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REIMAGINING ENGLISH HEGEMONY: THE CASE OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN 21ST CENTURY INDIA

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The paper examines how new age pedagogies and neoliberal policies consciously work towards 'naturalizing' English language's hegemony in higher education (HE) in India. An ethnographic study the paper foregrounds the precarious positioning of non-English Indian languages vis a vis the over-sweeping discourses of internationalization and education as job/skill oriented. Hegemony of English in the current times is coupled with a restructuring of non-English language departments as well as fleeting market demands for human capital. The paper also brings into question the role of internet and related technologies in reorganizing the linguistic dynamics of HE. Instead of democratizing, internet produces new monopolies in knowledge production, controls knowledge traffic from global North to South and further legitimizes the language hegemony. The paper argues that, in the last two decades, the neoliberal rupture has been leading HE institutes to a death of vernaculars like situation within their physical, cultural and academic spaces.

Introduction

Language preferences in the developmental and postcolonial contexts of Asia and Africa reflect critical ideological processes embedded in economic and power relations. Within these contexts linguistic choices are often renegotiated to condition their social systems including education. The "uncritical" acceptance of English as a universal lingua franca (Phillipson 2017, 313) tempts to override the cultural and linguistic diversity of these regions. The hegemony of English in Indian context owes primarily to the early colonial interventions that remained more or less uncontested in the postcolonial times.

This paper examines a radical reproduction of language ideologies in sites of higher education (HE) in India amidst the ongoing techno-globalization. It foregrounds English language's

hegemony as naturalized in nuanced forms and pushed under "covert language policies" of neoliberalism (Piller and Cho 2013, 23). HE institutions in general have a catalyst role in language shifts among students from vernacular to English. Through ethnography of a private autonomous college in a South Indian metropolis the paper observes a radical linguistic reorganisation of the campus undertaken in the past decade. Drawing from the erstwhile imperial language ideologies that postcolonial governments further hegemonised the language hegemony is further aggravated by the neoliberal policies and administration of HE institutions as well as the changing market demands. The ongoing global discourse labels English as an 'essential' connect across the regional, national differences.

The language situation elicits an array of questions including that of inadvertence and exclusion of vernaculars, language transitions of individuals and communities, the socio-political dynamics of knowledge production and distribution, and that of job markets, social mobility and status enhancements. The paper seeks to elucidate how the global, empowering effect of English in the cultural-institutional milieus is prominent in conditioning the subjects' choice of language.

India which has more than 500 languages and over 2000 dialects still operational in its different parts has the third largest number of people capable of speaking in English, after US and UK. While it is estimated that over 20 percent Indians have exposure to English at various levels, Singh and Iyer (2016) suggests that "at least 5 percent of the population (almost seventy million people- that is, double the population of Canada and three times that of Australia) have considerable, even near-native, fluency in English" (212). The reinvention of language hegemony in the current times of techno-globalisation provides a paradigm shift in the linguistic mosaic of the subcontinent. Unlike in the erstwhile periods shifting linguistic allegiance towards English is seen as natural and normal.

Linguistic hegemony

In the hyper-multilingual composition of Indian geography language is central in the imagination of nation (Ahmad 2005). The linguistic hegemony of English is closely associated with the evolution of the colonial and nationalist project of reforming and

modernizing India since early to mid 19th century. While acquiescence of a linguistic order with English at the top was central to British Raj in India, as subaltern theorists like Ranajit Guha (1997) and Parta Chatterjee (1994) have argued, the colonial policies were imperialist in nature, implying there was absence of cultural exchanges between the colonizer and the colonized. In the imperialist policies, Guha argued, the dominance of British Raj and its lack of persuasion was evident. The imperialist language policies had the support of indigenous elites who had internalized the theory of Western superiority in the epistemic and material realms (Mukherjee 2009; Naregal 2001; Sen 2009). Education policies aimed to produce a social class whose "identity was partly constructed by the English language and whose access to the language was mediated by education" (LaDousa, 2014: 18). Access to English helped this small section of elites to secure the gate keeping role by gaining specialized access to the venues of production. While this remained so, the political independence of the 1940s opened the opportunity for "the Indian independence leaders to usher in a new hegemonic project" (Sonntag 2009, 10).

