Exploring Uninhibited Life through Non-Native Language Use: A Comparison of Contemporary Kolkata and Bengaluru

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Abstract: This paper tries to explore the politics associated with non-native language use in two major cities of India – Bengaluru and Kolkata. The recent protests against English signages in Bengaluru, the outflux of some non-Kannada speaking daily-wage labourers and the somewhat discriminatory experiences of non-Kannada speakers working in different sectors of the economy have served as the starting points of this paper. This paper tries to compare and contrast daily experiences in the two metro cities by looking at language use.By exploring non-native language use and its associated politics in everyday life in Kolkata and Bengaluru, this paper tries to explore what is meant by authentic version of communication by the people in the two cities, and thereby what is understood as "life uninhibited" by non-native language speakers in these cities in the contemporary times.

Keywords: non-native language, linguistic diversity, language politics, linguistic racism, identity politics

Introduction

The Karnataka Rakshana Vedike (KRV), a forum meant for protecting and spreading knowledge about Kannada, the native and official language in the southern Indian state of Karnataka, started a protest against English billboards in Bengaluru (often called the Silicon Valley of India) recently, in December 2023. The protest started against English language use in public places in the city, during which they tore down English signages or painted them black, and the resistance spread against Hindi(one of the official languages of India apart from English and also the language used by states in the northern parts of India), and other non-Kannada languages too. The intention of the KRV was to coerce

the government to implement a law which mandates that sixty percent of each display sign in the city should be written in Kannada.In the background of these protests and the simultaneous outflux of several non-native daily-wage workers in the city, language politics became a topic of reflection for the authors of this paper. The authors have tried to explore personal experiences of the residents of Kolkata and Bengaluru regarding the politics associated with non-native language use. Before proceeding further into the paper, it is necessary to explicate why these two cities. Both authors have been born and brought up in Kolkata. The first author has also lived in Bengaluru for the last almost five years until recently returning to her native place, Kolkata. As a result, it was easy for the authors to recognise politics and debates related to language use by the non-native population in the two cities.

Certain terms and ideas that will be used in this paper should also be qualified. In this paper, "native language" is used to describe the language that is spoken by the native population of that state or city and "non-native language" is used to describe the languages that are spoken by those people who have migrated to these two cities from other parts of India or the world.The native language of Karnataka and its capital city Bengaluru is Kannada as already mentioned, while thatof the majority population of West Bengal and its capital city Kolkata is Bangla.By looking at the use and acceptance of native languages in the two cities, this paper tries to locate inhibitions in daily lives of the people living in these cities, especially those who have migrated from elsewhere. By exploring non-native language use and its associated politics in everyday life in these two cities, this paper tries to explore the following:

1. the possibilities of coexistence of diversities in the context of globalisation and cosmopolitanism,

2. if there is any authentic version of communication in this globalised world,

3. what is understood as "life uninhibited" by non-native language speakers in the contemporary times.

This paper has been written on the basis of personal observations of the authors and those in their immediate circles as natives and non-natives in these two cities.The authors deal with personal experiences that reiterate or falsify existing claims of bias or otherwise, thereby exploring how the larger politics of language is affecting lived experiences of natives and non-natives in the two cities. Thus, the situation in Bengaluru is juxtaposed against Kolkata to bring out a comparison between the lived experiences of the non-native language speakers in the two cities.

