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The Language Question in the EU and India

The main objective of the paper is to undertake a brief comparative study of the language question in the EU and India in order to analyze the role of power in the formulation of language policies. The basic ground for comparison is provided by their similar political and linguistic situations. Apart from being two of the largest linguistic communities in the world, they exhibit stark similarities in their political structure and objectives, as both of them function on principles of democracy and 'unity in diversity', and pursue common goals of bringing equality (including linguistic equality) to their citizens and protection of linguistic minorities. As the research into linguistic policy and planning is driven by examining 'domains of enquiries', the basic research approach is to analyze how far the objectives of these polities correspond to the measures undertaken to achieve them.

Keywords: *language planning, language policy, Indian linguistic policy, European linguistic policy, European Union.*

Jezikovno vprašanje v EU in v Indiji

V tem prispevku je avtor predstavil kratko primerjalno študijo o jezikovnem vprašanju v Evropski Uniji in v Indiji, v kateri je raziskoval, kolikšna je vloga moči pri oblikovanju jezikovnih politik. Indija in EU imata podobne politične in jezikovne razmere in to podobnost predstavlja osnovo za primerjavo. Poleg tega sta to dve med večjimi jezikovnimi skupnostmi na svetu, ki sta si podobni tudi po politični strukturi, saj obe delujeta na osnovi demokratičnih načel in po načelu "skupnosti v različnosti". Poleg tega si obe prizadevata za enakost (vključno z jezikovno enakostjo) med državljani in zaščito jezikovnih manjšin. Prispevek se osredotoča na vprašanje, v kolikšni meri se cilji na področju jezikovnih politik in jezikovnega načrtovanja skladajo z ukrepi, katerih namen je v osnovi doseči omenjene cilje.

Ključne besede: *jezikovno načrtovanje, jezikovna politika, indijska jezikovna politika, evropska jezikovna politika, Evropska Unija.*

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1. Introduction

If anyone spoke earlier of European integration, they had to face the challenging question of whose integration was being talked about, for the former European Union (EU) constitutions themselves pursued the rhetoric of European integration while at the same time maintaining the idea of preservation of national identities, and even the most vociferous supporters of European integration found it hard to deal with this *contradictio in adjectio*. 1 December 2009, however, marked a turning point in this series of events because – after nearly a decade of negotiations – the Treaty of Lisbon entered into force: this was the day that was hailed as a "the beginning of a new era of European integration" (Waterfield 2009). This was an historic development in the sense that the new treaty promised to convert the former seemingly futile efforts at integration into a movement. Although the aforementioned treaty has not quite been able to solve the issue of democracy deficit (The Economist 2012), one cannot deny – considering the measures undertaken by the EU in the fields of education and culture – that the EU has made sincere efforts to keep its promise alive, notwithstanding the severe economic crisis that has been looming for years.

As the language question[1] is an important aspect of this movement, the extent to which it has contributed and can contribute to achieving the goal of integration, which the EU has been striving for through a multitude of programs such as the Erasmus Programme, The European Year of Languages (2001) and The European Year of Intercultural Dialogue (2008), among others, will be examined. Keeping such programs in view, it may be useful to assess to what extent the EU can learn in this field from other societies where coexistence of numerous linguistic communities has been a tradition. This requires a critical and comparative study of language policies in these polities as well as a systematic assessment of the relevant political-linguistic research.

This is precisely the focal point of the present paper, in which a comparative study of the language question in the EU and India is undertaken. In this context I want to examine the nature of the language question; i.e. to find out how far these two polities have been able to achieve the goals they have set for themselves as democratic polities and to what extent their language policies have helped protect their linguistic diversity. This inquiry is driven by an analysis of the role of political power in these polities in the context of language policy and planning.