The new cultural hegemony inaugurated larger discourses of official language, national language and, in the same vein, attempts to standardize the vernaculars (Sonntag 2003, 2009). In a Gramscian analysis "linguistic hegemony exerts and legitimates power by presenting the dominant language as an instrument, or tool" (Suarez 2002, p. 514). Linguistic hegemony operates by drawing upon discourses of individual and national progress and secures the consent of subalterns in the due process (Sonntag 2009; Ives 2004). The social, political and economic realms are further ordered to suit this linguistic hegemony. In the context of the 2006 National Knowledge Commission's recommendations to introduce English language from class 1 an author argues that what was considered in the past as part of "imperial [language] policies" have come back as "solutions" to revive the society from the gross inequalities and to gather "social and economic opportunities" (Rao 2008, p. 63).

Hegemony of English has devastating impact on the local and indigenous languages, knowledge systems and cultures (Canagarajah 2005; Phillipson 1992; XXXX 2019). However, to place English in square opposition to other languages and cultures

would not be fully justified. The empowering and integrative (Loomba 1998; Warschauer 2000) effect of English coincides with the "Indianisation of English" (Kachru 1983) which nevertheless has a disempowering effect on other languages and their speakers. As Mahesh Elkunchwar, an eminent Marathi writer, observed in the context of Indian English literature's dominance over other language writings, that "Bhashas remain unimportant not because literature of any merit is not produced in them. They are unimportant because the people who speak them are unimportant" (Singh and Iyer 2016, 213).

The hegemony of English has taken massive strides in South Asia in the wake of globalization's impact on its cultural and physical geographies. As opposed to its identity as a language of elites and upper class English now symbolizes the class aspirations of non-elites and subalterns (Hamid and Jahan 2019). This is despite structural disconnections like caste, class, region etc., still relevant and operating in its social worlds. The appropriation of English into education and the myriad social sites are looked upon as essential to realize the class aspirations of the subalterns and the marginalized.

As a "language for international development" English has a central role in educational policies of non-English speaking locations (Seargeant and Erling 2011). Global ideologies of language and employment opportunities have changed so much that English language is deemed inevitable for communities and individuals to be not "excluded from the global distribution of wealth and welfare" (2011, 251-52). The intimate association of English with everyday lives in non-English geographies has far reaching consequences. Among others it "threaten(s) to contaminate or wipe out local languages and cultures . . . (and) skews the socio-economic order in favour of those who are proficient in English" (Murray 2006, 204). The paper revisits this linguistic hegemony and its increasing moral weight on the Indian common sense: a trend exacerbated with economic globalisation through new age pedagogies.

The paper results from fieldwork and interactions during 2017-19. Started as a seminar paper in early 2017 on language movements it later developed into an ethnographic project on language choices. It takes everyday lives within the campus, its

linguistic structuring and the permeating ideologies, as points of departure and its problematic. My positioning vis a vis the research needs to be specified here as I worked in similar environment. While this warranted a conscious distancing from my own subjective presumptions, pre-knowledge of the space, its epistemic frameworks as well as the dynamics of HE system in the country definitely helped me in designing the research and in fixing the themes,

As Carolyn Ellis (2004) sought to understand the role of "I" in ethnography, that, ethnographic projects are "relational, about the other and the 'I' in interaction" (Ellis 2004, xix). Ethnographic research elicits questions of researchers' subjectivity and the power imbalance between the researcher and the subjects. The power dynamics may potentially lead to the othering of the researched which could be avoided through greater awareness of and a constant reengagement with the researcher's own positionality (Lønsmann 2016). Ethnographic research straddles the middle ground between the positivist assumptions of objectivity and the dangers of involving subjective elements (Silverman 2000; Freebody 2003; Méndez 2013). "Within ethnography, the question of objectivity and subjectivity is of crucial importance" (Hegelund 2005. 647). My own role as a professor has played a formative role in this research. The observations in this paper have arisen out of a process which, as Lønsmann had observed, the "ethnographic researcher was very much a part of" rather than remaining neutral to the surroundings (2016, 13).

