

THE ROLE OF ENGLISH IN MULTILINGUAL CONTEXTS: A COMPARISON OF THE REPUBLIC OF INDIA AND THE EUROPEAN UNION

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WHY THIS TOPIC NOW?

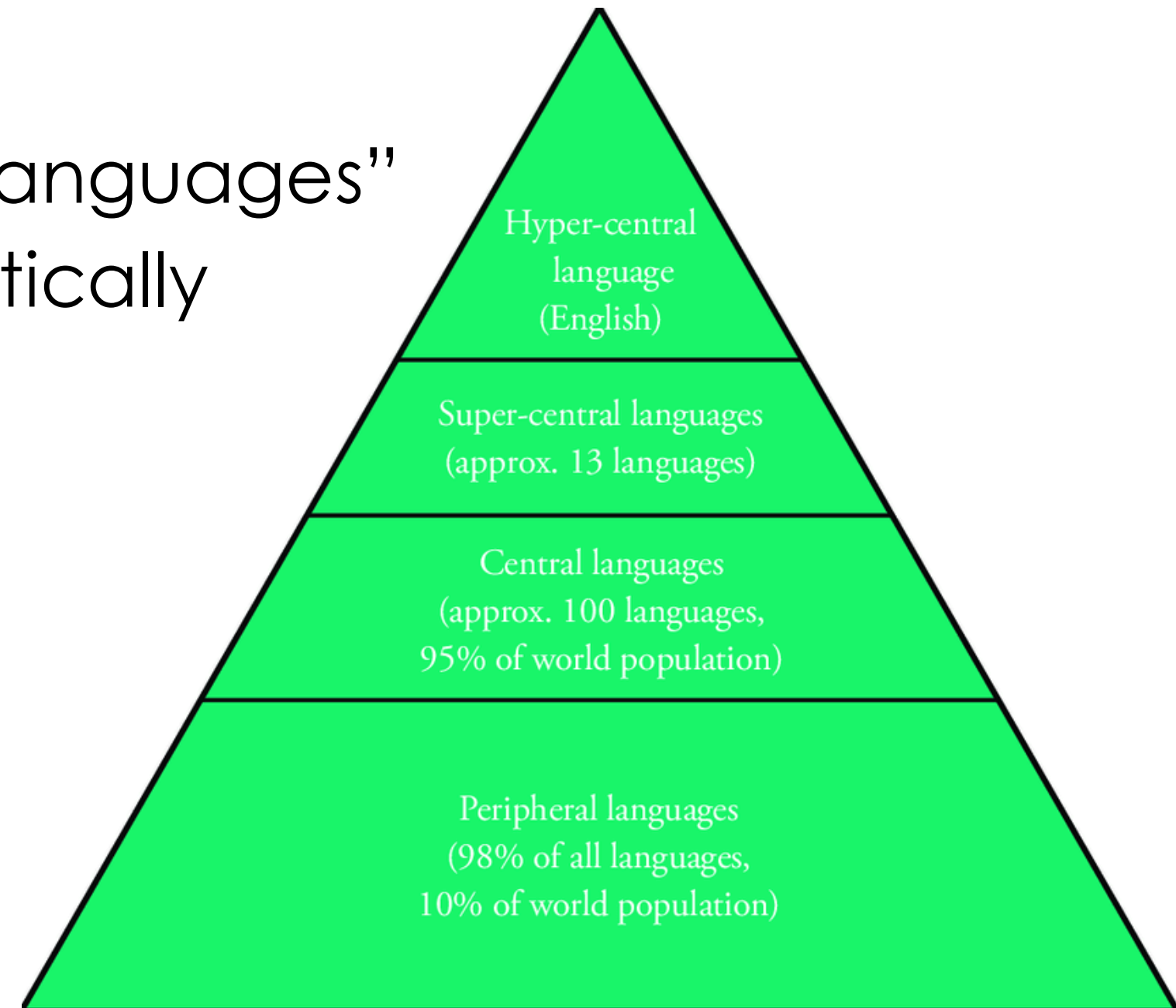
- English – a global lingua franca
- Multilingual societies
- The Brexit paradox: the UK left the EU, English stayed
- Everyday language choices

AIM AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- Where does English occur most often across sociolinguistic domains?
- The common and the different?
- (How) do language beliefs correlate with practices?

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Abram de Swaan, “galaxy of languages”
English mostly chosen pragmatically



THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

- Pierre Bourdieu
- English – high capital
- resource for education, business, mobility



THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

- Robert Phillipson, “Linguistic Imperialism”
- English dominance is not accidental
- Imperialism is supported by education, economy and prestige



THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

- Philippe Van Parijs, “Linguistic Justice”
- in Europe, English is justified with its efficiency
- costs in terms of fairness and multilingualism

PHILIPPE VAN PARIJS



*Linguistic Justice
for Europe & for the World*

OXFORD

DATA SOURCE

- Anonymous online survey (2021)
- Total (valid): 360 respondents
- EU: 192 respondents; Republic of India: 168 respondents
- Age range: 16–80+; majority (n=281) are 22–49
- Gender: 241 women, 119 men
- Data processing: quantitative statistical analysis + qualitative content analysis

WHAT WAS MEASURED?

- Sociolinguistic profile and language repertoire;
- English use by domain;
- Beliefs (language as a value)

LANGUAGE POLICIES & LANGUAGE SITUATION EUROPEAN UNION

- Officially: 24 official languages are equal.
- In practice: English dominates as working language and for international communication.
- “1+2” principle in education: mother tongue + two foreign languages.
- Digital asymmetry: major languages supported more than smaller ones.

