Language, Identity and Contemporary Society

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Edited by

Rajesh Kumar and Om Prakash

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Chapter One

Introduction

Rajesh Kumar and Om Prakash

Identity is a loaded and overused term and one that is interpreted differently in psychology, sociology, cultural studies, political science, and the humanities. Erikson's work in the 1950s led to renewed discussions in psychology where identity came to be viewed in terms of the personal idiosyncrasies that separate one person from another. In sociology, identity is viewed in terms of social categories and the relational roles through which people perform and locate themselves in social space. We formulate multiple identities that cut across the boundaries of social categories such as religion, region, race, gender, class, caste, and community etc., and we now talk of multiple identities contextualized and located in different sociocultural spaces. In the sociological perspective, social identity theory focuses on the ways in which individuals identify themselves as members of a social group (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Social identity theory looks at identity along two dimensions: the social and the individual. The social dimension of identity refers to membership of social groups and the roles an individual plays in such groups; whereas the personal dimension refers to the unique attributes and factors that create a distinct individual. Jenkins observes that "identity is the ways in which individuals and collectivities are distinguished in their social relations with other individuals and collectivities" (Jenkins, 1996: 4). Underlining the importance of the inextricability of language, identity and culture, Baez observes that:

> *"Culture, identity and language may be inextricable from each other; all create identity, or, at least, important aspects of identity. But language not only creates the contours of identity, it also may set up the conditions for other kinds of inclusion and exclusion, belonging and not belonging, success and failure ... Language gives meaning to social structures, identity-creating and oppressive ones."* (Baez, 2002, as quoted in Rovira, Lourdes C., 2008: 68)

We acknowledge the instrumentality of language in expressing culture: when we take away the language of a culture we consequently take away, "its greetings, its curses, its cures, its praises, its laws, its literature, its songs, its rhymes, its proverbs, its wisdom, and its prayers" (Fishman, 1999: 5).

The centrality of language in organizing communities and groups cannot be overstated: our social order is developed alongside our linguistic allegiance, shared narratives, collective memories, and common social history. Here, language does not simply remain a social object, but rather it is one that significantly determines our associations and social functions. We derive meaning through it and construct a multi-layered identity that situates us in a given sociocultural space.

> *"Language is intrinsic to the expression of culture. Language is a fundamental aspect of cultural identity. It is the means by which we convey our innermost self from generation to generation. It is through language that we transmit and express our culture and its values. Language—both code and content—is a complicated dance between internal and external interpretations of our identity."* (Gibson, 2004: 1)

Language encodes our inherited knowledge and helps us create meaning out of our everyday experiences. Language is instrumental in constructing meaning and defining associations with our world. As a social phenomenon, it shapes every aspect of our lives and binds us together. It becomes instrumental in asserting the uniqueness and distinct identities of one group against another. Identity includes many elements apart from language, such as class, region, ethnicity, nation, religion, caste, gender, and education. These associations can be either singular or multiple. It is an intertwined system with elements that complement each other. Language is one such element in this system and holds a particular interest because of the mutual influence of language and identity in relation to other social factors. As Rovira (2008:66) observes:

> *"Words, language, have the power to define and shape the human experience. It is because of language that I can name my experiences."* (Rovira, Lourdes C., 2008: 66)

The processes of globalization, hyper-mobility, rapid urbanization, and the increasing desire of local populations to be linked to the global community have created a pressing need to reconfigure identity in this new world order. Following the digital revolution, traditional and new media are dissolving linguistic boundaries. Crystal (2003) imagines a form of

bilingualism where English remains the language to connect with the global audience, whereas the other language becomes a means for socializing with local community. He says:

> *"It is perfectly possible to develop a situation in which intelligibility and identity happily co-exist. This situation is the familiar one of bilingualism—but a bilingualism where one of the languages within a speaker is the global language, providing access to the world community, and the other is a well-resourced regional language, providing access to a local community. The two functions can be seen as complementary, responding to different needs. And it is because the functions are so different that a world of linguistic diversity can in principle continue to exist in a world united by a common language."* (Crystal, 2003: 22)

The above statement reveals a new linguistic reality and underlines a linguistic tension between local languages and our negotiated identities. Hall's analysis of identity "as a production, which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation" (1990: 222) remains significant to our exploration of the phenomenon of the formation of identity in contemporary societies.

> *"Identity is not as transparent or unproblematic as we think. Perhaps instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished fact, which the new cultural practices then represent, we should think, instead, of identity as a 'production,' which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation."* (*ibid*)

The present volume is an attempt to capture the changing patterns and reformulations of multiple identities in a set of globalized, digitized, and hyper-mobile societies. Keeping in mind the fluidity of identity, we undertook this project to explore the concept through a multidisciplinary prism. We received a very warm response from our contributors towards this idea and their meaningful contributions in this volume are testament to their whole-hearted response. This volume contains a total of fourteen articles capturing cultural, social, and applied dimensions complemented by personalized experiential accounts. The following section presents the views expressed through the papers included in this volume and the cumulative arguments they contain.

Looking through the lenses of language and ethnicity, **S. Imtiaz Hasnain** discusses the politics of Hindi-Urdu digraphia within a framework structured around the indexicality principle of identity and the semiotic processes of iconization and recursivity He situates Urdu and Hindi in a shared domain of linguistic and literary space and cultural syncretism and

demonstrates how *languaging* and discursive practices are employed to develop the language of the masses for communicating a message of peace and harmony across religious and cultural boundaries. He shows how ideologically impregnated discursive practices have been constructed to exploit certain features of the script to create the dichotomies Hindi:Urdu = Hindu:Muslim through the forging of links between linguistic forms and social meanings.