A brief methodical description of the site and my own fieldwork may not be out of place here. The private college is more homogenous owing to the unambiguous management style of administration and its dependence on English as lingua franca in the campus. Started as a second grade college in 1880s the college operated as a government aided institution until 2005 when it became an autonomous college bringing changes in its ideological and administrative structuring. Interviews were conducted with the knowledge and consent of participants and field notes were prepared while some were recorded with their permission, especially those conducted over telephone. Most interactions were informal while some remained formal. The conversations were thematically organised than following a question answer method.

By and large the conversations with professors surrounded their experiences with Indian languages in campus, their observations about students' use of language, directives and measurements from management in this regard, classroom presentations, students' preference of courses and their employment weightage, the procedures and priorities behind curriculum designing and syllabus creation etc.; with professors in language department, additional issues concerning language options, the status of language teaching and the department's functioning in the past and the present were also raised. Except curriculum and language department issues, same themes were invoked with students additionally asking about their domestic linguistic preferences and language socialization. Due to lack of space I haven't covered the latter topics in detail in this paper. Altogether close to 25 professors and 30 students from various departments were interviewed. The college was technically divided into three, namely the regular college known as the day college, the evening college and the commerce college. The latter divisions consisted of about 2000 students each whereas the regular college had close to 8000 students.

Language and knowledge economy: Private College in a metropolis

Sites of education are deeply enmeshed in language ideologies. The college retains a uniglot environment despite its multi-cultural combination, with students from different lingual backgrounds and from different parts of India and abroad. Monolinguism in campus is imposed through loose (participative) and tight (directive) organizational regime (Sagie 1997), at par with emerging corporate cultures. The linguistic structure of the campus sidelines all other languages as insignificant. Including Hindi non-English languages are used informally, away from surveillance and within small groups and commonly perceived as local and geographically restricted. In the era of neoliberalism, the language economy of educational institutions, in postcolonial-developmental contexts is conditioned to match the middle class ideologies of the target groups of students and parents. Signifying a common trend the promise of English as an integral component of higher education reaches its full throttle in private colleges and universities articulating compliance with the commercial matrix.

"Ideologies of language . . . are not only about language"

(Woolard and Schieffelin 1994, 55-56); they critically connect language to questions of identities and morality and sustain and reproduce old forms of inequalities. They shape our understandings of languages and project the same "onto people, events, and activities" (Gal & Irvine, 1995: 970). Language ideologies are consolidated in schools and colleges to their maximum potentials. The uncontested projection of English as lingua franca of the campus draws from both the praxeology associated with the multilingual backgrounds of students and its implicit acceptance as a language of progress, development and individual mobility. The everydayness of the college provides insights into its reassertion in subtle forms. The ingenious creation of the cultural-physical and academic-non academic environment of the campus combines the hybrid elements of cosmopolitanism and convent culture without uniforms. The hybrid identity consciousness of students combined with the upscale consumption of ideas and materials is a fertile ground for reasserting linguistic hegemony. In addition to learning and teaching the college authorities insist that all communications– oral and written– be made only in English. More informal this norm is meticulously followed within its boundaries including playgrounds and lifts. Students often switched to English in the presence of senior professors and top management officials.

Higher education is commonly perceived as the final phase of education before the adult is ready for the job market. Connecting HE with employment reveals a larger strategy and convergence of state's and management's objectives with the demands of industries and parents' ambitions. I shall come back to this in a while. The linguistic structuring of HE heavily draws from the Medium of Instruction (MOI) debates that surround schooling in South Asia (Barnard and Hasim, 2018; Hamid and Jahan 2015; 2019, Attanayake 2020, Hamid *et al* 2014,). English is deemed an inevitable component of education in neoliberal discourses on the MOI (Attanayake 2020).

