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English in India and the role of the elite in the national project[1]

Abstract

Introduced by the British colonization and today the official language of the Indian Nation in association with Hindi, English is spoken as a second language by a minority of the educated population of 8 to 11% according to current estimations. A chance for India to converse with the world cultures, in compensation for centuries of domination, or conversely an inherited alienating burden still preventing this conversation from being on equal terms? The paper will dwell on such issues, after a factual evaluation of the role of English in the Indian pluralism, and a study of the consequences of its historical infiltration in the whole system of the State.

English in India and the role of the elite in the national project

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« In India, English is the language spoken by the ruling class. It is spoken by the higher class of natives at the seats of Government. It is likely to become the language of commerce throughout the seas of the East". Thus ended Macaulay's most famous minute, in 1835, a report aimed at instructing the Indian elite in the English language, in order to produce "a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals and in intellect". This most famous sentence, to be later quoted everywhere, summarized the explicit intention "« to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern"[2] . Hundred and seventy years later, most of the reports devoted to the use of English establish similar conclusions regarding the sociology of English[3]: the small proportion of people using English corresponds to the social class which is tightly integrated to world economy and techno-structures. This is particularly true for the millions of expatriates of the Indian subcontinent who are at least as close to the foreign techno economic trusts as to their own country and people, an elite whose belonging to the world, linked to the English language, is sharpened by the new technologies (Bhattacharya 1998 : 45)[4].

Introduced in India by the British colonizers, English today is the associate official language of the State, along with Hindi, a status first suggested for fifteen years in 1950,

[1] A first version of this paper was published in *Herodote* 115, 4ème trimestre 2004, pp. 63-90

[2] The complete text of the minute is available on-line: the original reason prompting this momentous report was the concern about the use of the British financial support in education institutions, particularly the "misuse" of it in Delhi College and Banares Hindu College for Persian and Sanskrit respectively, both curricula leading to the unemployment of the graduates and an intellectual bend towards obscurantism and non-modernism, thus considered as useless studies.

[3] The available data is not as important as expected, and lacks reliability: "there is little information on the extent of knowledge of English in India. Books abound on the place of English in the Indian educational system, job competition, and culture; and on its socio-linguistic aspects, pronunciation and grammar, its effect on Indian languages, and Indian literature in English. Little information is available, however, on the number of people who "know" English and the extent of their knowledge, or even how many people study English at school" (website of the US Library of Congress).

[4] The category of NRI (Non Resident Indians), is commonly re-spelled in parody by the resident Indians as "Not Really Indian" or "Never Relinquished India".

then renewed *sine die*, largely because of the protest of Dravidian speakers against Hindi. Although it was not mentioned in the original list of the 14 constitutional languages ("major regional languages)" listed in the Eighth schedule, nor in its successive amendments, English is the official language of 4 North Eastern States and of 8 Union Territories[5].

A chance for India, to voice her mind, in compensation of centuries of domination, to enter on equal foot in he dialogue of today world cultures, or, in the contrary, a paradoxical denial of this opportunity stolen by language otherness? Such a question will be addressed in section 3, after a try for evaluating the role of English in the plural culture of contemporary India (section 1) and a look at the weight, today, of the introduction of English in the Indian colonial system (section 2).

1. The Indian pluralism and the English language

It can be said about many former colonies that the idea of nation in its homogeneity dissimulates an heterogeneous reality which accommodates ethnical, religious, linguistic contradictions. But it is probably nowhere as striking as it is in the case of India: not infrequently its very existence as such a single concrete entity has been questioned.[6] I leave it to Shashi Tharoor (2000 : 7-8) to express the degree of that authentic pluralism rather than to Nehru, first because his are contemporary writings, second because he belongs to this class of writers who could make English a language for intellectual essay as well as for novel.