Underlining the linguistic tension and negotiated identities in the multilingual context of the Kashmir region, **Asharf Bhatt and Rakesh M. Bhatt** cite the case of the Kashmiri speech community, where intralingual conflict has serious repercussions for linguistic identity. They demonstrate how in contemporary Kashmir there exists a situation of 'digraphia' where Muslim and Hindu Kashmiris view the script/s of the same language, Kashmiri, more according to religious predispositions and related ideologies than from objective positions. They conclude that the Kashmiri language has always been a binding force between the two communities, however, apprehensions remain that the uncertainty of the script may play a divisive role if not handled carefully and keeping the feelings of both communities in mind.

Pritha Chandra makes a case for Hindi-Urdu as one and the same language—a widely accepted view among many contemporary South Asian linguists. She further claims that Urdu is not a minority language and that the bills and ordinances passed granting it official status in UP have further marginalised the language, separating it from its many varieties and lineage. Scholars promoting Urdu literacy and education have failed to challenge some of the core problematic assumptions that have plagued the language since the pre-independence era. She recommends measures that could alleviate some of the problems she has raised regarding the current treatment of the language. She suggests that if these measures were supported by state and non-state agencies and properly implemented they would lead to Hindi-Urdu obtaining its rightful place in the linguistic domain.

Unravelling the social fabric of the Bajjika community and how particular linguistic markers are integrated into its social structure, **Abhishek Kashyap** shows how the Bajjika language has developed a linguistic system that consistently display an interlocutor's social status, which, in turn, is deployed in constructing the speaker's social identity. He seeks to explain the relationship between social status and social identity in Bajjika language and culture and shows that the language has developed linguistic

markers that meet speakers' sociocultural requirements for declaring their identity. The social organization of the Bajjika community is hierarchical and in this hierarchy the construction of identity is linked to an interlocutor's social status, which is itself determined by a number of factors such as caste, economic class, level of education, profession, rank, seniority, and kinship status. This social hierarchy gives rise to a highly calibrated system of honorifics that is integrated into the pronominal system and the system of verbal agreements: speakers of Bajjika carefully select agreement markers in the verb to index their own social status and that of the addressee or a third person referent.

B. N. Patnaik looks at Jagannath culture and the Odia language as traditional symbols of Odia identity and also shows how two Odia food items, *pakhala* and *rasagola*, have emerged as specific identity markers. He attempts to separate the religious, mystical, spiritual, and profoundly personal and intuitive aspects of Jagannath 'consciousness' (preferring this term to that of 'cult') from the collective and the social. He invites us to view an episode in the *Sarala Mahabharata*, which describes a city where values are topsy-turvy, as an example of ascribed identity. The name of this city is Babarapuri. *Babara* may be a colloquial term in Odia, whose *tatsamic* (Sanskrit) form is *barbara* meaning 'uncivilized.' *Babarapuri* is the name given to the city by the *outsider*. No *insider* would have condemned the set of values that he and his fellow citizens live by and called his city such. The four symbols of Odia identity dealt with in this paper are looked at from an insider's perspective. The insider and the outsider perspective likely converge in the case of Jagannath culture and the Odia language. As for the two food items, the possibility of convergence may be there in the case of *pakhala* whereas today a similar convergence appears impossible in the case of *rasagola*. While convergence makes the identity marker surer and stronger, its lack does not make it much weaker, certainly not to the point where scepticism sets in.

Neena Pandey captures expressions of folk culture that image society in its various forms. These imagings are significant tools for influencing the identities of various social categories. Drawing on the folk songs of eastern Uttar Pradesh, she describes the mechanisms by which these folk songs formulate images of women and construct gender identities. These songs narrate women's designated roles and the desired manner in which they are to be performed. She observes that "every society has its own value system, which defines what is permitted and what is forbidden. The degree of behaviour, appearance, reflection, and portrayal are always

observed, analysed, and judged by the members of that society that forms
and sustains an image. These cultural ideas, symbols, norms, values,
mores, and patterns of behaviour have played a crucial role in the creation
of images of women; although the images perceived about women differ
from one society to another. When we talk about the category of women,
inferiority is universal. Folk songs reflect the prevalent culture, which is
largely patriarchal and represents the relationship between the powerful
and powerless. It is crucial to intervene in these constructs and engage, in
a constructive manner, in identifying those songs that present gender-equal
and humanistic images of every being in general, and women in particular.
Creating new songs with the aim of building a healthy and gender-equal
society will enhance the creative space for the development of society.
These engagements require the ongoing longitudinal participation of
village communities using the power of folk songs as an effective tool in
reconstructing popular mindsets and acting as an agent of positive change
(from this book)."

In a multilingual country like India, the question of national language and
national identity has been discussed from multiple perspectives. Adding to
this ongoing discussion, **Anjani Kumar Sinha** brings in a further
argument in this context by concluding that English is a language of
national identity, at least for educated Indians. This analysis leads us to
tentatively conclude that a literate India will accept both English and Hindi
as languages of national identity and the debate surrounding Hindi versus
other Indian languages will become as redundant as the debate
surrounding English versus Hindi is right now.

Peter L. Barasa and **Carolyne Omulando** underline emergent identities
in the African language context and the implications of culture on
language learning and how they can be appropriated pedagogically.
Drawing on examples primarily from the eastern and southern parts of
Africa, in particular Kenya and South Africa, this chapter proposes a
critical and interpretative approach to the concepts of language, identity,
and society. The issues highlighted in this chapter, especially towards the
end, invite reflection on language in the classroom beyond the functions of
language in its cultural setting. The perspectives proposed in this chapter
present a different reading of portrayals of culture from the determinist
and/or fixed concepts often seen in mainstream cultural, theoretical, and
applied linguistics. They plead for a re-engineering of the African idiom to
support the new identity of the twenty-first century African, which needs
both international and indigenous languages to function.