Background of Linguistic Politics in Bengaluru and Kolkata

Bengaluru

The Karnataka Rakshana Vedike (KRV),which literally translates to Society for the Protection of Karnataka (and by extension or rather in operation, of Kannada), has been claiming for decades that Kannada and its speakers have been relegated to the margins in Bengaluru where people from across the country and the world work and live, hence making English and Hindi common languages over Kannada. While the influx of migrants has made some local people think that they would soon become a minority in the city, KRV's "Kannada first" demand springs from a linguistic nationalism that has been in the making for decades. According to Nair (1996) Kannada nationalism was different from other forms of nationalism during the colonial period in "measuring itself and its inadequacies not against the overarching triumphs of the imperial power but against the more modest successes of other linguistic nationalisms within India itself" (p. 2809). In fact, according to her, the demand for Kannada nationalism arose as long back as in the 1920s and after Independence, Kannada nationalists were accommodative of other languages, especially English since they realised it was necessary for economic development. As such, Kannada nationalism "possesses neither the will nor the resources to combat the hegemonic presence of English as the language of science, technology and indeed global capitalism" (ibid.,p. 2810).The current protests against English language are quite possibly an attempt to remedy this inability of the Kannada nationalism in the previous decades. Strident protests started in the 1980s against non-Kannada language use in Karnataka, one of the most famous being the Gokak agitation of 1982 which gets its name from the committee that was headed by V.K. Gokak.In Karnataka, Sanskrit was offered as one of the languages with respect to the medium of educationin schoolsapart from Kannada and English, as part of a three-languageformula popular in Karnataka state-syllabus schools until recently. Compared to the other two, the students who used Sanskrit as their medium of education scored higher marks. Subsequently, students started giving their state language, Kannada, the least preference. The then Chief Minister of the state D. Devraj Urs, attempted to rectify the situation by removing Sanskrit as the first language to one of the third languages but a subsequent Chief Minister R.G. Rao brought Sanskrit back as a first language in Karnataka schools. This was followed by mass protests throughout the state and a committee under the chairmanship of V.K. Gokak, a professor and writes in English and Kannada and Jnanpith award winnerfor his work in Kannada language. The committee's report called for the establishment of Kannada as the only first language

in the state. The state government, however, was not welcoming towards the report and kept postponing its implementation. This led to the Gokak movement in the 1980s, which saw participation from all over the state (Chenni 2020).Later, in 1994, major protests broke out when state broadcaster Doordarshan started programming in Urdu language on the regional service, leading to violent communal riots in the city of Bengaluru.Years later, in 2017, Kannada nationalists led by KRV, took on Hindi in their pro-Kannada agitations. The protesters demanded removal of Hindi from signages and public announcements on Bengaluru Metro line. *Namma Metro, Hindi Beda* (our metro, we don't want Hindi) trended for days on social media. Some agitators even demanded the removal of English signboards, saying Kannada signages and announcements alone should be used in the city metro since that is the local language. Such demands not only continue to this day but instead seem to be gathering force as migrants keep flocking to the city in larger numbers in search of jobs. In fact, the current Chief Minister of Karnataka, Mr. Siddaramaiah too is often heard at various public platforms encouraging the non-Kannadigas to learn Kannada.According to a BBC online report by Henry (2024), "While the influx of migrants has made some local people think that they would soon become a minority in the city, KRV's 'Kannada first' demand springs from a linguistic nationalism that has been in the making for decades"(digital). The protest against English started after India's IT boom in the 1990s which increased the demand for English-speaking workers.There was a general anxiety among many Kannadigas that English speakers from other states were taking away their jobs. The BBC reportmentions thatin Bengaluru four out of ten people come from outside the city and thereforethe majority of the city's population, as of 2019,actually came from within the state. Even so, fears regarding opportunities for upward social mobility among the local Kannadigas were rising as the importance of English for better a higher standard of living and better opportunities became apparent. As Nair (1996) wrote, "There was, right from the start, no contest between the 'prestigious enchantress' (English) and the 'sobbing mother' (Kannada) … An internationally hegemonic language like English became desirable cultural capital for the Karnataka, indeed the Indian, elite, especially in the absence of a common language in the incipient nation-state"(p. 2811).

While the fears may be well founded, there is a rather important takeaway from Henry's (2024) article – the majority of manifestations of Kannada nationalism go unopposed in Bangalore and even in the state (Karnataka) with the general opinion being that non-natives*must* learn the local language, that it is a necessity. Numerous instances of derogatory comments and discrimination against non-native speakers are still commonly found in Bengaluru and it can come from any quarters of the local

populace, something has been validated through personal experiences of the first author and of those within the author's close circle of non-nativesliving in the city.A general apathy towards non-native languages and a sense of superiority of the native language speakers, in spite of it being a cosmopolitan city, are trends that are not very difficult to discern for one who lives in Bengaluru,. Let us now see what the situation is in Kolkata.