> How can one approach this land of snow peaks and tropical jungles, with seventeen major languages and twenty-two thousand distinct dialects (including some spoken by more people than speak Danish or Norwegian), inhabited in the last decade of the twentieth century by nearly 940 million individuals of every ethnic extraction known to humanity? How does one come to terms with a country whose population is 51 percent illiterate, but which has educated the world's second largest pool of trained scientists and engineers, whose teeming cities overflow while four out of five Indians scratch a living from the soil? What is the clue to understanding a country rife with despair and disrepair, which nonetheless moved a Mughal emperor to declaim, "If on earth there be paradise of bliss, it is this, it is this, it is this . . .?" How does one gauge a culture that elevated non-violence to an effective moral principle, but whose freedom was born in blood and whose independence still soaks in it? How does one explain a land where peasant organizations and suspicious officials attempt to close down Kentucky Fried Chicken as a threat to the nation, where a former prime minister bitterly criticizes the sale of Pepsi-Cola "in a country where villagers don't have clean drinking water," and which yet invents a greater quantity of sophisticated software for U.S. computer manufacturers than any other country in the world? How can one portray the present, let alone the future, of an ageless civilization that was the birthplace of four major religions, a dozen different

[5] Of the twenty languages officially recognized (Manipuri, Nepali, Assamese, Bengali, Oriya, , Urdou, Marathi, Konkani, Gujarati, Sindhi, Panjabi, Kashmiri, Sanskrit, Telugu, Kannada, Tamil, Malayalam, Santhali, Chattisgarhi, plus Hindi outside the list of the VIIIth Schedule) and used in administration, all were Indo-Aryan or Dravidian (the last four) until 1994, when Manipuri was the first Tibeto-Burmese language to be officially recognized as a "constitutional language" , before Santhali for the new State of Jharkhand (100th amendment of the Constitution), from the Auso-Asiatic family, in 2003 (100th amendment of the Constitution), Chattisgarhi being expected to be the official language in the new State of Chattisgarh. The four States whose official language is English are Meghalaya, Nagaland Sikkim and Tripura;

[6] Khilnani (1997), in *The Idea of India*, has convincingly argued for the impossibility of defining the Indian nation on anything else than an abstract idea of the nation (that of Nehru), neither history, nor geography, nor local culture, nor religion, nor uses and lore, nor languages allowing for a single homogeneous definition.

traditions of classical dance, eighty-five political parties, and three hundred ways of cooking the potato?

The extreme linguistic diversity is then one among other extremes in a Sub Continent which is prominently multicultural, a qualification now quite usual to define India.

Its twenty major languages (see note 5) and its hundreds of dialects mapped into four genetically distinct families, overlap in the complex picture of a generalized multilingualism. Not only none of the States is monolingual, but more than half of the districts are multilingual (Srivastava 1974), let alone the regional local varieties and the important diglossia between written and spoken registers[7]. There is no speaking community which does not handle at least three distinct language codes, and there is no language whose speakers don't have at least two other contact languages. Similarly, there is no regional language whose speakers are not also present in a sizable amount in another State where the given language is not dominant: for instance, in Andhra Pradesh, a telugu-speaking State which was separated from Tamil-speaking Tamil Nadu after a language movement for the recognition of a Telugu territory[8], Urdu is also spoken by two and a half million speakers, as well as Rajasthani, Tamil, Marathi, Oriya, Malayalam, Panjabi, Kond, Jatapu, Savara, Koya, Yerakula, Gondi, etc.). Reversely, important Telugu-speaking communities live in Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Orissa (Shrivastava 1994 : 102), and Delhi[9].

It is well known that the verbal tradition in India is an organic multilingual one, a grassroot plurilingualism where the various language identities of the plurilingual user behave as a global communicational unit (Le Page & Tabouret Keller 1985, Le Page 1992). This grassroot multilingualism is both societal and spontaneous: since it activates in a fluid way an heterogeneous repertoire mainly in its low nonstandardized varieties, in conformity with an organic stratified model, it relies on the integration of differences and on serendipity, within a shared communicational ethos which is widely spread across India. Khubchandani (1991 :16-17, 1997) defines it as a functional heterogeneity, with each segment of the repertoire having a specific function and a well defined sphere of use in social, cultural and economic activity. The dynamics of such a common ethos is thus non competitive. Each of the speeches involved in the various exchanges is, as nicely coined by R.N. Srivastava (1994), "a part of the whole" and not of them is "apart from the whole"[10].