Kembo Sure sees language and identity as linked in a special, complex, and transient way reflecting how social and mental spaces interact in the contemporary era. He describes the case in Kenya where there are about 42 languages, depending on one's definition of language and dialect. According to the Constitution of Kenya 2010, English and Kiswahili are the Official Languages of the Republic, whereas Kiswahili is the National Language. The officialization of English and Kiswahili involves the imposition of legitimacy linked to power over Kenyan territory and the workplace and consequentially delegitimizes all other languages in the process. Kiswahili and English are 'totemized' and provided with an 'iconic status' that is denied to the others. That is to say one of the defining social features of being Kenyan is the ability to speak English and Kiswahili, the two languages that symbolically function as identification markers of Kenyan citizenship. He concludes that in pursuit of social coherence and internal peace, individuals need multilingual competency to deal with the here-and-now and also to prepare them for the next set of contexts. The dynamic linguistic communication of the twenty-first century transcends the monolingual and monocultural concepts of 'self' and 'others.'

Language is a major source of identity formation. English became a lingua franca through the process of colonization. Industrial society and, its successor—information society—have seen many local languages and dialects become extinct or come close to extinction for a variety of reasons, including a lack of patronage by hegemonic powers. The million dollar question as to whether English will continue to be a global lingua franca, leading to many languages such as Hawaiian becoming extinct, requires the urgent attention of social scientists, particularly sociolinguists. It is predicted that English, particularly American English, will continue to expand in contemporary information society. Local, regional, and national languages may be saved from extinction through the digitization practices of the network society and the new technological paradigm of Informationalism. Through the case study of the Hawaiian language in the USA, **Abdul Matin** looks at this development within the framework of Castells' informational society. He argues that Manuel Castells' notions of the network and Informationalism may be of value in preventing the extinction of some languages. Finally, rather than the 'market,' the 'will' and 'transmission' are seen as important concepts for the revitalization of endangered languages.

Thapasya Jayraj and **Rajesh Kumar** point out that kinship terms and pronouns are strong carriers of identity and community attributes

according to the different sociolects in each community. They provide evidence from Malayalam and demonstrate that pronouns and kinship terms show a spectrum of variations according to sociolect. This study was primarily based on five sociolects of Malayalam: Thiyya, Nair, Namboothiri, Mappila, and Christian dialects. Variations are not merely phonological, but each form is unique and directly connects to the identity of a particular community. The use of pronouns in these sociolects of Malayalam is highly influenced by class and power relations. The question as to whether identity influences language or language influences identity remains. However, it can be agreed that they influence each other and form a complex social structure. Likewise, the choice of language form is heavily influenced by the identity of the speaker, to an extent that some forms are restricted to a specific group of people by virtue of their social status and power. Similarly, the identity of a person is also defined by her/his choices in language use. The choice of a linguistic element enables a speaker to express her/his own social-religious-cultural identity, to identify with others from the same community, to help others identify the speaker, and to suggest feelings of attachment to or detachment from the people around them. Likewise, each variation in language form, be it sociolectal, regional, or structural, represents an associated identity and the linguistic choices of an individual are part and parcel of her/his identity.

Namita Krishnamurthy and **Rajesh Kumar** provide a very close examination of the slang at IIT Madras, which they claim to be a rich and highly developed in-group language. Apart from being strongly influenced by the general language situation in India, particularly in relation to English, they also claim *insti lingo* is a vibrant linguistic site that encompasses and draws on the emergent linguistic trends of the 'youth bulge.' As such, it is reflective of the broader phenomenon of 'Indian English,' or, more problematically, 'English *of* India.' It simultaneously opens up the many nuances of identity creation, confirmation, and resistance within specific sub-groups and communities on the IITM campus. The privileged social reality of the IIT brand is examined in this paper in order to situate the overlapping spaces of language, youth culture, and identity. The feelings of *insti pride*, identified across the IITs, are compared to the resistive counter-culture of *HS pride*, which has become a highly contested ideal among the multiple identities active in the campus community. They examine the curious position of MA students who possess dual identities as both IIT students (as residents and students of IITM) and non-IIT students (due to their lack of engineering proficiency) and their unique adaptation of *insti lingo* as minor sites of linguistic conformity and resistance across and outside the campus.

Miki Nishioka demonstrates that the younger Japanese generation is incorporating and mixing loanwords, or *katakanago*, at a prolific rate, much like an immune system reacting to pathogens. The older generation tends to look on changes caused by these loanwords as erosive of their Japanese identity. In contrast, the younger generation (under twenty) are happily creating and reformulating their identities through engaging loanwords or creating new words using logical and linguistic methods.

Presenting the case of Hmar speakers in Mizoram and its neighbouring areas, **Vanlal Tluonga Bapui** argues that many Hmar speakers are fast losing their native language and adopting the language of the nearest majority group to better assimilate for sustenance and growth. As such, Hmar identity is becoming more of an emotional choice than a linguistic reality. The Census of India lists tribes according to the language spoken. As such, a sizeable number of Hmar tribespeople is not listed as Hmar because they have adopted the dominant language in their location. Speakers of Lushai (Mizo), Thadou-Kuki, Simte, Rangte, and other kindred languages of the Hmar tribe are excluded from the Hmar tribe list.

We believe that the confluence of various perspectives presented in this volume will help broaden the reader's viewpoint through their examination of identity as a multidimensional concept and the way in which it draws on a range of allied disciplines. Last but not least, we are grateful to the Centre for Continuing Education at the Indian Institute of Technology Madras, for their all logistic support in bringing out this book. We cannot thank enough people like Victoria Carruthers, Robert Pomfret, Anthony Wright, and Matthew Scott for their continuous help and support while bearing with us through uncomfortable delays. Finally, we extend our gratitude to the many individuals who have directly and indirectly been supportive in our endeavor.