2. Grounds for Comparison

The first problem that such a comparative study is confronted with is that of the grounds of comparison. One may ask on what grounds the EU and India can be compared, as their fundamental political constitutions are entirely different. While India is a democratic republic constituting 28 states, the EU is a supranational

structure. India has its own constitution which is respected, valid and in force throughout its territory, whereas the different countries of the EU are entirely sovereign states, and the persisting aforementioned democracy deficit continues to be a barrier for the EU. The sovereignty of different member states is taken as grounds for underestimating the influence on such policies.

This conundrum of fundamental comparability can be solved using three arguments. Firstly, a comparative study of two polities should not merely be reduced to questions of formal political structure. It is equally important to focus on the similarities in goals and objectives and the EU and India have these in abundance. Not only do they vow to achieve and/or maintain integration, but they also pursue the goal of protecting linguistic minorities and maintaining language diversity. Apart from that, the language ecologies of the EU and India exhibit striking similarities. Both of them have almost two dozen official languages (the EU has 24, while India has 23) and follow the three-language formula as a policy to promote multilingualism and maintain linguistic diversity. The increasing dominance of English is a problem that both polities have in common, as they both consider their goal to be achieving linguistic equality. Thirdly, and most importantly, one should also consider the relation of discretionary powers of the center and its states on a particular issue. While on a central level, the EU and India do formulate language policies, it is eventually at the discretion of the respective federal state to implement these policies or not. Therefore, in the context of language and education policy, EU and India have a similar center-state relationship, and this provides an ideal background for comparison.

3. Theory, Methods and Approaches

While introducing the readers to the theories and methods used in the field of language policy, Ricento (2006, 10) states that there is no overarching theory of language policy and planning, in large part because of the complexity of the issues that involve language in society. As researchers and policy analysts, Ricento (ibid.) adds, we ask basic and varied questions about events in the world, and while in some cases it is possible to develop a theory or model for a specific phenomenon based on triangulation of a preponderance of the best available empirical evidence,[2] designing a general theory applicable to all phenomena may be impossible.

Keeping this important postulate in mind, I shall use the term approach or approaches instead of theory or method, and shall refrain from trying to develop my own theory or method. This decision, however, should not be understood as an evasion of theory. The basic approach shall, at first, be the following: as the EU and India are based on the principles and ethos of democracy, the ideal way of conducting a brief comparative analysis would be to examine how far their objectives as democratic polities correspond to the measures undertaken to

achieve such objectives in the field of language policy. Their precise objectives are to be concluded from the self-perception and vision of these polities as mentioned in their respective constitutions or treaties.

Having deduced the objectives, the next step will be to expose the inconsistencies in policy implementation. This will be done by focusing on the lack of harmony between goals and the measures undertaken to accomplish them. The domains of inquiry in this case consist of the following guiding questions:

a) How many languages are there in the EU and India, how many of them are recognized as official, and what is relative status of official languages among themselves?
b) What is state of linguistic minorities in the EU and India? To what extent are they actually protected?
c) How does political power influence the formulation of language policies in the EU and India?[3]

The official discourses of the EU and India will be analyzed – as part of these questions – using critical discourse analysis in order to expose the hitherto latent power structures behind the decisive political processes. The guiding principle is borrowed from van Dijk (2012, 3) as I approach the language question by focusing on the role of discourse in the (re)production of dominance, where dominance is to be understood – as defined by van Dijk (ibid.) – as the exercise of social power by elites, institutions, or groups that results in social inequality, including political, cultural, class, ethnic, racial or gender inequality.

However, first of all, I would like to briefly discuss the complexity and vagueness of the terminology regarding the field of language policy and planning, and cite the reason behind my decision to choose "language question" as a good alternative.