Or maybe we should say "was" rather than "is", since this non competitive dynamics got recently changed under the competing forces towards official recognition, the market pressures, and competition for hegemony at a local or regional level (see section 2).

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[7] Whether the term "diglossia" is taken in its restricted meaning which was originally implied in Ferguson 1959 (two related languages, as for instance Singhalese in South Asia) or in its extended meaning as in Fishman 1967 (two possibly non related languages) or Romaine (1995).

[8] Andhra Pradesh was officially created in 1953, after the death of Potti Sriramulu, the leader of Vishal Andhra, thus opening the not-yet-ended silsila of « bifurcations » (separation from a State on language basis), opposed by the Congress up to that time and since 1928 (JVP committee in 1948, from the Monford and the Dar commissions to the VJP committee: after the State Reorganization in 1956, numerous "bifurcations" were still to come, up to the recent creations of Jharkhand, Chattisgarh and Uttarakhand in 2002. (for more details see Montaut 2004).

[9] Where they nurture their ancestral language better than Panjabis and less than Bengalis according to Mukherjee 1996.

[10] An oft quoted example in the ample literature on the question since Pandit (1977) is that of the Gujarati merchant, qui speaks the local variety of Gujarati at home, Kacchi and Konkani in his professional activities, as well as Marathi, who communicates in Hindi with the milkman and the railway employees, in English in more formal occasions, and uses sant bhasha in his religious practice when singing bhajans, along with old Hindi, Urdu, Persian and eventually Arabic if he is Muslim, Sanskrit and Braj if Hindu, who reads Gujarati newspapers and sometimes English, who hears Hindustani at the cinema hall.

One of the features nurturing the vitality of the traditional spontaneous plurilingualism and the extraordinary resilience of language diversity in India (Pattanayak 1991, Pandit 1977) may well be, apart from the fluidity of language identities and grammatical tolerance operating in serendipity, the structural convergence of the various Indian languages which, in more than forty centuries of co-habitation on the same spatial area, has deeply transformed all the local speeches. It is today more legitimate from a scientific viewpoint to hypothesize an Indian family than four distinct families such as Indo-Aryan, Dravidian, Austric and Tibeto-Burman, to the extent that each of the Indian members of such families have now more structural affinities with other Indian members of other families than with non-Indian members of their own family (Emeneau 1980)[11]: neighborghood links are stronger than brotherhood links structurally speaking.

Clearly English is a newcomer in the picture and several reasons suggest that it got added more than integrated within the family -- linguistically speaking at least: word order remains SVO, main syntax retains prepositions, etc.[12]. A language acquired more often at school than through spontaneous interaction, it plays a major role in the repertoire of a minority, the intellectual elite, without belonging to the list of "minor languages".

The number of speakers who return English as a mother tongue (MT) is estimated to be about 0,3%, with little variation between the various Census since in 1981 the number of English MT speakers was about 202 000 and in 1991 about 179 000 (that is, hardly more that the number of Ao speakers, a Tibeto-Burman language spoken in the North East of the country and practically ignored in instruction as well as in the job market). The number of bilingual speakers with English as L2 is however far more difficult to estimate. According to the *Census of India*, they represented approximately 65 millions (slightly more than the Marathi speakers, which amounts to 8% of the population. But the appreciation on bilingualism can highly vary, since, according to the 1981 Census of India, there were 13,3% bilinguals with Indian languages and 1% with English, whereas in the same year the Anthropological Survey of India estimated that bilingual speakers were 66% of the population, and in 1993 almost half of them with Hindi as L2 –Hindi being equally spoken as L1 by approximately 40% of the Indian population. The use of the language as a language medium in schools may also be an indication of the literacy rate in English, and similarly the choice of the language as a subject (the topic for L2 or 3 for instance): the quasi totality of universities and prestigious schools or institutes use English as the teaching medium. If English was in 1992 the teaching medium of 13% of the high schools, 4% of the middle schools, 3,4% of the upper middle Schools, and 1,3% of the primary schools, the proportion is quickly increasing[13] -- but how do we estimate the ratio between alphabetisation and real ability to communicate at both oral and written levels? The diffusion of newspapers in English may be the most reliable criteria, and the