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CHAPTER TWO

LANGUAGING AND ETHNIFYING:
INDEXICALITY AND ICONIZATION IN URDU

S. IMTIAZ HASNAIN

1. Introduction

From a theoretical point of view, many of us find the idea of 'language' and 'ethnicity' to be quite relevant. However, if one wishes to understand how people use discursive and ethnic practices to give meaning to what they do, we require a better analytical lens to view these practices, which bring meaning-making into communicative repertoires. The verbalization of language and ethnicity makes us understand that individuals and groups are also 'doing language' and 'doing ethnicity', i.e. they have the ability 'to language' and the ability 'to ethnify'. According to Garcia, "Languaging refers to the discursive practices of people … [A]nd ethnifying points to the act of signifying and calling attention to an identity by pointing to certain ethnic practices" (2010: 519); both these practices are in a dialogic relationship with each another. With regard to Urdu and Hindi, we find that the speakers of both languages engage in interaction through languaging and ethnifying in performing certain ethnicized acts of identification.

Journeying through the pulsations of a loaded history and looking through the lenses of language and ethnicity, the first section of this chapter situates Urdu (particularly the form spoken in North India) and Hindi in a shared domain of linguistic and literary space and cultural syncretism. The second section deals with languaging and the discursive practices employed to develop language of the masses to communicate a message of peace and harmony across religious and cultural boundaries. The third section shows how different genres of literature, language patterns, and the politics of linguistic engineering have been used to create an ethnicized identity. Finally, the fourth section discusses the politics of Hindi-Urdu

digraphia within a framework of the indexicality principle of identity and the semiotic processes of iconization and recursivity. It shows how ideologically impregnated discursive practices have been constructed to exploit certain features of the script for the purpose of juxtaposing the dichotomies of Hindi:Urdu = Hindu:Muslim and thus forging links between linguistic forms and social meanings.

2. Shared Linguistic and Literary Space and Cultural Syncretism

In the following, I quote some passages from Anita Desai's *In Custody* (1984), which alludes to a shared literary and cultural syncretism. The narrations of the three protagonists—Nur, who is an Urdu poet, Deven, who teaches Hindi at a private college, but intends to publish a monograph in Urdu, and Murad, who prints Urdu books—inform us of the anguish, disconcert, and suspicion surrounding the fate of Urdu, which has slipped from the mainstream to the margin as a result:

> "Urdu poetry? ... How can there be Urdu poetry when there is no Urdu language left? It is dead, finished. The defeat of the Moghuls by the British threw a noose over its head, and the defeat of the British by the Hindi-wallahs tightened it. So now you see its corpse lying here, waiting to be buried."

> "No book was judged worthy of the (Sahitya Akademi) award this year. Why such treatment for Urdu … Because Urdu is supposed to have died in 1947? What you see in the universities—in some of the universities, a few of them only—is its ghost, wrapped in a shroud. But Hindi—oh Hindi is a field of green, all flourishing" (Anita Desai 1984: 42 & 55).

Urdu occupies a unique position, one that is decidedly unusual, in the linguistic scenario. Even if it is looked at in isolation, there is always the metaphysical presence of Hindi, which inevitably makes any discussion on Urdu include its relationship to Hindi. (Hasnain and Rajyashree 2004) This is missing altogether in the case of other Indian languages. Born in the Indian soil and a product of the intimate interaction between the linguistic currents of the Indo-Aryan and Perso-Arabic groups, Urdu belongs genetically to the Indo-Aryan family of languages. Its close similarities with Hindi, based on the use of ordinary conversational registers, has led many linguists to believe that both Hindi and Urdu are

near dialects of the same language. Hence, it is very common to find them hyphenated as Hindi-Urdu in linguistic literature. The reverse, i.e. Urdu-Hindi is, however, not very common.[1]

It has been for centuries, a language of people of all faiths: not all Muslims spoke this language; it was not exclusive to Muslims and it included many non-Muslims among its speakers. For instance, Kayasthas, Kashmiri Brahmins, and Khatris—three important Hindu communities—were traditionally educated in Urdu and Persian.[2] Pt. Lekh Ram, a prominent Arya Samaj leader in Punjab in the nineteenth century, edited *Arya Gazette* in Urdu, preaching the tenets of Arya Samaj through this paper. *Arya Patrika* and *Arya Samachar* were published in Urdu in Uttar Pradesh. The Nagari Pracharini Sabha, an organization that was committed to the promotion of Hindi, only had a few Muslims members. Anjuman-i-Taraqqi-i-Urdu, on the other hand, had a number of distinguished Hindu scholars as members,[3] the most prominent being Pt. Brajmohan Dattatreya.

Furthermore, *ghazal*—a widespread and popular genre of Urdu poetry—was admired equally by both Hindus and Muslims. In the composition of *ghazals* Urdu was traditionally used by both these communities. While narrating the socio-cultural history of Bihar immediately after the first Freedom Struggle in 1857, Ahmad provides a vivid description of the organization of a poetic symposium (*mushaira*) in Patna around 1857-58:

> "In the list of poets participating in a poetic symposium, both Hindus and Muslims were present in equal number. Even the organizers of such a poetic symposium happened to be both Hindus and Muslims. If one day it was organized in the premises of Maharaja Jai Gopal Singh Saqib, the other time they assembled in the house of Nawab Mohammad Ali Khan Hairati. If at one point the stage for the poetic symposium was adorned by Shah Mobarak Husain Mobrak, Nawab Hadi Ali Khan Faaiz, Nawab Md.