4. Terminological Aspects

Terminological vagueness seems to the biggest problem of all newborn disciplines. This fits into the context of the area being investigated in this paper, as during the inception phase of this discipline there was a state of indecisiveness over how the newborn discipline, which deals with the interplay of language and power, should be termed. Studer et al. (2009, 7) point out that while looking for an apt term for this discipline, one finds a multitude of contradictory interpretations describing the terms as multi-faceted and multi-layered political, sociological, philosophical and cultural constructs. Terms like language politics, linguistic politics, language policy, language planning, language policy and planning, and language policy-planning (Studer et al. 2009, 11) have been suggested to describe the various aspects of the discipline concerning the interplay of language and politics. Blommaert (1997, 1) talks of the dilemma of linguists at a conference

focusing on this topic and elucidates how difficult it was to coin a term for the interrelationship between language and power:

> When we decided to hold the 1995 Annual Conference of the Linguistic Society of Belgium on the topic of political linguistics, we knew that we were doing something dangerous. We were toying with the terminology. Our intention was to have a conference in which the interplay between language, in its most general sense and politics, in its most general sense, could be discussed. Neither did we want to stick to more or less established disciplinary identifications, such as 'critical linguistics', 'critical sociolinguistics' or other 'critical' subdisciplines dealing with language and politics / … / The most common denominator for the topics and approaches presented by the scholars who attended the conference, was language politics / … /.

An important factor in the nomenclature of the discipline concerning the interplay of language and power has been the issue of its political neutrality. While today applied linguistics by means of critical discourse studies has established itself as a discipline with undaunted political inclination, during its inception phase such politicization put linguists in a topsy-turvy position. Blommaert (ibid.) talks in this regard of a gradual paradigm shift in the attitude of linguistics towards the political neutrality of their subject:

> This political dimension is probably a new element in the discourse of language planning. In the past, the tradition of studies on language planning was often marked by an assumption of political and ideological neutrality, by rationalism and by a belief that an objective inventory of real linguistic needs would yield the best language plan for any given country. The failure of many rationally designed language plans, the upsurge of nationalism and identity politics (resulting in heightened sensitivity to 'linguistic rights'), and the political agenda set by the new South African Government after the fall of Apartheid, have all demonstrated how secondary purely scientific considerations in determining the most appropriate sociolinguistic profile for a society / … / Language Planning is, perhaps more than any other domain of present-day sociolinguistics, one field in which linguists have to think and analyze politically.

Blommaert's appeal to the other linguists is relevant insofar as it can be interpreted in terms that paradigms can be de- and reconstructed, and there is nothing inappropriate in linguists taking a political stand if required. While Blommaert (2009) does make a valuable contribution here, the fact is that the problem of terminology remains unsolved. As the general understanding of the terms "language policy", "language planning", and "language policy and planning" is marred by their ambiguity, one needs a term that can effortlessly point out the problematic of the language-power relationship. The term "language politics" seems to perform the latter desired function better, but it does away with the former meaning, i.e., that of policy and planning. This impasse is overcome by Sarangi's (2009, 2) following postulate:

> I use the term language question to refer to those multiple domains where language and politics interact and result in tangible historical and political outcome of a certain

> kind. The language question should not be reduced simply to the problem of language planning, policy, and programmes but should take into account the ideological power of languages(s) and its various forms of domination and subordination.

A thorough reading of this postulate does give the impression that even Sarangi (ibid.) thinks of the terms "policy" and "planning" as being politically neutral, but on the other hand, she does come up with a suggestion that solves the problem of terminological vagueness, as the term "language question" undeniably possesses a greater semantic width than "language policy" or "language planning", and retains the component of controversiality while not doing away with the sense that it concerns questions of policy and planning, too.

5. The Language Question in the EU

5.1 The EU's Self-Perception and Vision

Although financial concerns do play a pivotal role in the EU, it is more than just an institution dedicated to economic cooperation. It is true that after World War II, the EU began – in the form of the European Coal and Steel Community – as an initiative of six countries (Belgium, France, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and West Germany) that shared control of coal and steel in order to ensure the prevention of further armed conflicts and to secure a more peaceful future for Europe. Now however it cooperates on an array of issues (such as the environment, transport, unemployment, etc.), and most important of all, it focuses on preserving European culture, which implies the preservation of its languages, too.