English language education begins from the early phases of children's socialization and continued to the schooling and later to the college and university. Parental expectations about the outcome of education as well as the accumulation of cultural capital play a central role in the medium of education of their children and in the choice of institutions (Gurney 2018; Botelho 2006). In

the early socialisation language ideologies play a greater role in the acquiescence of language hegemony and in language transitions (Riley 2011). To enhance language learning parents handpick fairytales, animation videos and so on just as they meticulously choose the school and college for their children.

Astha, a student whose parents belong to two different places, with Tamil as her mother's first language and Punjabi as her father's, can however read and write only in English. Still in need of more empirical research and statistics instances of such language shifts are not uncommon among middle class families settled in Indian cities (Rai 2012). Family, as a site of learning, reinstates the superior status of English during the early socialisation of children. Parents eagerly send their children to English medium schools and gradually make English a spoken language in the domestic spaces. This helps children learn English in the most 'natural' ways. While this is truer in urban centres students from non-urban locations or with a local/regional identity carry deep seated concerns about their linguistic profile. As an author observed in the context of private schools in Delhi, students from economically weaker sections and poor in English "go through an extended phase of muteness and incomprehensibility before they finally pick up the language" (Mohan 2010, 19). HE is a significant temporal moment when students' coming of age is combined with adulthood aspirations. Knowledge of English, its fluency and accent controls students' socialization within the campus and occupy central significance in shaping and unfolding their ambitions.

Human capital and language choices

The hybrid identity consciousness of students converges with the preconditions of career markets and with questions of cultural and social capital. In the modern knowledge economy universities and colleges are "encouraged to develop links with industry and business in a series of new venture partnerships" (Olssen and Peters 2005, 313). Autonomous colleges, at the cusp of becoming a university, are required to fulfill the latter roles in order to migrate. Apart from teaching and learning they inculcate pedagogic practices and impart skill sets matching the industrial standards and expectations. English language skills often figure as pre-requirements of this whole frame.

On the material advantage of English language in globalised India, a study identifies that "[the] hourly wages are on average 34% higher for men who speak fluent English and 13% for men who speak a little English relative to men who speak no English" (Azam et al. 2013; 335-336). According to the authors beyond trade and commerce with the outside world, "English is not the only possible lingua franca, it is a *natural* one given India's colonial past and given the influence of the United States in the world economy " (338; Emphasis added). The oversweeping discourse of human capital and education (Shastry 2012; Viswanath *et al* 2009; Fontana & Srivastava 2009; Abbas & Mujahid-Mukhtar, 2000) brings language and job market in direct and a seemingly plausible connection.

Human capital is as much central to conceptions of success in the market and economic prosperity as it is to reduction of inequalities. It finetunes the commonplace imaginations of national progress. Nevertheless the centrality of language ideologies in human capital produces a counter effect by keeping a large segment of students from HE. As an author observed that "[a]bout six million students (40% of all enrolled students) from non-metropolitan India enter the system every year and fail to achieve their educational goals because they are unable to cope with English" (Niranjana 2013, 14). The reverse effect of the predominant conceptions of human capital on a vast number of languages and its native speakers needs further exploration.

Human capital and language are at the centre of imaginations of nation as well. Students, parents and teachers revealed different imaginations of nation with varying perceptions of education. Students who endorsed the role of English spoke of nation as resting on such indictors as economic growth, higher FDIs, better infrastructure etc., whereas those who opted non English languages for their second language courses spoke of nation for its cultural heterogeneity. Language choices in education embody conceptions of nation (LaDousa 2005). Higher education, especially private colleges and universities, epitomizes the imagination of nation in alignment with market where language transition or shift on the part of students is not a choice but rather comes with the system. Albeit this doesn't lead to a total distancing of the subjects from their vernacular cultures the latter is definitely sidelined in the

institutionalized and corporatized imaginations of nation and its knowledge-language interplays.