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[1] This positioning has also been problematized with regard to identity. For example, it has been a tradition to organize an all-India poetic symposium (mostly represented by Hindi-Urdu poets and Hindi-Urdu knowing Punjabi poets) every year on the evening of August 15, in the Red Fort—a place dedicated to the delivery of the Independence Day Speech by the Prime Minister of India. At one such poetic meeting, a discordant voice was raised when Hindi poets were invited first and the use of an alphabetical arrangement was used to resolve the issue (personal communication by L. M. Khubchandani, 1991).

[2] King 1994, 10.

[3] Faruqi, 2001, 47-48 and 52.

> Hussain Khan Hijrati, the other days Kunwer Sukhraj Bahadur Rahmati, Raja Ganga Prasad Badar, and Rai Durga Prasad Shah whole heartedly made arrangement for organizing such events. Besides these poets and other connoisseurs of sher-o-shairi, a good number of Hindu and Muslim gentry, elites, business class, lawyers representing different walks of life attended these poetic symposiums, which had brought fame to the ganga-jamni gathering of sher-o-sukhan of Patna" (Ahmad 1988: 456-57).

Ahmad further writes:

> "Every month a poetic symposium was arranged in Kunwer Sukhraj Bahadur Rahmati's house. Poets from Patna and outside attended such events. They were both Hindus and Muslims and they rendered their verses both in Urdu and Persian" (Ahmad 1988: 457).

Linguistic and cultural syncretism representing the shared literary and cultural space has been widely referred to as *Ganga-jamni tahziib*: a metaphor for Hindu-Muslim cultural unity. It combines *Ganga* (Ganges), the holy river that flows through Benares, the city of Hindu pilgrimage, with *Jamni*, derived as an adjective from another rive—the Jamuna—on the banks of which (Muslim) Mughal dynasty forts were built. Iconically, Jamuna represents the Muslims and the Ganga represents the Hindus, both showing the same appreciation for a poetic sensibility and pleasure, and, thus, obliterating the indexicality of its producers.

3. Languaging and Discursive Practices of Common Identity

Mobility, mixing, political dynamics and historical embeddedness are central concerns in the study of language. These concerns are constantly reflected in 'language-in-use' and 'language-in-action.' As such, the notion of separate languages bound by specific linguistic features is not sufficiently adequate to analyze language-in-use and language-in-action. Language is a ubiquitous and polymorphous phenomenon, and therefore, any abstraction of this phenomenon to develop greater understanding of universals when describing a part of the human mind, shows a complete disregard of the *parole* or the data of speakers' actual behavior. Individuals and groups use language by bringing into play various discursive and ethnic practices to signify what it is they wish to be. Language is a social construct that involves people in multiple discursive practices.

Contrary to this traditional conception, in the contemporary (European) conception, language is conceived as a cultural artifact fostered by literacy and standardization. Anton de Nebrija's grammar of Castillian Spanish (1492) marks the beginning of the history of colonialism and linguistics. It is said that before the Spanish sailors sailed to conquer the New World, Anton de Nebrija recommended his then newly published grammar of a 'living,' spoken language to Queen Isabel with the infamous observation that "[l]anguage was always the companion of empire … language and empire began, increased, and flourished together" (Trend 1944, cited in Errington, J. 2008: 18). It also reaffirms Makoni and Pennycook's (2007) argument that language was originally constructed by states that wanted to consolidate political power either by establishing language academies or encouraging [4]in ways that masked their similarities and differences.

Urdu, as a vernacular language, was commonly used by everyone irrespective of religious affiliation. It was the language of communication for the common people, while Arabic and Persian were the languages of the gentry and the elite. As such, the Muslim Sufis used this language for disseminating their message of peace and harmony.[5] *Rekhta*, a Persianized form of the Khariboli dialect, offers a good example of mixing and hybridity in language use with a purpose of communicating the message of syncretism. This can be seen in the following couplets of Amir Khusro (1235-1325) where one part of one verse was in Persian and the other in Hindi or Hindvi:

Ziihaal-e-miskin makun taGaaful, duraaye nainaa banaaye batiyaan

Kih tab-e-hijraaN nadaaram aye jaaN, na leho kaahe lagaaye chatiyaaN

(Do not overlook my misery by blandishing your eyes and weaving tales

My patience has overbrimmed o' sweetheart, why do you not take me to your bosom.)

Shabaan-e-hijraaN, daraaze chuun zulf varoz-e-waslatcho umr kotaah

Sakhii piyaa ko jo main naa dekhuun, to kaise kaaTuuN andherii ratiyaaN

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[4] In terms of head counts used in Census.

[5] This is akin to Franciscan friars in medieval Europe who used vernacular languages to deliver their sermons. Kehnel (2006) discusses this in the context of the beginnings of standardization in fourteenth century England.

(Long like curls in the night of separation, short like life on the day of our
union

My dear, how will I pass the dark dungeon night without your face
before.)

Urdu as a vernacular was the language of the Sufis. It was developed out
of genuine, meaningful, creative, multicultural and multi-religious
encounter as a means of common communication; it was neither a Muslim
language nor a Hindu language. Not being a court language was a strength
because it was accepted as the language of the masses.

4. Ethnifying Muslim Identity

The journey which began with the use of local languages for disseminating
quasi-religious discourse, finally developed to include religious writings
and their dissemination through Urdu. By the nineteenth century, Urdu had
become the language of the elites and even Hindus translated their
religious texts from Sanskrit into Urdu. (Rahman 2011) This development
is significant because Arabic had always been considered sacrosanct and
no other language, including Urdu, had enjoyed this privilege.

Under colonial rule two factors contributed significantly towards the
increased use of Urdu in religious writings:

(a)   Printing in India;
(b)   The downfall of the Moghul Empire and British domination.