Kolkata

West Bengal too has had protests related to language over the years although these protests were somewhat different compared to those that have been carried out in Karnataka and Bengaluru. In case of West Bengal and Kolkata, these protests were more anti-Hindi than anti-all non-Bengali languages, beginning in erstwhile East Pakistan as a struggle to retain the mother tongue of the local people, Bengali.It is owing to these protests that February 21st is celebrated in Bangladesh as Bhasha Divas and UNESCO observes the same day as International Mother Language Day. These anti-Hindi protests have continued on and off in West Bengal and Kolkata over the years although their vigour has been much less compared to similar agitations in Bengaluru. In 2018,an organisation named "Bangla Pokkho" was establishedwith the sole aim to resist the imposition of Hindi in West Bengal. This organisation was greatly inspired by the southern states' struggle against the imposition of Hindi in their states.As per their Wikipedia page, Bangla Pokkho has gathered a membership of two to three lakh people and the objective of this organisation is to resist Hindi domination in all forms as well as the domination of Hindi and/or Urdu speakers in West Bengal. Their Facebook page cover photo is a collage of many revolutionary and idealistic statements regarding Bengal and Bengali people with one sentence standing out, which translated to English means "One day everything will belong to Bengal" and implying by extension to Bengalis as well. The organisation did have some wins in their attempt to make Bengali stand out in West Bengal which were covered by news media at the time. Kolkata Metro Railways authorities introduced Bengali on the metro smart cards in April 2018 after protests by the group's members. Soon after, the group bombarded Kolkata Police with emails and social media messages, protesting the department's decision of putting up signboards in Urdu and Hindi in non-Bengali speaking areas. It demanded Bengali cannot be excluded from any state government notice or campaign. As Anirban Banerjee, an active member of the group and a lawyer practising in Calcutta high court, said in an interview to Hindustan Times in 2018 "The BJP's rise at the Centre and in West Bengal had a direct impact on our movement. The saffron camp's slogan of 'Hindi-Hindu-Hindustan' poses the biggest threat for Bengal" (digital). The Facebook page of

Bangla Pokkho is replete with photos and videos of meetings, protest marches, etc. that they have been carrying out on issues related to the importance of Bengali language such as in case of writing competitive examinations but also on other matters of daily importance like unstable local train services at different parts of the state, Citizenship (Amendment) Act of 2019, etc. Thus, to a great extent, the Bangla Pokkho is trying to resist the *saffronization* (saffron is the colour associated with Hinduism and has been adopted by the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh or RSS, the parent body of the now ruling Bharatiya Janata Party of BJP) of West Bengal by resisting Hindi imposition much like in Bengaluru.

While organised protests through Bangla Pokkho are going on against Hindi in West Bengal, other individual localized protests have also been going on. Hashtags like #AmioBanglaMedium (I am also from Bengali Medium) have also done the rounds on the internet to generate talk about the relevance of Bengali in the corporate world thereby trying to make space for a native language in anEnglish dominated space.However, it must be pointed out that in case of English, the situation has been quite the opposite in West Bengal and Kolkata than in Bengaluru where vehement protests against English have been going on. In West Bengal,the state government's attempt to remove English from primary school levelin the 1980s was met with widespread backlash by opposing political parties. Bengalis have given a high status to English and it can be sensed in everyday discussions to this day that English knowledge is considered mandatory to climb the socio-economic ladder. According to an India Today article, the importance of English in Kolkata and West Bengal"was brought home rather dramatically recently when the second largest constituent of the Left Front, the Forward Bloc, publicly declared that the Front's educational reforms, particularly the decisions to scrap English and the system of examinations in the primary school stage, were among the foremost reasons for its poor showing in the Lok Sabha elections last December" (Banerjie 1985). The article goes on to say that the"Marxist opponent of the Left Front, the Socialist Units Centre of India (SUCI), has used the language issue to rally large sections of the urban and rural middle class against the Front ever since 1980 when the changes were first introduced.Of late, some Congress(I) leaders have also started voicing their opposition to the abolition of English. The literate classes in the state, despite their almost jingoistic devotion to the cultural heritage of the Bengali language, fear that by abolishing English at the primary stages the Government is in effect ensuring a lifetime of mediocrity and restricted opportunities for their children" (ibid.). As Datta (1981) rightly points out, "If it is argued that our reading of English is a colonial relic, it is clear that the colonialism represented by the English language is expanding through voluntary acceptance" (p. 622).