In order to understand the EU, it is important to investigate how the EU perceives itself. Such an understanding can be construed by means of an analysis of the documents that define the EU, e.g., the treaties and the charters. These texts are vital for understanding the EU, because it is through them that the EU presents itself to the world. An apt example of such a defining document would be the Treaty on European Union (also known as Treaty of Maastricht) from 1992 that marked the foundation of the EU in its present-day form.

The Treaty on European Union (TEU) describes freedom, democracy, the rule of law, and human rights as the founding stones of the Union. Furthermore, it emphasizes that "the protection of the rights and interests of the nationals of its member states should be guaranteed" (Article B, TEU) and strengthened through "the introduction of European citizenship as an important objective of the union" (Article B and Article 8, TEU).

A similar goal is pursued by the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, in that it states in its preamble that the "people of Europe are determined to share a peaceful future by focusing on a Union closer than ever". The decision to share a peaceful future can be understood as an indirect reference to

the unrest of the past and the desire to avoid such troubles in future. This preamble declares that the Union will be founded on the values of human dignity, freedom, equality, and solidarity. To preserve and develop these values is its first target, and the preamble of the Charter maintains this should be done while respecting the diversity of the cultures and traditions of the peoples of Europe as well as the national identities of the member states. As a first step to achieving this objective, the Union recognizes the fundamental rights of the people. In order to grant its citizens equality, the Charter in its Article 21.1 imposes a prohibition against discrimination of any kind and that includes a prohibition against discrimination based on language, too.

5.2 Linguistic Minorities in the EU

One can conclude from the texts of the Treaty on European Union and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union that the EU seeks to eradicate discrimination and guarantee equality. However, the problem arises when it comes to implementing these ideas, as the EU's language policy suffers from several inconsistencies. The EU's objectives and the measures taken to fulfill them do not correspond to each other in the desired way.

The most noteworthy example would be that of the linguistic minorities. Although the EU has the protection of linguistic minorities and their rights as its goal, it does not grant protection to migrant languages. The binding document in this context, The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ECRML), clearly states that it does not protect the rights of migrants:

> For the purposes of this charter:
> "regional or minority languages" means languages that are:
>
> 1) traditionally used within a given territory of a State by nationals of that State who form a group numerically smaller than the rest of the State's population; and
> 2) different from the official language(s) of that State;
>
> it does not include either dialects of the official language(s) of the State or the languages of migrants;

One cannot help wondering why the most important document would decidedly reject certain languages when the guiding principle is to secure equality for all. Studer et al. (2009, 65) paraphrase this problematic accurately:

> [The] Charter for Regional and Minority Languages (1992) /…/ explicitly excludes migrant languages and language varieties from the scope of its application. The Charter carries a potential for controversy in that it is highly ideological in its preamble but very limited in actual scope. As a result, the current discourse stressing the necessity of citizens' mobility contradicts the actual legal situation of migrant communities. In the Charter, for example, many large and established migrant communities, such as the Turks in Germany or the Albanians in Switzerland, are not protected, while historically older language communities, which may be much smaller in size than migrant communities (e.g. German speakers in Hungary), enjoy full benefits.

This state of disparity – as mentioned in the analysis presented above – clearly indicates that the EU has yet to fulfill its promise of bringing equality and ending discrimination. The key expression that shapes the discourse of dominance here is "traditionally used" languages. Simply by using one word (traditionally), the policy makers have succeeded in excluding migrant languages from the ECRML's scope, because – as a rule of thumb – migrant languages tend to have a shorter history in the country of migration. Even if the firm supporters of the ECRML would argue along the lines that the Turkish language in Germany does not have a tradition as old as the German language in Hungary, they might want to rethink their standpoint, as there are also other languages that have a long tradition and are still unprotected, e.g., the Arbëresh language in Italy.[4]