The rise of British domination generated three general responses among
Muslims:

(i)   Resorting to armed struggle against British rule;
(ii)   Cooperating with the colonial masters and allowing some
        degree of assimilation and Anglicization;
(iii)   Emphasizing religious identity and overstating purity in
        religious practices.

The emergence of British domination and the loss of Moghul power were
perceived as an attack on Muslim identity giving rise to a binary
relationship of religious opposition: Muslim: Moghul vs. Non-Muslim (or
Others): British. The opposition strengthened a call to reinvent religious
identity, spearheaded particularly by Shah Waliullah (1703-1762) and the
followers of *Hadith* (called *Ahl-i-Hadith*). Insights were drawn from the

Quran and the *Hadith*—the two fundamental sources of Islamic doctrine—for reinventing religious identity. Urdu became a vehicle for translating the repository of knowledge found in the Quran and the *Hadith* and was channelled through Arabic script.[6]

The use of the Perso-Arabic script allowed a smooth transition in reinventing religious Muslim identity. Large-scale printing of Urdu translations of religious writings made them widely accessible. Even an illiterate Muslim had access to this knowledge as it was delivered through spoken discourse in religious sermons—knowledge that had otherwise remained confined to those individuals with a knowledge of Arabic alone.

5. Indexicality, Iconization, and Recursivity vis-à-vis Script

Indexing of the Perso-Arabic script of Urdu with a specifically Muslim identity, the large-scale printing of Urdu translations of religious texts with Islamic themes, and a general decline in Arabic and Persian speaking elites allowed Urdu to emerge as a language with the capability to transcend local specificities and articulate the nuances of the Islamic religion. As such, Urdu, in Perso-Arabic script, was perceived as being an Islamic-heritage language (the others being Arabic and Persian) and was taken up for use in several formal domains including administration, the judiciary, and lower level courts of law. Implementation of the Warren Hastings Judicial Plan of 1772 in Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa, according to Bhatia and Sharma, changed the legal system:

> "The system was called the *Adalat System*. The technical terms used in the courts were all in Urdu, such as *moffusil*, *faujdari*, *and dewani* … The judicial plan also included courts of appeal, which were called *Sadar Nizamat Adalat* and *Sadar Diwani Adalat*" (Bhatia and Sharma, 2008: 365).

It even permitted native law officers to assist an English judge in *Diwani Adalat*, which consequently enhanced the functional load of Urdu. Hindi and Urdu represent an extreme case of digraphia as they differ in their

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[6] Arabic script, because of its association with the Holy Quran, symbolizes Muslim identity and therefore Islamic literary heritage. Likewise, Devanagari script's relationship with Hindu scripture written in Sanskrit symbolizes Hindu identity representing Hindu literary heritage.

writing systems despite their structural similarities. Hindi is written in the Devanagari script, which is used to write Sanskrit, the sacred language of Hindus. Urdu is written in a modified version of the Persian script, which itself is an adapted form of the Arabic script—the sacred language of Muslims.[7] Although in sociolinguistic literature we do find instances of linguistic similarities between two languages verging on mutual intelligibility (Serbian and Croatian), the graphemic difference between Hindi and Urdu is far more dramatic than the difference between the Cyrillic script of Serbian and the Roman script of Croatian.

King believes that "Hindi and Urdu are among the first languages to be cited in general discussions of the topic of digraphia" (2001: 43). As far as the system of writing is concerned, the Devanagari script of Hindi is written left to right using an overhead horizontal line connected to the grapheme for marking word boundaries; the Perso-Arabic script of Urdu is written right to left and the words are set off from each other by final forms of consonants and by spaces. However, the two differ in terms of their characterization. The Devanagari script has been conventionally characterized as 'squarish,' 'chunky,' and as 'having edges.' The Perso-Arabic script, on the other hand, has been conventionally characterized as 'graceful,' 'flowing,' and 'having curves.' These characterizations have created iconic associations based on ideas of nation, religion, and geopolitical space: Hindi script = India, Hinduism, South Asia vs. Urdu = Pakistan, Islam, the Middle East, and this can be interpreted as an image of the essence of a social group (Irvine and Gal 2000: 37). The metalinguistic debate surrounding the politics of Hindi and Urdu digraphia involve discursive acts towards constituting distinct Hindu and Muslim identities, premised on common-sense ideas, sets of beliefs, attitudes, and values about language practices, and articulated as "a rationalization or justification of perceived language structure and use" (Silverstein 1979: 193).

On 18 April 1900, Anthony P. MacDonnell, the British Governor of the North-West Province and Oudh (1895-1901) ordered the use of Hindi in

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[7] Rizwan Ahmad challenges the traditional ideology that considers the choice of script crucial for defining Urdu and Hindi. Analyzing the recent orthographic practices of writing Urdu in Devanagari script, he concludes that "Muslims in India no longer view the Arabic script as a necessary, let alone defining, element of Urdu, nor do they believe that Devanagari is completely antithetical to Urdu and their Muslim identity" (2011: 260).

the Devanagari script in provincial law courts. His directive was characterized by many litterateurs of the time "as the virtual funeral pyre of Urdu" (Khalidi 2010: 58). The 1900 resolution not only precipitated the hardening of the cultural and political identities of the Hindi and Urdu linguistic communities in North India, but also brought about a radical shift in the enumerative techniques and categorization of the two languages. The 1901 decennial census coincided with an intensified Hindi movement following the April 1901 resolution.[8] It marked the beginning of identity politics and community formation based on the *politics of numbers* (Sarangi 2009), which dominated the next five years of enumerative process. According to Sarangi, the enumerative writings produced during this period described in detail both "the historical narratives of socio-linguistic relations, identities and differences between Hindi and Urdu and their respective communities" and "… multiple forms of cultural and political conflict between [the two communities] over questions of their becoming the primary languages of economy, polity and culture of the colonial state." (2009: 200-201) The *politics of numbers* thus gave legitimacy to both the colonial state and the Hindu and Muslim social communities to determine "linguistic-political power, control and identity of their languages and linguistic communities" (Sarangi 2009: 202). These historical narratives highlighting differences, sociolinguistic relations, and identities between the two language communities finally collectivized the identities of Hindus and Muslims and provided their own logic for legitimizing difference. This is shown in the following excerpts from the 1901 census:

> "Nagari is easier to learn than the Persian characters. Table vii shows clearly that Hindus prefer to read the Nagari, the Musalmans the Persian characters" (Census of India 1901, Vol XVI: 159).