[11] Hindi or Bengali (IE) is then closer to Tamil (Dr) than to French or English (IE), Santhali, an Austric languaage, is close to Bengali than to Austronesian languages. In the whole Indian family, retrofexes or cerebral consonants are phonologically opposed to dentals, word order is the same (final verb, postpositions and not preposition, s, anteposition of the genitive complement, anteposition of the adjective, postposition of verbal auxiliaries after the verbal base, causative derivation from intransitives, compound or serial verbs for expressing aspect and mental attitudes, reduplication with grammatical and expressive functions, "dative subjects", etc. A 30 pages bibliography is available in Montaut 1997 on these questions.

[12] It is a different matter if we view things in a cultural or stylistic way of course (Kachru 1986).

[13] Fifth All India Education Survey, 1992. For the proliferation of English medium schools (an average 75% increase between 2001 and 2006), see note 3x. We must also take into account the considerable disparity between rural and urban zones (English is the first language in only 0,6% or rural schools, even if the proportions are almost equal for English as a second or third language in high schools).

evolution of English publications in this respect is interesting: on the 49 145 newspapers and periodicals published in 2002, 7125 were in English (19 685 in Hindi), whereas, according to Kachru (1986 : 12sq.), the number of newspapers in English twenty years before was 3582: the proportion was slightly less than 19% at the beginning of the eighties, and about 17% in the first years of the twenty-first century. In the same period, the proportion of newspapers in Hindi increased considerably, since it has nowadays reached 40%. As for the number of copies diffused, they probably represent a readership which we can multiply more for vernacular newspapers than English ones, and the official statistics give the following (*India 2002* : 19): 1 687 099 copies for the *Times of India*, the most widely read English daily (1 243 573 copies in 2004), 847 346 for the *Hindustan Times*, figures comparable to the Bengali newspaper which sells the best (*Ananda Bazar Patrika*), the Hindi daily which sells the best is close to the Times of India with its 1 138 035 copies (*Dainik Jagaran*), as well as Malayali with its 1 208 001 copies (*Malayala Manorama*). Readership was estimated in 2006 (National Readership Survey) to be the highest for *Dainik Jagran* (with 21.2 million readers) and *Rajasthan Patrika* (with 21.0 million readers), both published in Hindi. *The Times of India* is the most widely read English language newspaper (7.9 million), followed by *The Hindu* (4.05 million), *Hindustan Times* (3.85 million).The *New Indian Express* is also most widely read [English] {4.0 million.

Taking all these various indicators into account, it can be admitted that a proportion of 3 to 11% master enough English to be able to benefit from it in the job market, both national and international, but having a BA in English is not always a passport for the proliferating call centers in big cities where one can earn quick money – they may welcome people without any diploma but with a language capacity acquired independently from the academic system.

2. The historical antecedents of today contradictions

It is well known that English as an Indian language is one of numerous legacies of the British colonization which already started with the growing impact of the East India Company. But it may not be so well known that the introduction of English in the relations of dominants and dominates has not been immediate. It was the formation in the "vernacular" languages (at the time Hindostanee in its two forms, Hindee or Urdoo) that was the first large scale language schooling,[14] when Lord Wellesley decided in the very first years of the 19th century to open a language school in Fort William College in Calcutta, whose direction is entrusted to Sir John Gilchrist. From this College, devoted to the teaching of what was then called "vernacular" (a term I will be using for that reason), will emerge, between 1800 and 1810, the first educational texts, grammars, dictionaries, literary or narrative texts, in modern Hindi, later on compiled in an anthology called the *Gutkâ*, which will be used as textbooks in schools until the end of the 19th century. James Mill, from the India Office, indicates in 1833 that a position such as member of the Board of Revenue could satisfactorily be entrusted to persons without knowledge of English.