5.3 Official Languages and Their Relative Status

A biased protection policy for regional and minority languages is not the only problem that shapes the language question in the EU. Even the so-called majority languages become victims of discrimination at the hands of policy makers, and this situation is only worsened by the ever-increasing dominance of English. The EU has 24 official languages[5], but to speak of them as equal would be an inappropriate description. To give an example, the official documents of the European Commission are first produced in English, French, and German, the so-called vehicular languages, and then translated into other languages. However, due to financial constraints and lack of time, only relatively few working documents are translated into all languages. The European Commission tends to use English, French, and German as working languages, whereas the European Parliament provides translations in various languages according to the needs of its members (European Commission 2013).

5.4 Political Power and Policy-Formulation

The third and last aspect of the language question in the EU concerns the role of the European Commission in formulating language policy. The monopolistic role of the European Commission in realms of language policy, as Studer et al. (2009, 66) postulate, may lead to grave consequences:

> Although the strong restriction of the procedural process is aimed at limiting controversy and conflict, it is precisely this strongly formalized and circular character of the policy-making procedures that bears fruit for controversy with regards to formation of policy dealing with multilingualism. Due to its restrictive character, language policy-making procedures allow for potential of biased policy leading to conflicts of interests and a degree of dependence on European Commission approval of proposed drafts as well as to very limited communication possibilities outside the formalized structure.

One cannot deny, therefore, that there is always the danger that language policy could be instrumentalized by the European Commission to serve its purposes, or, as Studer et al. (ibid.) put it, to "serve ideologies compatible with Commission values".

6. The Language Question in India

The Republic of India has a federal structure and invites comparison with the EU in terms of political and linguistic situation, as stated in the introductory chapter above. It consists of 28 states[6] and seven federal territories (also called 'union territories')[7] as compared to the 28 member states of the EU. Both the polities have an enormous linguistic diversity: While the EU has over 150 regional and minority languages apart from the current 24 official languages,[8] India has – according to the webpage of the reference work 'Ethnologue' that intends to catalog all the known living languages of the world – 447 living languages (Ethnologue 2013a). These languages belong to five different language families, namely Indo-Aryan, Dravidian, Austro-Asiatic, Tibeto-Burman, and Andamanese.[9]

When it comes to having multiple official languages, India is not far behind the EU. India has two trans-regional official languages, namely Hindi and English, and in addition to this, has 21 other official regional languages.[10] The very first thought that may strike someone dealing with the Indian linguistic situation is why only 22 Indian languages have had the privilege of becoming official, when there are hundreds of other languages. The answer is a complex one and needs explication, which is why it is important to refer to India's view of itself as a modern state.

6.1 India's Self-Perception and Vision

Like the EU, the Republic of India sees modern democratic values as its founding cornerstones, as one can infer from the preamble to the Constitution of India mentioned below:

> We, the people of India, having solemnly resolved to constitute India into a sovereign socialist secular democratic republic and to secure to all its citizens:
>
> - Justice, social, economic and political;
> - Liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship;
> - Equality of status and of opportunity;
>
> and to promote among them all
>
> - Fraternity assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity and integrity of the Nation;

As in the EU's case, the Indian constitution talks of bringing sociopolitical and economic justice and equal status to all its citizens. This would imply the equality of languages, too, which is sadly not the case because of the problem mentioned

above. In spite of the huge linguistic diversity, only 22 Indian languages have official status.[11]

6.2 Official Languages and Their Relative Status

Currently, India has 23 official languages, but having so many official languages was not the original plan of Indian language policy. The government of India tried to implement Hindi as the sole official language of the union, and the non-Hindi speaking states were given a time-span of 15 years – starting from 26 January 1950, the day the Indian Constitution came into effect – to learn Hindi, to which the non-Hindi speaking states originally agreed, but later they refused to accept the imposition of Hindi (Ram 1978, 1012). This policy to implement the language of the majority as the national language can be understood better when put into a broader perspective, as done by the following postulate of Kaplan (2001, 1):

> While the European nations had had centuries to evolve their national linguistic models, it was assumed that the newly emergent polities could transplant and evolve similar structures in merely decades / … / additionally, since no one had ever kept an account of the actual processes and costs involved in the development of the European models, it was not recognized that full implementation of the new processes were beyond the means of what were at the time among the poorest communities in the world.