Amidst this students also make willful choices vis a vis the language question. The 'usefulness' of language is often raised as a random concern with increased legitimacy. The hidden curriculum in the campus, consisting of practices and norms that reinforce the persistent cultural beliefs and ideologies, is designed to meet the agendas of their parents and other stakeholders (Tajeddin and Teimournezhad 2015). As a student asked the question, during an interaction, about the need to retain her mother tongue in the face of an institutional space where, despite pluralities, "only one language has both body and soul". And this, she said, is "going to be the case for ever in life". She narrated that she has not come across an institution where English is not the norm although her whole studies she completed in India. Her mother tongue is only a thin line connecting her with her roots, by which she meant her family and 'tradition', which is more or less completely disconnected with her exterior world, a world of jobs, friends and strangers.

The precarious language department

The language department comprised all non English languages taught in the college. The campus being surrounded in the hegemony of English its extreme precariousness was evident in its structuring. Understaffed and still waning in strength it reflected conspicuous disinterest of the state as well as management vis a vis regional languages in HE. Language departments were initially formed in colleges and universities in line with the 'three language formula' that post-colonial Indian state had followed from the beginning (Petrovic and Majumdar 2010). Mandatory in the school system this was followed in spirit in the HE system although English was undisputedly accepted as the first language in HE. Other languages were often available as 'options', commonly labeled as 'second language'. This further depended upon factors such as the location of and their availability in the individual institutions etc.

In the last ten years or so especially in private HE institutions a clear shift has occurred with all non-English languages often dealt in one department as opposed to retaining them under different

individual identities. Concurrent with the transition from government aided to autonomous/private status this shift signifies a near language death situation within the physical space of the campus. Owing to the late 1990s' globalization boom and its obsession with human capital with English skills the situation has led to a massive decline in the demand for other languages. This also redefines English language skills more as "cultural competence that comes from familiarity with culture" (Sen 2009, 120) than merely as communicative skills or knowledge of language.

The transition to autonomous status involved a restructuring of the language department with minimal recruitment of faculty to non-English Indian languages. In the past the college used to offer courses separately in Kannada, Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Sanskrit, Hindi and Arabic, as core papers as well as 'second' languages. This is no longer the case from 2005 when the system was dismantled to form a common department. Besides removing Telugu, Malayalam, and Arabic from language options no languages are taught as core papers any longer in the campus to the students.

Another related development is the incorporation of 'Add English' as an optional paper that students can choose to replace language papers. Allowing the management and students equally to circumvent the mandatory provision of language education in undergraduate courses, Add English paper is held as the primary reason for the massive reduction in the number of students choosing language courses. Still regulated by the university norms of the country the individual managements nevertheless are at liberty to decide on the status of language education. For instance it is still mandatory that students who have studied a regional language in their higher secondary classes should continue with the same for their UG courses as well. However if their respective language is unavailable in their admitted institution of HE they are at liberty to choose other language options including the Add English paper. This is often manipulated and managements keep Add English on the platter for the satiation of students and parents at large. Indian language education in the campus is increasingly looked upon as a mismatch between the expected outcomes of education and students own interests and expectations. Add English paper is thus an effective 'ideological bridge' between the management and the students.

With around ten members the language department had to cater to the non-English (Indian language) requirements of more than ten thousand students scattered across three colleges that worked independently under the same management. However as very few students opt Indian language papers the teacher student ratio is not threatened justifying the low strength of professors. The actual number of professors and the languages they teach was as follows:

Name of language	Number of teachers
Kannada	4
Hindi	3
Sanskrit	1
Tamil	1

I have omitted teachers for other foreign languages including German, French and Spanish. Half of those teaching Indian languages were part time faculty. With senior professors, recruited while the college was government aided, retiring in about five years "a complete switch to Add English courses is awaiting us", according to a Kannada professor. "Students with knowledge of their parents language dwindle every year," a Hindi professor said. "It is common that in classes of hundred or more students, less than twenty have working knowledge in their mother tongues out of which only very few chose Indian language as their option". Simultaneously the increasing demand for non English foreign languages like French, Spanish, German etc., is gradually transforming the role of language departments to that of a foreign languages department. The deteriorating language scenario is more dealt with silence, both inside and outside. The persisting language ideologies render such changes insignificant whereas the discontent among a few teaching faculty of other Indian languages is more isolated and lingering in the apolitical climate of the private college.