[14] Hindostanee or Hindustanee. The terms 'Hindi' ('Hinduî', 'Hindavî') and 'Urdu', often substitutes for 'Bakha' (lit. "language", where not yet (end of the 18th c. and early 19th c.) associated to the respectively Sanskritized or Persianized styles which marked the emergence of the written literature created out of the common speech of the Gangetic plain. On the contrary, one of the very first texts produced in these years, *Raanii Ketkii kii kahaanii*, The story of the Queen Ketki, by Inshallah Khan 'Insha', explicitly states in the prologue that the new language (hindi, hindavi) should avoid all words alien to Hindi, such as Sanskrit, Persian, Braj and regional dialectical words. On the complex question of the origin of the distinction of Hindi, Urdu, see Rai 1984.

And Hobson, author of the first glossary of the Indian words in the English language, the famous *Hobson-Johnson*, was in favour of the vernacular languages in the quarrel opposing the Orientalists (favouring Indian languages, that is, mainly Sanskrit or Persian, in education) and the pro-English modernists (favouring English as an instruction medium and topic). What inspired Macaulay, nominated in 1834 by Lord Bentinck as Director of the General Committee for Public Education, is in conformity with a general political as well as cultural trend. This trend was in its turn in conformity with the shift from a purely economic relation between Great Britain and India (resource extraction, payment of tribute) towards a modern industrial mode of exchange, with the colony serving as a market for the goods manufactured in Britain, as well as a source of raw produces, the wish for cultural, and eventually religious, domination being an additional change in conformity with the colonial ideology (Bhattacharya 1998)[15].

The famous "minute" issued by Macaulay in 1835 is located in the main stream of a liberal ideology, associated to the utilitarian trend of J.S. Mill and Lord Bentham, which can be clearly decoded in the Charter Act of 1834: it states, notwithstanding the interests of the Company, that "no native of India nor any natural born subject of His Majesty should be disabled from holding any place, or employment, by reason of his religious, place of birth, descent or colour". The same Charter Act decides for an amount of money allocated for supporting education in India which is ten times higher than the previous subsidy allocated in 1813. Such conceptions (right to education for the people, including girls, the trust in the equal value of all human beings, the faith in progress) had reached the Indian elite through the contact of the English language and the philosophical and ideological trends it conveyed in its then literature. And this is one of the reasons why the "reformist" Indians of the time[16], who considered themselves as enlightened and modern, were often in favour of the pro-English modernists in the above mentioned controversy. Ram Mohan Roy for instance, the famous reformist of the Bengali Renaissance, advocates as soon as 1823 the introduction of English in the academic curriculum. While giving to the British the credit of progressive and philanthropic motivations, he strongly criticizes the traditional Indian educational system as obscurantist and backward: "The Sanskrit system of education would be the best calculated to keep this country in darkness, if such had been the policy of the British legislature"[17].

Besides, the abolition of the "Sanskrit system" (or the Persian system, in *madrasas*) did not altogether mean that vernacular modern languages should be ignored, and the British themselves were far from agreeing together on the role they should play in the educational system. We can hardly have any doubt that Macaulay himself – who

[15] This is what the Indo-Anglian writer Keki Daruwala humorously registers in his own way more than one and a half century later: "We are all trapped in History. The Europeans came to trade, hung on to fight, intrigue and conquer, and stayed on to instruct. Their colonies became markets for their textiles and their language. Conversions followed, to another way of life and on occasions to Christianity. When they went back, they left their language behind, and half-castes. In an alien land, language itself turns brown and half-caste… Colonial history shows that language can be as domineering as any occupational army. It supplants myths, whole iconographies, world-view, ideology. It ushers in its own symbols and its own values. An armada of new texts sails in. Old dogmas and bigotries are swept away and exchanged for new ones" (in Desai 1995: 30).

[16] Most reformists societies (like the Brahmo Samaj of Ram Mohan Roy in Bengal and the Arya Samaj of Dayanand Saraswati in Panjab) reject bigotry, ritualization and superstitions (including local beliefs and popular devotion) and promote a coming back to the "purified" religion of ancient times (essentially vedic and vedantic), while in the social sphere they condemn casts, child marriage, sati, and seek to promote instruction for women, all features in consonance with the Western liberal philosophy.

