*. The University of Texas Press, Austin.

Compare the above with a recent survey conducted by Padmanabha, Mahapatra, Verma and McConnel (1989)¹⁷ in India. Of the total of 114 languages with at least 10,000 speakers that were listed in the 1981 census, they found that about fifty of them have written modes of expression. The general observation here, as well as in works of other sociolinguists who have written on India (cf. Pandit 1976),¹⁸ has been that South Asia has been able to retain its multi-ethnic and pluri-lingual character over many centuries.

There are, of course, reasons behind this trend in language retention in India. Each major language in India acts as a link with other languages. Every language area consists of at least 3 inter-languages. All of the widely accepted and understood languages have many variants. For example, Hindi alone has forty-eight variants. One reason for India's linguistic diversity is the complex social realities of South Asia: Indian languages reflect the intricate levels of social hierarchy and caste. Many will ask if I am talking here about dialects rather than language variants. Differentiating between a language and a dialect is often a political issue: a prestige variety is often labelled a "language" while "dialect" is often used for forms of speech that are restricted in use. Speech variation is not a new phenomenon. It was also found in early surveys.¹⁹

Another reason for language diversity in India is that Indians typically are not just bilingual but multi-lingual. Multilingualism in India has nothing to do with education; it is found among illiterates, as well. In different contexts / domains, people use different languages. The 1931 census added a question on bilingualism, and 1991 census even had a question dealing with trilingualism. Census figures show that the percentage of India's bilingual population in 1991 (19.44%) was significantly higher than in 1961 (9.7%), 1971, (13.04%) and 1981 (13.44%). In 1991, 7.26% of the population claimed to be trilingual.

If we go back to look at the extent of multilingualism in India, we find that after Independence, the 1961 and 1971 census figures²⁰ show 193 classified languages out of a total of 1,652 mother tongue labels and "raw" labels numbering 3,000. This jumped to around 7,000 in the 1981 census. The 1991 census then touched an all-time high figure of 10,000. This was why language rationalization has become a big challenge in India. In fact, the problem in India lies in defining 'mother tongue'. According to the census definition, mother tongue is "the language spoken in childhood by the person's mother to the person. If the mother died in infancy, the language mainly spoken in the person's home in childhood." The emphasis in the 1881 and 1891 census was on mother tongue as the language 'ordinarily spoken in the household'. In 1901, enumerators were instructed to record names of languages 'ordinarily used'. This was extended in 1911 and 1921 to 'ordinarily used in his own home'. In 1931, 1941 and 1951, it was stipulated as the language first spoken 'from the cradle'.

Language loss does not seem to be an issue in India but the predicament of the language planner in India is that language labels change every decade. For example, Angika, Bajjika, or Galong are

¹⁷ Padmanabha, P., B.P.Mahapatra , V.S.Verma , G.D.McConnell. (1989) *The Written Languages of The World : A Survey of the Degree and Modes of Use* (2. INDIA, Book 1, Constitutional Languages, Book 2, Non-Constitutional Languages). Jointly published by the International Centre For Research on Bilingualism and Office of the Registrar General, India, Laval University Press, Quebec

¹⁸ Pandit, Prabodh B. 1976. *Languages in Plural Society*. Delhi: Manohar.

¹⁹ See, for example, census returns of Bombay (1864), Madras Presidency (1871) and Bengal (1872) or Grierson's LSI (1886-87), all of which tell the same story. 179 languages and 544 dialects were reported at the turn of 20th century.

²⁰ Census of India, 1961, 1971, 1981, 1991. New Delhi: Office of the Registrar General of India.

labels that went out of use recently but we have no dearth of new labels such as Rajbanshi, Kokborok or Gorkhali. There are instances of language revival, as happened with Nepali. There are also campaigns for giving a rightful place to what was once a marginalized speech such as Konkani and there are cases of survival of languages spoken by transplanted communities such as Saurashtri Tamil. Many generations of settlers in Andaman and Nicobar also retained their languages. If we dig deep into the decennial census tables of other South Asian countries, similar trends can be found to different degrees.

Let's look at the big picture of the language situation in South Asia countries at this juncture. Table #2, below, shows the major languages of South Asia. Note that while all are multilingual countries, their multilingualism profiles are significantly different– which is what I meant with 'cline'.