The difference between KRV and Bangla Pokkho and other such protests in West Bengal and/or Kolkatais, however, wide in spite of inspirations drawn. In West Bengal, the protests were much more political, being a matter of vote banks as shown above. Moreover, in Kolkata as well as in larger West Bengal, the majority of the general public are not as invested in the cause of preponderance of Bangla in their day to day lives as the general public in Bengaluru are in case of Kannada. In Karnataka, while language related protests do have a political angle, yet most of these protests are carried out in religio-cultural ways. The most significant example of that ispraying to Bhuvaneshwari Mata as the goddess of Kannada language and the soil of Karnataka on 1st November, the state formation day in Karnataka, along with the more secular singing of the state anthem.Deifying a language in a state where most people are religious could be called a masterstroke in raising Kannada pride in the hearts of the common masses, thereby making the issue of Kannada protection a matter of importance in the everyday life of people. This could be taken as a good explanation of why the native locals in Bengaluru often behave derogatorily towards anyone who cannot speak Kannada. In Kolkata, while politicisation of language has happened to an extent, such deification or fetishisation has not taken place. This probably explains why the general public are not as vehemently opposed to non-Bengali speaking non-natives in Kolkata as is the case with Bengaluru.

The above brief discussion on the histories and the lived realities of the two cities in terms of their linguistic politics shows that Kolkata and Bengaluru have had some major differences in spite of often having the similar agenda of anti-Hindi imposition. What is important to note here, however, is that sentiments against non-native languages have been much higher in Bengaluru than in Kolkata, as corroborated not just by the news media and social media but also through personal experiences of the authors.With this background, we will take a look at some current lived realities related to linguistic politics and discrimination in the two cities after a few words on the methodological matter.

Methodology

Methodology is given great importance in social research and rightly so since we deal with human behaviour and tendencies which are difficult to analyse unless we stick to a proper strategy technically called the research design. However, it so happens often that as social scientists we encounter events and thoughts which we want to further explore academically even if a strict strategy may not always be possible to follow. The methodology of this paper is something like that. It is broadly exploratory in nature and tries to uncover and compare experiences of inhibitions in the daily lives of non-native

citizens of Kolkata and Bengaluru. A lot of the data comes from the authors' personal experiences of living in both Kolkata and Bengaluru which has been supplemented with experiences of others in the authors' known circles living in either of these two cities. Media reports, especially social media posts have also turned into an important source of data. Besides using naturally gathered information through personal experiences, a more structured method of gathering some data was also used. An open-ended questionnaire was sent to six respondents each in Kolkata and Bengaluru for better understanding of the trends in the two cities in the current times using convenience sampling. The data come from people between 18 to 45 years, comprising students and working professionals who have moved to either of these two cities in the recent past. Questions were designed loosely on the basis of the experiences of the first author as a non-native in Bengaluru and the same questionnaire was sent to the respondents of both Bengaluru and Kolkata so that there was a parity in data.

It is acknowledged that the methodology followed in paper is rather loose but as said in the beginning of the section, often times methodological strictness in academia stops us from exploring nascent thoughts. In this paper, we have tried to explore such nascent thoughts with the limited resources available for conducting this research while keeping in line with the basic methodological requirements of social research. With this, let us delve into the study.

Bengaluru vs. Kolkata: Comparing Linguistic Discrimination

Being a resident of Bengaluru for four years and an on and off visitor for about three years before that, the first author has gathered enough experiences by herself and through accounts of other non-natives living in the city regarding the most common aspects of linguistic politics and discrimination in the city. As such, it seemed logical to base the comparison on those very experiences and points of difference. The second author aided in the collection of data from the respondents of Kolkata on thesame thematic points. What follows is the comparison of linguistic discriminations experienced by the non-natives in both Kolkata and Bengaluru.

Learning the local language

This was a matter that was given great importance by the local natives in Bengaluru but similar emphasis was not given by the local natives of Kolkata. The same was corroborated by the responses of the non-natives of both the cities. All six respondents in Bengaluru said that at some point in their stay in the city they had faced comments, often in the garb of jokes or sometimes in directly derogatory ways, that shamed them for not knowing

Kannada. However,none of the six non-native respondents from Kolkata said that they were shamed or had to face any derogatory remarks for not knowing Bangla. Here one important point must be made –most people in Kolkata are able to communicate in basic Hindi which makes it easier for the non-Bengali population to communicate with the locals. Kannada, on the other hand is a language that is distinct from languages in the northern or eastern parts of India while also being significantly different from other south Indian languages. Therefore, picking up Kannada is a much more difficult feat to accomplish, especially for those who have come from non-southern parts of the country. Knowing Kannada turned out to be an important factor determining how one is treated in Bengaluru, no matter what the person's skills, qualifications and overall social status may be. It is not uncommon for high-ranking professionals to experience derogatory comments made by locals who may be much lower in skills, qualifications and social standing, something corroborated by the first author's own experiences in the city.