As should be clear from Kaplan's postulate, any attempts at direct emulation of European linguistic models were bound to fail. The consequences of this problematic paradigm in the Indian case were fierce, as it led to widespread protests in the southern states (Chandhoke 2008):

> Confrontation was pre-empted by postponing the implementation of Hindi as the national language till 1965. But by 1963 the anti-Hindi agitation in Tamil Nadu assumed appalling proportions. Sections of the Constitution were publicly set on fire, and student unions and political parties joined the massive protests against the decision to impose Hindi on non-Hindi speaking populations. January 26 1965, the day, when the switch to Hindi was to be implemented, was marked by public mourning, hoisting of black flags, rioting, police firing, killings, and self-immolation. The central government had no option except to assure states that Hindi would not be imposed, and that they could continue to use English for official purposes.

As Thapar (1967, 1686) aptly described it, "language or linguism carries within it too many undefined frustrations, superstitions, fears and aspirations to be played around by policy-makers who live for the moment". The Indian Government had to bow to the demands and vehement agitation of the Tamil-speaking community, and as the government could not venerate only Tamil as another official language, it decided to include 12 other Indian languages (apart from Hindi and Tamil) in the 8th Schedule, the part of the Indian Constitution listing the official languages of the state (see footnote 11), in order to avoid agitations and protests from other linguistic communities that might have disliked

the favoring of Tamil over them. This list added one more language (Sindhi) in 1967, three more (Konkani, Manipuri, Nepali) in 1992 and four more (Bodo, Dogri, Maithili, and Santhali) in 2003.

The privilege of being included in the 8th Schedule means that these languages acquire a certain degree of cultural capital, since they play a crucial role in social mobility (Sarangi 2009, 27). This has led to a neck-to-neck rivalry amongst speakers of various languages (e.g., Bhotia, Lepcha, Mizo, Nicobari, Sambhalpuri, Tulu et al.) to get their languages enlisted in the 8th Schedule in order to achieve official status (Sarangi 2009, 28). The most relevant statement in this context comes from Saxena (1997, 272), who postulates that there are no demographic, cultural, or linguistic criteria for inclusion or non-inclusion in the 8th Schedule, and that it has evidently depended largely on the ability of a language group to influence the political process.

6.3 Political Power and Policy Formulation

The perils of Indian language policy are best described by the way in which the Government of India views and describes its language policy. The following is an excerpt from the overview of language policy as mentioned on the website of the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) of India (Ministry of Human Resource Development 2013):

> The Language Policy of India relating to the use of languages in administration, education, judiciary, legislature, mass communication, etc., is pluralistic in its scope. It is both language-development oriented and language-survival oriented. The policy is intended to encourage the citizens to use their mother tongue in certain delineated levels and domains through some gradual processes, but the stated goal of the policy is to help all languages to develop into fit vehicles of communication at their designated areas of use, irrespective of their nature or status like major, minor, or tribal languages. The policy is accommodative and ever-evolving, through mutual adjustment, consensus, and judicial processes.

This statement is in itself a dominance-generating discourse. The talk of "accommodative and ever-evolving (policy) through mutual adjustment, consensus and judicial processes" can be seen as sugarcoating a policy that has never existed in the first place. Wodak (1989, xv) speaks in this context of the necessity for demystifying social processes to make mechanisms of manipulation, discrimination, demagogy, and propaganda transparent. I understand the above-mentioned sociopolitical discourse as a part of social processes, too, and would hence try to demystify it. The "mutual adjustment" that is being addressed here should not be understood as if all the linguistic communities lived together in perfect harmony and have always been willing to adjust to the needs of each other. What these words successfully manage to hide is the power politics and struggle between different linguistic communities since India's independence.