Table #2. Major languages of South Asia

Maldives	Bangladesh	Sri Lanka	Bhutan	Nepal	Pakistan
Maldivian/ Divehi(22m)	Bangla (124.8m)	Sinhala (1.32m) Tamil (0.3m)	Dzongkha (2 m) Nepali (0.16m) Tshangla (0.14m)	Nepali (9.9m) Maithili (2.19m) Bhojpuri (1.37m) Newari (0.78m) Eastern Tamang (718k) Awadhi (540k) Gurung(177k)	Urdu (10.72m), Sindhi (16.99m) Panjabi (30.0m) Saraiki (15m) Pashto (9.6m) Brahui (2m) East. Farsi (1m) E.Balochi (1.8m) N-Hindko,2m W.Balochi 1m S.Hindko (0.6m)

Table #3, below, displays other major languages of the region, having between 150-600k speakers:

Table #3. Other major languages of South Asia

Maldives	Bangladesh	Bhutan	Nepal	Pakistan	Sri Lanka
	Urdu (600k) Hindi Chakma Burmese Sadri Arakanese Santali (157k)		E.Magar (288k) Limbu Tharu W.Magar Tharu, Rana Thakur Tamang (186k)	Gujari (300k) Shina Parkari Koli Balti Khowar Kohistani Marwari Bagri Dhatki Wadiyara Koli Kachi Koli (176k)	

In addition, almost all the countries have many middle-range languages with 25k to 125k speakers.

Table #4. Middle-range languages in South Asia

Maldives	Sri Lanka	Bhutan	Bangladesh	Nepal	Pakistan
Sri LankaMalay Creole (50k) Indo-Portuguese Creole (1.25k)		Khengkha (40k) Bumthankha (30K)	Tipra (105k) Garo (102k) Khasi Meitei Kokborok (78k)	SW-Tamang (100k) Rajbanshi Gurung Deokri Tharu, Tharu, Kathoriya	Hazaragi (110k) Kashmiri (105k) Jadgali (100k) Waneci (95k) Torwali

				Tharu, Saptari E.Gurung Tibetan Santalli Bantawa Tharu, Mahotari Tharu, Chitwan Chepang Chepang (27k)	Burushaski Kacchi Od Sindhi Bhil Kalami Gurgula Bateri (30k)
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Finally, there are the minor and truly minor languages:

Table 5: Minor languages in South Asia

Maldives	Sri Lanka	Bhutan	Bangladesh	Nepal	Pakistan
Nil	Nil	Chocangacakha Dzalakha Nyenkha Kurtokha Lakha, Brokpake	Chocangacakha Dzalakha Nyenkha Kurtokha Lakha, Brokpake	Thulung Lopa Sunwar, Thami Dhanwar, Takale Kham, Kulung, Olangchung Gola, Helambu, Sherpa, Khaling, S.Ghale, Gamale Kham, Camling, Yakka, Sohna, Bahing, N.Lorung, Dhimal	Loarki Goaria Lasi Dehwari Ghera Sansi Vaghri
Minor languages					
Sinhala (1400) Arabic (300)	Nil	Tibetan Lhokpu Gongduk Lepcha Chalikha Dakpakha Olekha	Pankhu	Thakali, Kham- Sheshi, Bote-Majhi, Majhi Janggali, Thakali, Chourase, Mundari, Dolpo, Chantel, Yamphe, Dzonkha, Sangpang, Jirel, Lhomi, Manangba, Mugu, Nubri, Dungmali, Puma, Palpa, Darai, S.Lorung, E.Tamang, Kham, Nisi, Kham, Maikoti	Wakhi Phalura Yidgha Dameli Jandavra Kati Kalkoti Kalasha Ormuri Khetrani

Variation and convergence in South Asia

Linguistic variation and convergence phenomenon have had interesting support from other, non-language, studies in Asia. For example, Luca Cavalli-Sforza²¹, a geneticist from Stanford, and her colleagues correlated archaeological evidence as well as DNA markers, to plot the variation in the

²¹ Cavalli-Sforza, Luca, et al. 1988. Reconstruction of human evolution: Bringing together genetic, archaeological, and linguistic data. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences in the USA* 85:6002-6006.

following way, namely, that there are four major clusters in Asia.²² According to these findings, Indo-Europeans (Tocharians?) moved into the area around 3800 years ago. Perhaps 1000 years ago or perhaps earlier, Indo-European speakers from south of the Urals, north of the Black Sea and in western Kazakstan moved westward and eastward. They moved south, (presumably) mixing with Dravidians and other indigenous language speakers. Considering the genetic gradation of Asians, this north-south division will become important. Thus, while there are variations or divergences, there are some converging trends, too.

Several studies—Emeneau²³, Masica²⁴, Subbarao²⁵, Abbi²⁶ and my own work (Singh 1976; Singh et al, 1986)²⁷—have pointed out at different times that South Asia witnessed two opposite patterns of convergence and divergence in languages. Some languages split and new speech forms and labels emerged, as in Indo-Aryan: Sanskrit & Prakrit to Apabhramshas to Modern Indian languages. Some languages (like Tamil) changed without accompanying changes in their names or labels. Further, merger of structures or linguistic convergence was a common process by which dissimilar and divergent languages become more like one another. When this happened on a social plane, unified varieties emerged, like Sadari or Nagamese.