[17] Letter quoted in Garg (2001: 67). However, a (pre)reformist such as Bhartendu, a Hindi speaker from Benares, thinks on the contrary that the progress in the Hindi language and education in Hindi alone (in the region) can lead to progress and modernity, although by many sides his positions echoes the reformists ones (faith in rationality and technological progress, in modernity, enthusiastic admiration of the 19th century British society for these achievements, etc.).

confessed a total ignorance of either ancient or modern Indian languages – did not hold them in a high esteem[18]. But the reform of the system of public education which was to be voted a few years later, known as the Vernacular Dispatch or Charles Woods Education Dispatch of 1854, clearly states that, even if the knowledge of English will always be an essential requirement for those Natives of India who want to achieve higher education (article 11), even if English cannot be dispensed with in urban surroundings, the knowledge of English remains essentially a means for acquiring a good education and should in no way be an aim in itself (article 12). Consequently, the knowledge of English should never replace a good knowledge of the vernaculars, *because the languages understood by the masses are more important*, and they are the ones which have replaced Persian in administration and in the Court[19] (article 13); it is then desirable to teach English only where there is a demand for it, and to always teach it in combination with the vernacular languages *of the district* and the general culture conveyed by these languages. The 14th article of the Dispatch concludes that vernaculars should be used to instruct the *larger classes* of the population who ignore English or have no sufficient knowledge of it. As for the instructors, they should know both languages, because this double knowledge only will enable them to enrich the vernacular languages and cultures by means of ideas and words to express them[20].

These two historical documents (Macaulay's Minute and the Vernacular Dispatch) clearly show the double tension which is at work, right from the beginning, in the language policy of the British domination: the diffusion of English aims at fabricating this class of intermediaries between dominants and dominates which Macaulay was dreaming of (a tool for collaboration), but it is also the vehicle for the progressive ideology which favours mass education and is praised for that by the reformists. English is the language of the elite, but it is also the vehicle for such notions as social progress and mass education. On the other hand, the education of the masses, which Macaulay does seem to care of, can only be achieved through the vernacular languages, and even, as is very clear from the 1854 Dispatch, in their local variety – not in the learned speech such as high Hindi or Urdu which already differ from oral speech by their sanksritized or persianized lexicon respectively. The same is true for all other regional languages, which have a high learned speech far enough from the spoken language not to be understood by children from underprivileged backgrounds or living in villages where the local dialect is quite distinct from the regional language.

The end of the colonial period is then dominated, as far as language is concerned, by this schism between masses and elite (Di Bona (1998 : 370), a schism which still prevails in today independent India although in a different way since it got reframed into the modern dialectic nation/local.

The desirable balance could indeed never be achieved, and the "combination" advocated by the 1854 Dispatch between English (the means for accessing power) and vernacular languages in their local "district" form could never be implemented. In reality,

[18] Macaulay goes so far as to compare the whole bulk of Sanskrit and Persian scientific, moral and philosophic literature to an obscure imbroglio, in order to oppose wasting public money in publishing "eastern" books, and to blame Delhi College (Persian) and Sanskrit College for creating a population of jobless graduates useless to their country and to their own family.

[19] Persian was given up as a court language in 1836 after numerous protests, since neither the accused nor the complaining person was usually able to understand the language used in trials, and in a more general way, the average man was unable to understand the language of administration. Italics by me.

[20] Document quoted in its integrality by Garg (2001: 164-68).