Language used to Communicate with Locals

Since most non-natives, especially those who have not stayed for a very long time in the cities, find it difficult to pick up the local language, it was an obvious question forward that what was the language used to communicate with the native population. In this case, there is a big difference between Kolkata and Bengaluru.The non-natives in Kolkata typically tend to converse with the native locals in Hindi which is spoken by the vast majority of the native people in Kolkata although many have picked up Bengali as well over the years. In Bengaluru, many of the non-natives speak to the local population in English or Hindi. There is a sizeable portion of the Kannadiga population that is not well versed with Hindi but is able to speak basic English. This is not to say that the local people in Bengaluru do not use Hindi – they do and the number of people being able to speak Hindi has increased over time with more migration from other parts of the country – but the anti-Hindi sentiment has remained even in those natives who are able to speakHindi. This was a trend seen across all age groups, classes and communities in Bengaluru through the author's own experiences and the experiences of those non-Kannada speakers in her circle. It was found from the answers of the respondents that the majority of them had not learnt any Kannada, including those who were in the city for more than a decade or were second generations in the city, and they spoke in Hindi or English with the locals, whether they were friends, colleagues, shopkeepers, etc. It was only the first author and one more person who had learnt basic Kannada and were able to make small conversations with the locals in Kannada but even they faced derogatory remarks for not learning the language sooner or better.

The situation in Kolkata was somewhat different. The majority of the respondents said that they had not picked up Bengali while a few who were second or third generation residentsof the city, had learnt Bengali. A problem that became evident in Kolkata was with those non-natives who were fluent neither in Hindi nor in Bengali, especially the people from north-eastern India or the hilly regions of West Bengal. One such respondent said that she was forced to learn rudimentary Bengali and Hindi, otherwise it was becoming difficult for her to manage in banks or government offices where a lot of older Bengali people work and they are unable to manage well in English. Since people from these regions of India are not usually fluent in Hindi, communication outside of their local regions with people who do not know English, usually their second language, becomes a matter of strain. Other than that, however, the rest of the five respondents who were included in this small study, said that they spoke in Hindi or rudimentary Bengali with the locals.

Feelings of Discomfort/Discrimination for not Knowing Local Language

This question was asked since such feelings were experienced by the first author and her friends or family in Bengaluru and hence it was necessary to be corroborated with the responses from Kolkata. It turns out that in Kolkata except the one respondent from Darjeeling – a popular town in the hills of West Bengal – who surely represents similar voices that were not included in this study, the other five respondents did not face any discomfort while speaking in Hindi. The discomfort felt by the Darjeeling respondent was during interactions with older men and women, especially older professors in college who were more comfortable teaching in Bengali and those in government offices such as in banks, post offices, etc. all of whom usually had been conversant in only Bengali all their lives. With the younger natives, English and Hindi seemed to be viable options of communication within the city of Kolkata. Powerplays specifically were not acknowledged by any of the respondents of Kolkata. In case of Bengaluru, discomfort for not knowing Kannada or even fluent Kannada, can come from any corner of the society. Powerplays emerged in different interaction situations regarding language. Snide remarks and off-handed comments passed on as jokes for not knowing Kannada are commonly faced by non-Kannadigas and such comments and remarks can come from a colleague as much as a bus conductor. To give a personal example, the first author (an assistant professor in a college) was once told by a driver of her employing institution's vehicle the following – "you are eating our food, you are drinking our water, you are using our electricity, you are walking on our land, but you won't learn our language?" Another young colleague of the first author had commented,

"this is the land of Kannadigas, anyone staying here should and must learn Kannada". The first author also had experiences of similar comments from students who expressed their superiority by virtue of knowing Kannada, thereby indirectly trying to make the author feel inferior. Ideas of typically accepted hierarchies in the society such as age, profession, etc. tend not to be seen in the case of language at least. The following experience of a Sri Lankan man as shared on a public networking platform sheds light on the matter: "When I was in Bengaluru, I wanted to find a place but I didn't know Kannada (I'm Tamil from Sri Lanka) I asked in Hindi to a shop keeper. In Bangalore many people speak fluent Hindi, But this shop-keeper couldn't. And my Hindi was also rudimentary. He replied me this is Karnataka we don't know Hindi talk in Kannada. I explained that I'm Tamil and I didn't have other option. Then he said talk in Tamil. He is not Tamil but he's happy to listen Tamil than Hindi / English". Such comments and sentiments were not faced by any of the respondents from Kolkata who were included in the study. While interactions were sometimes difficult between those non-natives who could not speak Hindi or Bengali, it seems that such interactions typically do not take derogatory turns in this city. In Kolkata,interactions were laced with frustrations of not understanding each other rather than with the intention to put the non-native language speaker down. The same could not always be said of Bengaluruwhen speaking as a non-native resident of the city.