Language departments are by and large sustained independently in the state and public HE institutions despite serious decline in its demand. However its non-obligatory nature has left the private managements in a state of complete freedom to deal with the question of language education in their campuses. With the decline in demand language courses are withdrawn gradually. There exist no courses in the college where a non English language

is the core/main subject. Signifying a wide trend, no Indian languages, including the local vernacular Kannada, are offered as core/main subject in any colleges in the whole metropolis.

The system 'second language', sometimes addressed as 'third language', symbolizes uncontested language ideologies in HE. It reverses the precept 'English as a second language', commonly used in policy and academic discussions, in HE whereas English is placed in a primary position from the beginning. The term second language, signifying all non English Indian languages available in the campus, invokes a politically and historically rooted hierarchy of languages. A colonial legacy the language hierarchy has continued to the 21st century with critical proportions. From 1854 Wood's despatch English has remained the sole language for imparting higher education in India. The restructuring and confining of the language department is one explicit sign of the blind endorsement of language ideologies and the systematic ejection of other languages from the sites of higher education.

In a sense the *othering* of all non-English Indian languages finds its consolidation in the politics of nomenclature including that of 'second language'. The rubric language department is another one. Contradicting the generosity behind the title 'department of English', it, on the one hand erases the individual identity of Indian languages in the campus and, except Sanskrit, identifies them as 'languages' associated with specific geographies. On the other hand, such naming and the pedagogic practices keep the status of English at par with subjects like Physics or Chemistry and as a skill that defies both disciplinary and geographic borders; that it cannot be considered merely as a 'language'. The poor treatment of language department goes alongside the hidden objective of enhancing the naturalized learning of English in the campus. The abated language department with alarmingly low strength –of both students and teachers –signifies the growing lack of vernacular sensibility or any conscious intent to sustain them. The long endured static role of English as the primary language of HE has been further intensified with its projection as "a language of opportunity and a vital means of improving prospectus for well-paid employment" (Project English 2009 quoted in Seargeant, & Erling 2011). The uniglot character of the campus and its lack of resistance to the hegemony of English are complete with the degeneration of the language department.

Knowledge traffic and Internet induced knowledge spectacles

The global spread of English language has serious implications for the processes of knowledge production and dissemination. On the one hand the hegemony of English language has serious impacts on the ways in which academics is practiced and perceived in HE institutions by controlling its outcomes. On the other hand course materials are produced and pedagogic practices designed keeping in mind the ideological interests of the upper and an aspiring middle classes. This section attempts to cover the subtle dynamics of curriculum designing undertaken in the college that indicates the emerging trends in the field of HE. I attempt to foreground how the new digital initiatives simulate the old models and reproduce the hegemonies with an aggravated effect on linguistic plurality. The knowledge-language economy and its industrial connects are embedded in the global circuits of power and controls the flow of knowledge (Altbach 2007). Amidst this planning of curriculum and related tasks become processes with larger "social implications beyond the academic ones" (Sen 2009, 119).

Previously the success of colonialism depended on the sanctification of knowledge corridors that allowed a more or less one way traffic of knowledge systems, from the West to the East. This is fully legitimized in the current era of digital technologies. As Spivak observed during an interview with Robert Young the colonially established networks of knowledge production and dissemination play "a more subtler role" in neocolonialism (1991, 221). By now it is academic common sense that despite the official end of colonialism the erstwhile socio-political structures of power exert a critical influence on the cultural-knowledge systems (Sara *et al*, 2019). Albeit the controls have significantly shifted from the British to the US in the post Second World War period, as observed by many including Edward Said, the Eurocentric systems of knowledge production have more or less been sustained through economic and political differences.

Knowledge traffic -the process of knowledge production and the control over its flow -in the contemporary is different from its past versions where it was often translated to Indian languages. The internet, on the contrary, brings knowledge producing and receiving centres, mainly students as well as teachers, in direct contact through the singularities of technology and language. The

reader in these regions access websites, mostly of universities and research institutes in the US and/or English speaking locations in Europe especially the UK, for knowledge and information. Knowledge, in such cases, has a very instrumental connotation and is mostly transported without intermediaries including publication houses. Thus while internet carries promises of democratising knowledge production (Shrum 2005), in practice it produces new monopolies, and consolidates and increases the divisions.