The narratives produced in the post-1900 resolution invoked the European concept of nation and national language, precipitated the construction of the cultural and political identiies of Urdu and Hindi language groups, and also established a symbolic-semantic identification between language, nation, and religion. The discourses of the Hindi nationalist movement equated Hindi with their religio-nationalist struggle and gave new meaning to nationalism. Thus, *Hindi, Hindu, Hindustan*, a slogan of the then Hindi

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[8] This resolution recognised Hindi in Devanagari script as the language of judicial administration in the NWP and Oudh along with continuation of Arabic in Perso-Arabic script.

stalwart, Pandit Pratap Narayan Mishra, produced the idea of a single national language, religion, and national boundary, and conflated language with nationalism and nation-state formation:[9]

> *cahuNhuN jusaaNco nij kalyaan*
> *to sab mili Bhaarat santaan!*
> *japo nirantar ek jabaan*
> *hindii, hinduu, Hinduustaan!*

> If your well-being you really want,
> O children of Bharat!
> Then chant forever but these words
> Hindi, Hindu, Hindustan
>   (Rai 2001: 90).

Indexing of the Nagari script with Hindu identity can also be seen in the following article, titled "Hindi Bhasha," published in *Sudarshan* in February 1900:

> "In the ancient times there were two languages—Sanskrit and non-Sanskrit. When the greats like Vyas and Valmiki were living, all spoke in Sanskrit. When we became Hindus our languages changed. Now we are Hindus and our language is Hindi" (cited in Patel 2011: 145).

Traces of nineteenth century colonial India's ideologically politicized discourses and indexing of Hindi (via Sanskrit) with Hindu were also found in the rhetoric of Hindi supporters in post-independence India. Urdu was perceived by both the informed and the uninformed as synonymous with Muslim culture. For instance, a speech delivered on June 15, 1948 by Purshottamdas Tandon, the then Senior Congress Leader in Uttar Pradesh (the state containing the largest number of Urdu speakers), mentioned:

> "Muslims must stop talking about a culture and civilization foreign to our country and genius. They should accept Indian culture. One culture and one language will pave the way for real unity. Urdu symbolizes a foreign culture. Hindi alone can be the unifying factor for all the diverse forces in the country" (*National Herald*, Lucknow, June 15, 1948, cited in Khalidi 2010: 36).

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[9] A three-fold assertion of the identity of language, religion, and the motherland, which consolidated communal mobilization through its mischievous genius of poetry, but failed to wipe out traces of its lexical heritage (*zabān* in place of *bhāshā*) see Hasnain and Rajyashree (2004).

Indexing of Urdu script with identity and the process of iconization that treated it as foreign, also involved personifying the Urdu script as fraudulent, deceitful and difficult to read, attributed to a version of cursive Urdu script called *shikasta* 'broken writing.' [10] The following report published in the newspaper *Jagat Samachar* on April 19, 1869 captures these processes of iconization:

> "All know the defects of the Oordoo [Urdu]and the advantages of the Nagree [Devanagari] character; how great is the evil, when it is considered that only the servants of the Court understand the papers of the Court, and even they are sometimes confused, owing to words being written one way, and read in another" (King 1994: 135).

Certain writers of Hindi plays in the nineteenth century also echoed this iconization of Urdu as fraudulent. The plays mentioned by King include Pandit Gauri Datta's *Devanagari aur Urdu ka ek natak* (A Play of Hindi and Urdu) and Munshi Sohan Prasad's *Hindi aur Urdu ki Larai* (The Fight of Hindi and Urdu). These are allegorical in nature and represent Urdu and Hindi as 'Begum Urdu' and 'Queen Devanagari,' where the pleading for Queen Devanagari argues:

> "… [Queen Devanagari] teaches righteousness and removes falsehood, and that under her rule people could become merry, become wealthy, carry on their business, and learn wisdom. Bribery ... would weep at the very sound of her name, and fabrication and fraud would disappear should she rule again" (King 1989: 180).

Urdu, on the other hand, was represented through the following:

> "This is my work—passion I'll teach,
> Tasks of your household we'll leave in the breach.
> We'll be lovers and rakes, living for pleasure,
> Consorting with prostitutes, squandering our treasure ...
> Lie to your betters and flatter each other
> Write down one thing and read out another" (King 1989: 181).

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[10] In quoting an anecdote, "The Drama of the Boat and the Prostitute," heavily utilized during the nineteenth century pro-Hindi and anti-Urdu language tract that highlighted the difficulties of reading this version of Urdu script, King narrates that a District Superintendent of Police sends a message in Urdu to one of his subordinates requesting that a boat (*kishtii*) be kept ready for his arrival. Because of the ambiguity of the Urdu script the subordinate misreads *kishtii* as *kasbii* 'prostitute,' leading to embarrassing and amusing developments (King 1994: 135).