6.4 Linguistic Minorities in India

The situation of linguistic minorities in India can be plainly described as abysmal. A perfect example of the Indian Government's careless attitude towards its linguistic minorities is demonstrated by the very fact that on the same website where it declares its official language policy there is no mention of the languages of the Andaman.[12] This is really a sad state of affairs and demonstrates that negligible political power amounts to negligible recognition, protection, and maintenance. Some languages were able to make it to the 8th Schedule, but this happened only after the integrity of the state was put at stake and, as Thapar (1967, 1686) puts it, India was forced to choose between Hindi or unity. Thus, one finds that the language policy of India, which the MHRD describes as "ever-evolving", is nothing but a mere interplay of power hierarchies and identity politics. An appropriate description of the Indian language policy is given by Gupta & Abbi (1995, 4), in which they postulate that it is led by an assimilationist ideology:

> Perhaps the ideology of assimilation is at the back of the ES (Eighth Schedule). Constitution makers, perhaps, felt that the only way to contain the multilingual giant was to create a short, select list of 'major', 'dominant' Indian languages which shall take over, one after the other, all public domains of education, administration and so on, and that in due course of time, the 1600 odd other languages will be submerged under these mainstream languages. The assimilationist goal / … / will swallow the small fish – the languages not included in the ES. Either these small fish will have to grow big and strong enough to fight their way into the ES or major Indian languages (Languages of the ES) will take them over.

An apt example of a "small fish" turning into a "big fish" would be the inclusion of the Maithili language, which was long considered a dialect of Hindi (and thus ignored), in the 8th Schedule after its speakers pressurized the central government for years for this cause. This political move is surprising, though, as there are two other major languages spoken in Bihar (Bhojpuri and Magahi) that are still considered dialects of Hindi despite being spoken by millions of people, and which are yet to receive official status.[13]

It goes without saying that such an assimilationist language policy driven by power politics has been highly detrimental to the smaller and minority languages. According to a recent nationwide survey called the People's Linguistic Survey of India, India has lost over 220 languages in last 50 years (Lalmalsawma 2013). Eminent linguists like Skutnabb-Kangas (2009, 1) have gone as far as calling the Indian language policies "a crime against humanity" or "linguistic genocide". There are still a number of languages in India spoken by only a very small number of speakers and which need to be protected. The UNESCO Atlas of World's Languages in Danger (UNESCO 2013) counts as many as 194 Indian languages that can be classified as vulnerable, definitely endangered, critically endangered or severely endangered.

This grave linguistic situation is a scathing indictment of Indian language policies and proves that they are definitely not "language survival-oriented" as proclaimed by the Indian Ministry of Human Resource Development (2013). They have not been able to secure sociopolitical justice for a number of Indians, nor have they managed to bring equal status to them. There is a great divide between the measures and goals as set by the constitution of India.

7. Comparison and Conclusions

The present paper has looked at the language question in the EU and India in the context of the following issues: a) official languages and their relative status, b) linguistic minorities, and c) political power and policy formulation. As should be clear from the analysis conducted above, political power defines and shapes the language question in the EU as well as India. There are certain clear inconsistencies to be noted. Policies in these polities tend to be formulated from the perspective of the dominant group or institution and consequently are (or are not) met with resistance. Governing bodies in the EU as well as India operate with discourses that either tend to cover up the real problems through mystification (see the official statement by the MHRD), or are instrumentalized to subtly generate dominance, as evident from the exclusion of migrant languages or varieties in the ECRML.

Certain languages, which of course belong to the dominant groups, have managed to gain a politically legitimized status that acts as a tool to assert their dominance and reproduces it in that their certain chosen vehicular languages or official languages make it imperative within the given political territory that they are better protected and favored in education, the media, and other relevant spheres due to the prestigious status they have. Migrant and minority languages are at the receiving end of such policies, as due to their negligible participation in the political processes, their cause is seldom promoted.