The excess of knowledge traffic unfolds in the convergence of new age technology with pedagogic practices including, most importantly, the creation of syllabuses. Sometimes teachers developed syllabuses for different courses they are about to teach in meetings that lasted for 60-90 minutes. "With laptops connected through WiFi, it is not difficult to *access the different sources* lying scattered; If a teacher knows very well *where to find readings and who are the authors*, preparing a syllabus in one sitting is quite recommended as it will save too much of time" a professor in the comparative literature department said during an interview (emphasis added). The aeonian chains of deadlines in private institutes of higher education often converge with technological sophistication. "The *effortless* access to internet brings readymade syllabuses, books and other study materials to the fingertips; it also helps universities and teachers to *internationalise* the courses they offer", a professor in the department of Psychology added (emphasis added).

Knowledge traffic owes to the ideological structuring of higher education in the country and its different bodies of administration still premised on the old colonial principles. There is a stark absence of serious attempts to localise or glocalise the 'global' knowledge systems; the blind endorsement of old hierarchies coupled with excessive dependence on new age technologies lead centres of higher education to replicate and reproduce instead of producing new knowledge. As Rosenblit (2015) observes that "governments around the world are obsessed at present with establishing world-class-universities, dominated currently by leading research universities from the US, and a handful of universities in the UK and a few other countries" (14). In their study of HE in South Korea Piller and Cho observes that internationalization as a ranking

criterion is often easily manipulated to favour the spread of English (Piller and Cho 2013, 23).

Internationalisation legitimises the breathless flow of curriculums and syllabuses from West to East opening the floodgates for Western centric knowledge practices to enter the academic common sense of the global South almost seamlessly. The linguistic hegemony central to this is in addition to the politics of knowledge in education in times of globalization (Rata, 2012). This works hand in glove with issues of time pressure for professors leading them to overtly rely on sources convenient to access. In the case of privately managed institutes of HE the intensity of the situation is much more for their market-oriented projections from time to time have to resort to this language of international standards; this language is further endorsed by state and the public as effective means for individual student's success and the institution's excellence. This has a direct impact on local knowledge systems and languages. The fleeting market demands hardly leave much room to incorporate discussions, books and other materials produced outside of the dominant cultures. Knowledge traffic is naturalised in such contexts where flow of knowledge is heavily controlled by new age technologies and further mediated by definitions of legitimacy.

It plays a vital role in conditioning the academic and non-academic/institutional environment within the college. Teachers as well as students excessively rely on internet search machines for study materials as well as for information about ideas and authors. There is a discourse of 'proper' and 'legitimate' knowledge that further authorizes this knowledge flow in 21st century; knowledge produced and made available in English and circulated through foreign university websites and textbooks are commonly accepted as standard knowledge forms (Akena 2012). Instances and case studies totally disconnected to the local and national contexts flood classroom discussions. More applicable to social sciences where "Students often cite examples from US for discussing the covered topics in class …. I wonder if they remain absolutely ignorant about their immediate surroundings", a professor of History commented. However teachers often ranked students citing more examples from abroad highly as they are assumed to be "well read" as a Psychology professor remarked.

For foreign examples plenty of sources are available on internet whereas for local discussions one has to rely on one's own volition on most occasions. According to Nikitha, a second year undergraduate student in the Humanities department, "students [for assignments and classroom presentations] come to class with readymade materials available from internet, even including powerpoint slides, and give their presentations... Most often such presentations are orchestrated overnight by piecing together the information available from various sources". English language skills play a central role in such internet induced knowledge spectacles. Students with very good command over English often performed better in class and institutional level activities. Technology and cultural capital–English language skills and its embodiment, work together to produce a new discourse of success.