Discussion

The data gathered from experiences and questionnaires led the authors to two key themes while analysing and theorising upon the data: a) exploring inhibitions to daily life due to language discrimination or politics b) understanding what is meant by authentic version of communicationwhich is essential for identity formation using language.

Inhibitions due to Language Discrimination or Politics

To understand the differences between the native population's stance on the matter of not knowing the local language and the use of Hindi orEnglish in lieu of that, a very important point needs to be taken into consideration when comparing Bengaluru and Kolkata. While in Bengaluru and some other south Indian cities where English is known by a sizeable portion of the population owing to the stress given on English in schools and since a sizeable proportion of the population also consists of Christians who use English frequently in their daily lives, the same cannot be said of Kolkata. Therefore, Hindi, even if broken, is used by Bengalis to communicate with non-Bengali speakers and considering the rising population of Hindi speaking migrants and their

subsequent generations making Kolkata their home over the years, Hindi has become very common in Kolkata.English has remained as a medium of communication only among the upper middle classes and above.Those citizens belonging to the senior age groups who have had their education in Bengali medium schools are unable to speak fluently and confidently in English although they may be able to manage broken Hindi. It is here that the non-Hindi and non-Bengali speakers in Kolkata face a problemsince they are most comfortable in English after their native languages and when they need to interact with those sections of the population who are most comfortable in Bengali, communication often becomes difficult or breaks down. Thus, in Kolkata we might look at it as a matter of *inability*of the locals regarding a particular language'suse that causes inhibited interactionswhile in Bengaluru, experiences show that it may be seen as a matter of *choice*among the locals to push only Kannada as the most used language, sometimes with the government's explicit help. Both matters, however,cause inhibitions to daily life of non-native population. Inhibitions in case of Kolkata were seen in case of the respondent from Darjeeling who surely represents others in a similar state who are unable to communicate effectively due to the local population's inability to speak in English and due to their inability to speak in Hindi or Bengali. In case of Bengaluru, as experiences show, it is often the locals' demand that non-locals speak in Kannada or be ready to face discriminatory and derogatory remarks which has led to the outflux of daily wage labourers from the city and a general fearfulness in the lives of many non-natives in other sectors of the economy.We havedescribed this phenomenon aslinguistic racism that has emerged from ethnocentric ideas about one's own language and culture. It must be pointed out that ethnocentric thoughts about language are not completely absent in Kolkata as seen from the existence of organisations like Bangla Pokkho but such sentiments seem to operate much more in Bengaluru, especially when we see that usually respected boundaries of class or status are often not considered when derogatory remarks are made against the non-natives for not knowing Kannada.

Authentic Version of Communication and Identity Formation

If we try to analyze language politics from the perspective of authenticity, where we define authenticity as something that is most true to oneself, in that case communication in native language becomes the most authentic version of communication. In case of Bengaluru, ideas of authentic communication among the majority of the population emphasize the use of Kannada, making interactions in other languages somehow not viable or not authentic, thus creating a linguistic hierarchy. This exemplifies Antonio Gramsci's understanding of language as not just a tool for communication but also as

something that has implications for power relationships (Ives 2004).The non-natives in Bengaluru have expressed that they have felt power plays in their interactions with the local Kannadigas and as pointed out earlier, power plays related to language do not always go by the socially normalised hierarchies of class, caste, gender or age and instead it is the linguistic identity that becomes most important. From the perspective of identity formation, one can argue that since language and culture are interlinked, a person's sense of identity is often drawn from and through language. It is not unnatural that in post-colonial contexts, language has become a central feature of debates on national identity, empowerment and cultural transformation (Shakib 2011; Iyer & Zare 2009). Cosmopolitan cities which are a melting pot of cultures are obviously much more prone to such debates since every cultural group wants visibility and the ability to practise their language and traditions. It is when the native population sees the new culture and language as a threat that problems regarding identity and therefore politics regarding language and culture emerge, which has been the case in Bengaluru.