Socio-linguistically, too, South Asia shows tremendous similarities. Speech variation is the order, and cultural habits, rituals, and belief-systems show an equal extent of plurality. In a *Times of India*'s web-portal, Sandy Sundaram (April 16, 2003)²⁸ in her 'Speaking Free', recollected the peculiar predicament of many multilingual Indians:

Father was posted in the 'true' Telugu districts; it was but natural that we siblings spoke purest Telugu. Grandma, being a true Tamilian, made sure we also spoke Tamil, and tutors gave us the basics of English. Mother, being a very wise lady, engaged a Hindi tutor. To complicate matters, father went to Calicut and Mangalore, making us reasonably proficient in Kannada and Malayalam. This multi-lingual upbringing can be a boon and a curse.

Does so much multilingualism mean that South Asia is a perennial linguistic problem zone? I raise this as a question here because language planning literature is filled with suggestions that situations like these offer 'wicked problems', and they are neither 'tamed' nor 'tamable' (See Singh 1992 for a discussion on these concepts).²⁹ I see here a defeat of approaches to planning, and a great role for multilingual education, governance and communication patterns.

²² Cavalli-Sforza, Luca, Paolo Menozzi and Alberto Piazza. 1994. *The History and Geography of Human Genes*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. And also Ref:

<http://popgen.well.ox.ac.uk/eurasia/htdocs/cavalli.html>

²³ Emeneau, Murray B. 1956. "India as a Linguistic Area." *Language* 32:1.3-16

²⁴ Masica, Colin P., 1976. *Defining a linguistic area (South Asia)*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. As well as Masica, Colin P., 2001. The definition and significance of linguistic areas: methods, pitfalls, and possibilities (with special reference to the validity of South Asia as a linguistic area). *The Yearbook of South Asian Languages and Linguistics* 2001, 205 – 67.

²⁵ Subbarao, K.V. 1984. *A Study of Linguistic Typology, Language Contact and Areal Universals in the Subcontinent*, University of Delhi.

²⁶ Abbi, Anvita, 1992. *Reduplication in South Asian languages*. Delhi: Allied Publishers. and Abbi, Anvita, 1994. *Semantic universals in Indian languages*. Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study.

²⁷ Singh, Udaya Narayana. 1976. Negation in Bengali and the order of constituents. *IL*, 37.4 : 295-303. and also in Singh, Udaya Narayana. 1986. Polar verbs in selected South Asian languages and their combinability. (Jointly with K.V. Subbarao and S.K. Bandyopadhyay). In Bh. Krishnamurti, Colin P. Masica and Anjani Kumar Sinha, eds. *South Asian Languages : Structure, Convergence and Diglossia*. Delhi : Motilal Banarsidass. 244-269.

²⁸ Sundaram, Sandy. (2003) 'Speaking Free' in *Times of India*'s web-portal; April 16, 2003

²⁹ Singh, Udaya Narayana. 1992. On language planning and development: A pluralistic paradigm. Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study (IIAS) and Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal.

Languages and region formation in India

After 1947, there was a conscious decision that India would have 'linguistic' states. Reorganisation of states took place from 1956 onwards, and the government reorganised its states by reducing them from a total of 27 to 14. Later, chunks like the North Eastern Frontier Area with its numerous minority groups was split into seven states. By 2003, with the addition of Jharkhand, Uttaranchal and Chattisgarh, with their many tribal speech communities, there are as many states as there had been earlier. With creation of several autonomous regions and eight Union Territories, problems got more complicated. However, competition and a lack of proper planning have created what was called a 'Sunflower syndrome' (Singh 1990)³⁰ – a mutual dislike among all competing languages and mother-tongues and the matter has only worsened because of lack of dialogue and a severe insurgency problems.

From the Indian experience, then, one could see that language has worked as a factor in making of 'Nations' as well as 'Regions'. We are already aware from what happened in South Asia during the last one hundred year that nations have been 'made' in many ways. Language is also an important factor in the formation of nations in other developing regions; for example, lingualisation in Indonesia's use of Bahasa and the revitalization/resurgence of linguistic identity in Bangladesh. Here are some of the causes:

- Territorial divisions effected by colonial rulers (Pakistan)
- Dismembering of a nation-state because of internal political dissensions
- Prolonged war (Serbia)
- Protestations (fall-out of CNRT activities in East Timor)
- Geo-political unification (Germany)
- Novel identity-formation (Tanzania < Tanganyika & Zanzibar)
- Religious-historical belief (Israel)
- Self-determination or plebiscite

It is not that there are no conflicts in South Asia. Conflict resolution has been the biggest challenge in multilingual nations. From the internal dynamics of modern-day nation states, we can easily identify a series of dichotomies at work. Often two opposite forces operate through which human aggregates of a region attempt self-definition. While the factor of ethnicity prompts them to press for self-identity, the pressure of civic society teaches them to keep this feeling subdued. Further, when a country opens up to foreign trade, immigration, etc. it has no other option than to adhere to global narratives of liberal universalism. Thus, Globalism vs. Localism becomes an important point of debate.