It can, therefore, be concluded that the measures taken by these polities do not quite realize the goals set by their constitutions or treaties. It becomes evident from this study that the EU and India need to take stronger measures and reconfigure their power hierarchies in order to deal with the persisting language question. As India has its own set of problems, it is difficult to say if it can currently offer an apt solution to solve the European language question. However, the very fact that India has maintained its unity despite inner differences shows that the EU can still take a cue from the greater will to integration which India has demonstrated.

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Notes

[1] To avoid terminological conflicts and vagueness, I borrow the term "language question" from Sarangi (2009, 1–2), who uses this term to "refer to those multiple domains where language and politics interact and result in tangible historical and political outcome of a certain kind". A detailed analysis of the terminological aspects is given in the 4th section of this paper.

[2] An example of such a model, as mentioned by Ricento (ibid.), would be the Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (GIDS), which lists eight stages of a regional or minority language in competition with (an)other dominant language(s) for survival. GIDS was developed by the eminent US-American sociolinguist Joshua Fishman in his book "Reversing Language Shift: Theory and Practice of Assistance to Threatened Languages". See Fishman (1991) for details.

[3] These questions are addressed under the sub-sections Official languages and their status, Linguistic minorities and Political power and policy formulation, respectively.

[4] Arbëresh is a variety of Albanian spoken in southern Italy by groups of Albanians who have migrated to the south of Italy in different waves since the fifteenth century (Perta 2008, 1217). The Ethnologue website mentions that the language has no official status (Ethnologue 2013e), and Perta (2008, 1218) notes that these dialects are experiencing the threat of language decay and, in some cases, of death, because of the intense contact with Italian and surrounding Italo-Romance dialects.

[5] The official languages of the EU are as follows: Bulgarian, Croatian, Czech, Danish, Dutch, English, Estonian, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Hungarian, Irish, Italian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Maltese, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Slovak, Slovene, Spanish, and Swedish (European Commission 2013).

[6] The names of the Indian states are as follows: Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Goa, Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Orissa, Punjab, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Tripura, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and West Bengal.

[7] The following federal territories are defined as union territories: The Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Chandigarh, Dadra and Nagar Haweli, Daman and Diu, Lakshadweep, National Capital Territory of Delhi and Pondicherry.

8 These numbers are taken from the European Commission's report called "Many Tongues, One Family. Languages in the European Union". See European Commission (2004).

[9] The renowned Indian linguist Anvita Abbi, noted for her work on the languages of Andaman, talks of the existence of a sixth language family in Indian in her paper "Is Great Andamanese Genealogically and Typologically Distinct from Onge and Jarawa?". See Abbi 2008.

[10] The names of official Indian languages other than Hindi are: Assamese, Bengali, Bodo, Dogri, Gujrati, Kannada, Kashmiri, Konkani, Maithili, Malayalam, Marathi, Meitei, Nepali, Oriya, Punjabi, Santali, Sanskrit, Sindhi, Tamil, Telugu, and Urdu (See Ministry of Law and Justice 2013 in bibliography). English has had the status of "associate official language" since 1967 (Sarangi 2009, 27).

[11] A language is declared official after it has been listed in the 8th Schedule of the constitution. It is to be noted that although English has the status of "associate official language" in India, it is not included in the 8th Schedule, as it is not an Indian language (Sarangi 2009, 27).

[12] This information was last updated on 7 November 2013 (see Ministry of Human Resource Development 2013).

[13] The number of speakers of Magahi was 14 million in 2001 (Ethnologue 2013c), while Maithili had 30 million speakers in 2000 (Ethnologue 2013d). Bhojpuri's figures are the greatest with a total of 37.8 million speakers for the year 2001 (Ethnologue 2013b). Maithili was conferred official status in 2003.

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