While anti-Hindi sentiments emerged out of Kannada pride, anti-English sentiments did not emerge from the same place in Bengaluru. In case of English language use, there is a direct link between language use and access to privileged positions and resources which has often been cited as a justification behind the recent lack of acceptance of English by the KRV which claims to represent the local Kannada people.The reality is that not knowing Kannada is an obstacle to smooth daily functioning in Bengaluru for every non-native at some or the other point in their stay in the city. Thus, the resistance to English, as well asHindi, create inhibited daily experience of existence in Bengaluru, which may and often do affect identity formation among many non-natives who exist in a universe in between acceptance and rejection in the city. Loneliness and isolation are not uncommon among non-natives, especially those who live alone and do not have friends and family to turn to for a feeling of community and camaraderie. Communication in case of Kolkata, in our analysis, did not seem to be founded on the idea of pride of authenticity and purity of language use. Instead, choice of language in interaction situations in Kolkata, seems to be based on the end goal of getting the message across, even if that means adopting'unauthentic' versions of communication through the use of a non-native language such as Hindi. English is still looked upon with pride in Kolkata, a hangover of the colonial legacy, and is encouraged to be learnt for upward social mobility.However, it is cities like Bengaluru,which have experienced rapid globalisation and cosmopolitanism, that have made the use of English in everyday life almost a mandate due to the mix of a variety of linguistic groups from all over India as well as different parts of the world residing in the city for employment. One

may say that the linguistic imperialism of colonial times has given way to the linguistic imposition of capitalism that has ensured the sustained use of English in major Indian cities on a daily basis, especially in cities where a large number of non-native people live due to the demands of employment. Yet, interestingly, one finds that in Bengaluru, the recent protests against English imperialism are pointing towards another form of imperialism that is localist in nature – the imposition of the local language on the non-native population. The symbolic power held by language (Bourdieu 1992) is thus clearly seen in the language politics of Bengaluru.

The above discussion shows that in post-colonial contexts, language has become a central feature of debates on national identity, empowerment and cultural articulation. From a post structuralist perspective, language operates in a nexus of power and identity through diverse linguistic and cultural expressions (Foucault 1980; Bourdieu 1992). This once again takes us back to Gramsci's understanding of language as not just a tool useful for communication but also as something that has implications for power relationships and cultural and symbolic effects of language (Ives 2004). As Gramsci, who although is not considered a post-structuralist, wrote, "The advocates of a single language are worried by the fact that while the world contains a number of people who would like to communicate directly with one another, there is an endless number of different languages which restrict the ability to communicate. This is a cosmopolitan, not an international anxiety, that of the bourgeois who travels for business or pleasure, of nomads more than of stable productive citizens. They would like artificially to create consequences which as yet lack the necessary conditions...." (Gramsci 1985,p. 27). In a country like India, it is not always the needs of the cosmopolitan upper- and middle-class populations who know English but also the needs of the lower classes who migrate to other parts of the country for employment that make up the reality of language politics and power. At the end of it, the power inherent in language is undeniable and it is not surprising that it leads to negative experiences of the ones who do not know the powerful language. It is striking to find out from the experiences of the non-natives in Bengaluru out that the communication boundariesimposed by social hierarchies often take a backseat in many cases of linguistic power struggles, showing the deep-rootedness of language politics and linguistic racism in the city, something that was not reported from the non-natives living in Kolkata.

Conclusion

The impact of language politics seems to have an impact on uninhibited daily life experiences of the citizensin the two cities, although data points to more inhibitions in

one city than the other. It seems in Bengaluru, there are far more inhibitions to daily life for the non-native population due to the language barrier, whether that effect is psychological as in the case of derogatory remarks faced by them,or economic as in the case of the outflux of non-native daily wage workers. In contrast, Kolkata, which undoubtedly faces many an inhibition in daily life, probably does not face the same level of disruption to mental wellbeingof its citizens or to the economy due to the non-acceptance of non-nativelanguage. Being neither Anglocentric nor ethnocentric, it has to be acknowledged that in the linguistically diverse India, using English simply makes everyday life less filled with inhibitions for the educated middle classes. Similarly, being able to use rudimentary Hindi makes it easier for the lower classes to move around the country freely for employment, although this should not be taken as a warrant for the imposition of non-native languages. While English and Hindi have definitely had their moments of cultural hegemony in India, there is emerging a different form of hegemony in our southern cities like Bengaluru based on local language dominance, something not particularly prominent in Kolkata, thereby leading to starkly different ideas of authentic communication and life uninhibited in the two cities.

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