One must also understand the ethnic conditions reflected in the patterns of tensions between majority and minority groups (Schermerhorn 1970)³¹. Cleavage between compromise and control could create great differences. Control theory believes that those without the defining ethnic qualities lack respect. What about those without much bargaining power because of sheer lack of numerical strength or economic clout? At the core of this control theory is the plan that a majority ethnicity will try translating differences by adopting a system to control both values and resources of the minorities. This process is implicit in any majority-minority relationship, especially when there are great ethnic divisions.

³⁰ Singh, Udaya Narayana. 1990. On Language development : the Indian perspective. In Bahner, Joachim Schildt & Dieter Viehweger, eds. *Proceedings of the 14th International Congress of Linguists*. Berlin: Akademie Verlag. 1460-71.

³¹ Schermerhorn, R.A. 1970. *Comparative Ethnic Relations: A Framework for Theory and Research*. New York: Random House.

The matter of linguistic rights

At this point, it may be important to recall that all civil societies should ideally be interested in, if not committed to, protection of language rights of the ever-diminishing minorities. We need to underscore this danger of smaller languages losing space – both geographically and socially. Since there have been 50-odd new nation-states formed since World War II, it would be interesting to see their patterns of change and where they fall in terms of cline of multilingual speech communities. It is true that the *Preamble to the United Nations Charter*³² says

We the peoples of the United Nations determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind, and to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small, and to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained, and to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom, and for these ends, to practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another ...

But we also sadly observe that here have been some disturbing debates³³ on these issues we thought should be beyond all debates and controversies. In December 2002, at the United Nations in Geneva, or even later in September 2003, at the Eighth and Ninth Sessions of the Working Group on the Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (WGDD)³⁴, the tussle between large nation states like US, Canada and Australia and the indigenous people became evident. The WGDD Draft includes a preamble as well as 45 Articles such as one stating that every indigenous individual has the right to a nationality. Article 43 in the draft³⁵ also stated: "All the rights and freedoms recognized herein are equally guaranteed to male and female indigenous individuals". The Draft was adopted in 1994 by the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities of the UN Commission on Human Rights. It was then channeled to the WGDD where it has been kept in limbo by the larger States. The Draft is supposed to be finalized by 2004. I take this opportunity to make an appeal to all concerned to appreciate the concerns of linguistic minorities across the globe. The records of all South Asian countries have not been exactly bright in this respect but as I have pointed out, the smaller speech communities have always shown ways of managing their identity here through a combination of strategies – even though they have also shown trends of convergence on many planes. **Conclusion**

To sum up, we need to re-evaluate our approach to understanding the nature of conflicts and tensions that have to do with language, race and ethnicity. We also have to reassess how we could possibly relate them to nation-building. In case of problems with language development, which is further compounded by prejudice, our attention is mostly attracted towards the neglect of structural and societal conditions affecting race and ethnic relations. Prejudice and discrimination should be viewed as dependent and intervening variables. The role that the victims can and are willing to play in language revitalization and preservation activities must be clearly stated because the success of the efforts depends crucially on the group for which the plan is intended. Although for some, cross-lingual comparisons may seem useless, re-thinking of group relations is very important even now.

³² <http://www.un.org/aboutun/charter/preamble.htm>

³³ From Charmaine White Face, a freelance writer, in www.dincoalition.org .

³⁴ http://cfsc.quaker.ca/statements/CHR59_indigenous.pdf and <http://www.unhchr.ch/indigenous/groups-02.htm>

³⁵ <http://www.usask.ca/nativelaw/ddir.html>

Schermerhorn (1970; 1978)³⁶ for example, advocates a cross-cultural study of the dynamics of majority and minority relations. However, in the context of national development that impacts language planning, our central concern should be to find out under what conditions ethnic groups disintegrate or are isolated and to learn the ways to change those conditions. Our aim would thus be to account for the modes of integration and conflict as dependent variables in the relation between dominant groups and subordinate ethnic groups in different regions in India.

To end my talk, I wish to end with an observation of the Native American Secwepemc elder, Nellie Taylor,³⁷ who is reported to have said to a mainstream linguist that,

Without your language you're nothing, you are like a white person, lost and without a home.

How very true in today's context – whether in South Asia or elsewhere.

³⁶ Schermerhorn, R.A. 1970. *Comparative Ethnic Relations: A Framework for Theory and Research*. New York: Random House. And also Schermerhorn, R.A. (1978). *Ethnic Plurality in India*. Tucson, Arizona: University of Arizona.

³⁷ <http://www.schoolnet.ca/aboriginal/fnesc/part03-e.html>

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