There is also the pragmatics of convenience and familiarity that underpin knowledge traffic on its receiving end. Internet not only assembles a large body of knowledge into one space, it also saves considerable amount of time which otherwise is spend in libraries. Besides "students are unhappy if we cite regional examples. But everyone *understands* if we take a video or an instance from the US culture; on most occasions this helps in students judging us highly also", a professor of Management studies observed (emphasis added). The overt reliance on internet literally keeps anything that is local from the domain of classroom interactions. The discourse of familiarity and convenience permeates both the teaching and student communities. During one of the interactions a professor of life sciences narrated her experience with a student who, a couple of years back, came to her seeking assistance for an assignment on *tulasi*–an aromatic plant found in the southeast Asian tropics with medicinal value. "However", the teacher narrated, "later she changed her topic as she couldn't find much resourceful materials about the plant either in the online space or in the university library. All that she could find was some encyclopedic entries".

A problematising of knowledge traffic cannot be undertaken without reinstating the old binaries of East and West, English and vernacular or global and local. However techno globalisation has aggravated the old processes and has led to a heavy monopolization of the channels of knowledge flow. Looking at it broadly the question of induced knowledge traffic in the digital era then not

only reproduces the hegemony of English but it also impedes seriously the question of knowledge production. On the one hand it keeps the local domain outside the realm of knowledge production and, on the other, it reduces the scope of knowledge production to definite paradigms of 'authentic' knowledge. Just as language transition knowledge traffic is a historically embedded process that critically contains the role of vernacular languages and cultures in the HE spectrum.

Conclusion

A staggering homogeneity –both linguistic and cultural –has been introduced to the sites of higher education through new age pedagogic practices in neoliberal times. This homogeneity is nevertheless celebrated commonly as signifying cosmopolitanism and knowledge hybridity. With uniglot campuses no longer uncommon in South Asia, there is an urgent need to address this incongruity within academics as well as in policies. As Altbach has observed in the context of Africa where "no university offers instruction in any indigenous language" (2007, 3608); similar situation has been incited in South Asia where death of vernaculars within campuses are part of systematic efforts undertaken by the stakeholders including the state, management, parents and the teaching community. This drastically contradicts the founding ideals of pluralism of Indian HE system (Guha 2007); hegemony of English is not only implicit and silent but also imposes monolinguism.

The gaps in this field demand urgent, conceptually and empirically rich, explorations. The reverse impact of the uncontested 'first language' status of English in HE system on the medium of instruction debates and the parental decisions at the school levels requires further corroborations and remains by and large unexplored. The choice of medium at the school level is a dynamic and future oriented process undertaken by parents and substantially influenced by the medium of HE. This is fully discarded from the political and policy rhetoric that have nevertheless sustained the 'option' of mother tongue education for early schooling.

The undisputed ordering of languages as second and third, with the 'first' always being absent in discourses, depicts the blind

endorsement of language ideologies in HE. We need further statistics of the rapid flow of students to English optional papers in order to substitute Indian language learning as also about the closing down of language departments across the region; two signifiers of increased language transitions in neoliberal times. As Digambar Ghodke observed in his study that "[t]he end product of this language shift is a complete replacement or language death" (2016, 197). Gaining command over English language for upward mobility is a historically embedded practice among the middle and upper classes. However the current HE scenario denies any possibilities of linguistic coexistence.

Language ideologies in HE is sustained through a plurality of discourses that include the discourse of internationalizing the institutes and the discourse of skills. The latter for instance redefines language as skill connecting it directly to the 'education for employment' discourses. This predominant frame deems English language skills as inevitable to participate in the "financial, political and knowledge economies . . . conducted at a global level, and which therefore rely on modes of international communication" (Seargeant and Erling 2011, 54).

English language hegemony in HE is at the centre of the discourse of internationalization and critically reproduce the conventional knowledge networks. This is despite the techno globalization and centrality of technology in the current teaching-learning processes. The advent of internet and related technologies heighten the possibilities of participation of students and communities in distant places in knowledge production (Shrum 2005). Nevertheless, as observed above, the knowledge production and reception divisions are more pronounced and aligned on the global North-South divisions in the current age of technology. Internet combines technology and language to reproduce conventional knowledge networks normalizing both the one side flow of knowledge as well as the implicit hegemony of English language.

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