MOTHER TONGUE

Native language	n	%
French	32	16.70%
Latvian	30	15.60%
English	21	10.90%
Russian	14	7.30%
Italian	12	6.30%
Greek	10	5.20%
German	10	5.20%
Slovene	9	4.70%
Dutch	8	4.20%
Polish	7	3.60%
Romanian	7	3.60%

ENGLISH AS L2

153 from 192 (79,7%)

ENGLISH AT WORK

156 from 192 → 81,3%

ENGLISH AT HOME

60 from 192 → 31,3%

MOTHER TONGUE ONLY AT HOME

60 from 192 → 33%

EXAMPLES

- Female, 50–59, born in Norway; native language Norwegian; lives in Bulgaria; communicates in English at work.
- Male, 22–29, born in Greece; native language Greek; lives in Cyprus; communicates in English at work.
- Female, 30–39, born in Romania; native language Romanian; lives in Romania; communicates in English or French at work.
- Male, 22–29, born in Spain; native language Catalan; lives in France; communicates in French or English at work.

“DO YOU THINK LANGUAGE IS A VALUE?”

Definitely yes 157 → 81,8%

Yes 24 → 12,5%

Rather yes 4 → 2,1%

Partly yes 5 → 2,6%

No 2 → 1%

“THINKING ABOUT THE LANGUAGE VALUE, WHAT COMES TO YOUR MIND?”

- **Cultural value: 171 → 89,1%**
- **Identity value: 134 → 69,8%**
- **Economic value: 76 → 39,6%**

LANGUAGE POLICIES & LANGUAGE SITUATION REPUBLIC OF INDIA

- Officially: Hindi and English official languages
- 22 scheduled regional languages
- In practice: ~400 living languages (*Ethnologue*)
- ~30% of languages endangered
- English: a lingua franca in education, administration, IT (often perceived as more prestigious)
- Regional languages: locally dominant, but with lower status
- Minority languages: limited protection

MOTHER TONGUE

Native language	n	%
Hindi	44	26.20%
Kashmiri	30	17.90%
Bengali	9	5.40%
Malayalam	9	5.40%
Punjabi	8	4.80%
Marathi	7	4.20%
Konkani	7	4.20%
Haryanvi	7	4.20%
Kannada	6	3.60%
Tamil	6	3.60%
Telugu	6	3.60%

ENGLISH AS L2

156 from 168 (92,2%)

ENGLISH AT WORK

147 from 168 → 87,5%

ENGLISH AT HOME

73 from 168 → 43,5%

MOTHER TONGUE ONLY AT HOME

101 from 168 → 60,1%

EXAMPLES

- Male, 22–29, born and living in Telangana; native language Telugu; communicates in English at work.
- Male, 30–39, born and living in Jammu and Kashmir; native language Kashmiri; communicates in Urdu and English at work.
- Male, 40–49, born and living in Goa; native language Konkani; communicates in English at work.
- Female, 22–29, born and living in Punjab; native language Punjabi; communicates in English at work.

“DO YOU THINK LANGUAGE IS A VALUE?”

Definitely yes 128 → 76,2%

Yes 28 → 16,7%

Rather yes 5 → 3%

Partly yes 5 → 3%

No 1 → 0,6%

Definitely no 1 → 0,6%

“THINKING ABOUT THE LANGUAGE VALUE, WHAT COMES TO YOUR MIND?”

- **Cultural value: 129 → 76,8%**
- **Identity value: 127 → 75,6%**
- **Economic value: 58 → 34,5%**

EU–INDIA COMPARISON: KEY SIMILARITIES

- English is widely present as L2 in both groups (EU: 79,7%, India: 92,9%).
- English dominates in work/school domain (EU: 81,3%, India: 87,5%).
- English enters the private domain to a similar extent (EU: 39,6%, India: 43,5%).
- In both groups, respondents perceive language as a value (nearly universal “yes”).

EU–INDIA COMPARISON: KEY DIFFERENCES

- Native English is rare overall, but rarer in India: EU native English 10,9%, India 1,8%.
- Stronger domain separation in India: “mother tongue only at home” EU 31,3% vs India 60,1%.
- English is more common in the Indian work/school domain (87,5% vs 81,3%) and more common as L2 (92,2% vs 79,7%).
- “Language value” associations differ slightly: identity value is higher in India (75,6% vs 70%), while cultural value is higher in the EU (89% vs 77%).

CONCLUSIONS

- Hypercentral English
- English = linguistic capital (access, mobility, prestige)
- “Neutral” English ideology → default choice → quiet dominance
- Private-domain spillover: dominance extends into home/family communication
- Value ≠ protection: pro-language attitudes do not stop English-driven domain shift
- **We have to be aware about our daily language choices.**

Latvijas Atveseļošanas un noturības mehānisma plāna 5.2. reformu un investīciju virziena "Augstskolu pārvaldības modeļa maiņas nodrošināšana" 5.2.1.r. reformas "Augstākās izglītības un zinātnes izcilības un pārvaldības reforma" 5.2.1.1.i. investīcijas "Pētniecības, attīstības un konsolidācijas granti" otrās kārtas "Konsolidācijas un pārvaldības izmaiņu ieviešanas granti" projekts Nr. 5.2.1.1.i.0/2/24/I/CFLA/007
"Latvijas Universitātes iekšējā un ārējā konsolidācija"



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THANK YOU