the introduction of English in the academic curricula was accompanied by a growing neglect of the vernacular languages, and similarly, the emphasis on the so-called vernaculars was translated into an elimination of the languages of the people: the real evolution was « a process of disprivileging folk languages (*lokbhasha*) or dialects vis-à-vis sanskritized chaste Hindi or *shisht bhasha* (cultivated language) », according to S.C. Shukla (1998 : 45 sq.). Shukla then tries to find the reason for this perverse side-effect of the introduction of English in the education system, and identifies it in the total apathy of the elite regarding the education of masses, and notes that the middle classes had gone so far as to oppose the attempt for taxation on land which aimed at opening schools for poor children at the end of the twenties. A similar conclusion is reached by Jha (1998 : 224-6) who shows that the vernaculars as school medium have constantly decreased in the period because of the promotion of English – and to a lesser degree of Sanskrit. The dominant classes found schools, mainly in towns, with the single purpose of promoting their own members by educating them in English so that they may get a job in the administrative services[21]. Bhokta (1998 : 217) similarly attributes the « marginalisation of folk languages » to the search for well paid jobs, an Indian teaching English earning far more than an Indian teaching a vernacular language – and far less than a British. In the hierarchy thus emerging in the second half of the 19th century and prevailing during the next century, the local speeches of the Chotanagpur and Santhali Parganas for instance are downtrodden by Hindi, Hindi by English – a language which gets, just before Independence, associated with the « service-seeking mania » to quote Bhokta.

So, when the Congress Party and Gandhi started debating about a pan-Indian language during the first decades of the 20th century, the situation was burdened by the colonial contradictions in the field of language policy. The contradiction however shifts: in the 20th century, English, which remains the language of the elite, is no longer perceived as the vehicle of modernity and of the social project but rather as the only real pan-Indian language. Besides it conveys the trans-local notion of an abstract nation: a nation abstracted from its concrete components, whether religious, regional or linguistic, which could not be fitted into a common project, as convincingly argued by Khilnani for the Nehruvian idea of India (1997).

Gandhi made the nationalist movement a mass movement by directly reaching the masses, on the first hand by the symbols he manipulated, both moral and concrete (like the *charkha*), more infused with religiosity than marked with a specific religion, and on the second hand by the use of popular language.[22]. The nationalist ideology and the nationalist discourse were born in the Anglophone intelligentsia, but with Gandhi the movement goes down to the street and to the fields with the use of vernacular languages, particularly Hindustani, which was the most widely spoken and understood all over Northern India. This is the reason why Gandhi views "Hindi or Hindustani" (*"Hindi yani Hindustani", "Hindi athwaa Hindustani", Hindi yaa Hindustani"*, according to his phrasing in the 1936 Nagpur Session of the Bharatiya Sahitya Parishad) as the future national language of independent India (*swaraj*), and why he advocates its diffusion in all

[21] For instance, the Bhumihar Brahma Sabha and All India Kayastha Sabha associations, respectively founded in 1889 and 1887, have the declared objective of developing education and social progress, but their practical intention is to promote cast interests.

[22] All the movements directed against official power, that is, in India, Brahmanic orthodoxy, have succeeded in using the strength of the spoken folk language in order to express heterodoxical ideologies: it is particularly true for the various medieval *bhakti* movements which renewed the literary idioms by using the language spoken by the people including low cast people, but it had already been the case for Buddha using Pali and not Sanskrit to convey new ideas.

the Dravidian speaking provinces[23]. Even more than the English, he insists, those who enslaved India are our Anglophones. And indeed, "if we spend only half the efforts we do in learning English in the learning of Indian languages, there will be born a new atmosphere in the country and a good measure of progress will be achieved". Since 1925 it was agreed that the regional meetings of the Congress should be hold "in Hindustani as much as possible", and it not, in the regional languages (Amendment of article 33 of the Constitution of the Congress), yet a common language was needed for the national meetings, and this common language should represent a *swaraj* which is not the *swaraj* of the Anglophone elite but the *swaraj* of the millions of hungry illiterate people, of the women and the untouchables, of all the dominated people" (*Young India* 1931). Until the end, Gandhi will try to make this language the cement of national feeling in the Dravidian provinces: "I want a pledge from you here and now that you will all learn Hindustani. I say it is your *dharma* to learn Hindustani which will link South with the North" (*Jubilee Celebration* 1946).