Urdu was never exclusively a language of Muslims, but the communal divide between Urdu and Hindi has caused immense suffering among members of these language communities. Indexing of the Perso-Arabic script and the Devanagari script with defined religious communities has reinforced the perception of Urdu-Muslim: Hindi-Hindu identity and targeted speakers of both languages. This is can be seen in the two news clippings shown below:

BJP spokesperson receives threat letter in Urdu

THE HINDU
23/1/16

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI: BJP spokesperson Shahnawaz Hussain received a threat letter on Friday, prompting the police to register a case under relevant sections of the Indian Penal Code at the North Avenue police station.

The sender, however, was yet to identified till this report was filed.

The sender of the hand-written Urdu letter, which was dotted with English words, claimed to be from the militant group ISIS. While they

Addressed to Shahnawaz Hussain, the letter warned that he was on the ISIS' radar. The police have registered a case

did admit to the sensitivity of the case, senior police officers said they suspected it might be a prank.

Addressed to Mr. Hussain, the letter warned that he was on the ISIS' radar and that the group was contemplating

where and when he should be attacked.

However, much of the letter included abuses for certain senior women leaders of the party.

The sender also picked on Baba Ramdev for his alleged inclination to use cow urine in some of his products.

A senior police officer said the letter was received at Mr. Hussain's official residence on Pandit Pant Marg around 11 a.m. on Friday.

Police were informed immediately and the letter was handed over to them.

'Gogoi flaming terrorism by targeting Hindi speakers'

COUNTER ATTACK BJP says CM's remarks against it led to assault on Hindi speakers

Rahul Karmakar
■ letters@hindustantimes.com

GUWAHATI: The BJP has accused Assam chief minister Tarun Gogoi of having flamed "terrorism" and violent conflicts by labelling the saffron party as a "party of Hindi-speaking leaders trying to invade Assam".

BJP said the repercussions of Gogoi's remarks were evident from an attack on two Hindi-speaking labourers by United Liberation Front of Asom-Independent (ULFA-I) shooters in Dibgurauh district on Monday.

Borrowing his Bihar counterpart Nitish Kumar's pre-poll 'Bihari versus bahaari (outsider)' campaign strategy, Gogoi had last week said that BJP was a Hindi-centric party of invaders. The fear of intruders, particularly Bangladeshis, often dictates politics in Assam where assembly elections are

CONTROVERSIAL TALE

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■ Gogoi, though, has denied targeting Hindi speakers, saying his statement had been twisted out of context.

due early next year.

"The chief minister, whose constitutional duty is to protect all communities, has made his intolerance of Hindi-speakers clear. He has also indirectly promoted terrorism, as the near-fatal attack on two persons yesterday (Monday) shows," BJP general secretary Vijay Gupta said.

The ULFA-I strike coincided with Mukesh Sahay taking

over as the Assam Police chief. But it was seen more as a message for the BJP after the chief minister's remark. Gogoi, though, has denied targeting Hindi speakers. "My statement has been twisted out of context," he said. Since 2000, the ULFA has killed more than 200 Hindi-speaking people, who it says are representative of "occupational India".

The Paresh Barua-led ULFA-I

❯ The CM, whose constitutional duty is to protect all communities, has made his intolerance of Hindi speakers clear. He has also indirectly promoted terrorism, as the near-fatal attack on the two people shows.

VIJAY GUPTA, general secretary , BJP

faction continues to target them.

The ULFA's attack on Hindi speakers was allegedly orchestrated to create space for Bangladeshi migrants, who have in the past few decades taken over menial jobs from the people of Bihar-origin.

Deporting Bangladeshis, mostly Bengali-speaking Muslims, is a primary polling poll promise of the BJP.

Indexicality and iconization have also given rise to social discord, political strife, the contestation of identity, and intolerance, the most recent example being an incident published in *The Telegraph* on July 29, 2016. According to a report titled "Poem back on wall" published by Pheroze L. Vincent, an Urdu couplet composed by Zeeshan Amjad, a student, was painted on the wall of a Delhi Jal Board office in Shahdara on May 20, 2016 by Swen Simon, a French artist and Akhlaq Ahmad, a Delhi-based fonts expert. The couplet runs as follows:

> *Dilli teraa ujaRnaa, aur phir ujaR ke basnaa*
> *Woh dil hai toone paayaa, saani nahii hai jiskaa,*
> (Delhi, you were ruined and bounced back; no city has a heart like yours.)

A report quoted the artist Akhlaq Ahmad as saying that the crowd shouted slogans like 'Jai Shri Ram' (Hail Lord Rama) while calling the artists 'Lahoris' or Pakistani agents —an emotional outburst premised on the hermeneutics of suspicion and a historically incorrect representation, which has disturbed the religious equilibrium[11] and delaïcized the secular and integrative credentials of Urdu.

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[11] Some have accused Urdu of being responsible for the partition of India (Faruqi 1994). However, it should be pointed out that any argument regarding the use of Urdu in the creation of Pakistan is premised on Benedict Anderson's idea of imagined communities, which has acquired wide currency in studies on the making of the political imagination. According to Anderson, convergence of print technology and capitalism, called "print capitalism" in the colonial period provided a basis for communities and was important in the creation of nationalism. Inasmuch as language is the primary basis of a community and a nation is essentially a community of people who communicate through the same "print language," Urdu as a language for Muslims was used to create a religious nation called Pakistan. Hence the widespread perception that Urdu was a determinant of nationality, along with religion, and therefore not only catalyzed the partition of India, but was also instrumental to the creation of Pakistan. No doubt, after 1857, Sir Syed Ahmad Khan and his followers were anxious to shake off the taint of disloyalty by working with the British they were energetic in demanding representation for Muslims and this became a prelude to partition. However, to assume that Urdu has been the language of the Pakistan movement is an overgeneralization. For such an argument not only suffers from a lack historical accuracy, but also falls victim to reductionism.