Gandhi has of course another reason to stand in favour of Hindustani "or" Hindi as he also calls it[24]. This composite language, "Hirdu" in the terminology of some contemporary linguists, is the common legacy of both Hindus and Muslims in Northern India[25], and the major danger at the time is the communal division ending in the partition of the country[26]. Hence Gandhi's emphasis on the spoken language, which is common to both communities and may then help neutralizing the tensions: the language he supports is "a resultant of Hindi and Urdu, neither highly sanskritised nor highly persianised or arbianised" (*Young India* (27 August 1925), "a harmonious blend of the two will be as beautiful as the confluence of Ganga and Yamuna". Hence, also, Gandhi's tolerance regarding the graphic problem (*Young India* 26 December 1924), a crucial choice in this context since Hindi has started identifying with nagari, the Sanskrit alphabet, whereas Urdu is written with modified Arabic characters. Gandhi's adamant promotion of Hindustani/Hindi amounts to assert that freedom is not obtained in and with the language of the colonizer, and that the integration of the poor in the new nation will not be obtained in the language of the elite, but it also amounts to indefatigably emphasize the cultural and linguistic unity of the Muslim and Hindu communities[27].

Once Partition has been decided, once the creation of Pakistan has been announced according to the wish of the Muslim League, with Urdu as its national language, the Congress Party stops insisting on Hindustani and the debate is then restricted to the nature of the Hindi language consensually chosen for the new Indian nation: for the "Hindiwallahs" like Seth Govind Das and P.N. Tandon, the official Hindi can be only a

[23] In 1918, he creates the *Dakshina Bharat Hindi Prachar Sabha*, to diffuse Hindi in South India. The oscillation in the denomination of the language, from Hindi to Hindustani, is linked with the complex politics of Hindi and Urdu and the positions Gandhi took in these (see Asha Rani 2004: "The category of Hindustani remained ambiguous and fuzzy in content while, at the same time, it was used as a category of political mobilization and collectivization of the two communities between 1920-40", p. 150)

[24] An alternative (*yani, ya, athwa*) misunderstood or misused by both supporters of Hindi (who understood the equivalence Hindustani/Hindi as a way of accommodating Urdu in Hindi) and of Urdu (who understood Hindustani as a synonym for Hindi).

[25] On the community of language uses in the zone, see the concept of fluid zone forged by que Khubchandani (1997) under the sign HUP (Hindi-Urdu-Punjabi); on the cultural community developed in the North West (Pakistani and Indian Panjab in particular), see the contributions of historians (Hasan 2000) and writers such as Krishna Sobati, Krishna Baldev Vaid, Kamleshwar interviewed in Bhalla 2006).

[26] La situation est tellement explosive que les recensements de l'époque jouent sur la suppression des mentions hindi ourdou..

[27] Followed on this ground by Nehru: "Hindi or Hindustani or whatever it is called. It is the content of the language that counts and not the name so much", notwithstanding that "no language is close to Sanskrit than Persian" (National Herald, 13 February 1949).

sanskritized Hindi, explicitly attached to its cultural "origin", that is, aryanized and hinduized[28]; for the liberals and moderates, among whom Nehru and Patel, such a choice would serve as an incentive for religious sectarianism and support the obscurantism, bigotry and reactionary forces that British reforms tried to fight. But there are also certain liberals who, before the consensus in favour of Hindi in July 1947, had stood for English. It is the case of Dr Ambedkar, the leader of the Untouchables, who converted to Buddhism, for whom the choice of Hindi represents a symbol of identification to the Brahmanic orthodoxy, Hinduism and the cast system. Hindi written in nagari was however chosen as the official (not national) language, after a very hot debate which almost degenerated into an ideological war, leading to a violence never attained during the three years of the elaboration of the Constitution[29]. But the Hindiwallah did not win, since the official language is explicitly described in the Constitution as reflecting the composite culture of India and its ability to integrate vocabulary and idioms from various origins (article 351). The provisions regarding the "development" and "modernization" of the language suggest borrowings from Hindustani, other major regional languages, and their dialects as well as from Sanskrit[30].

The way these directions were implemented during the fifty years of independence has largely betrayed the hopes of the moderates and confirmed the fears of the supporters of English. Over burdened by a proliferation of sanskritized neologisms and obscure technicalities unintelligible for the villager even educated, the official language has become strictly similar to that stigmatized by Macaulay's minute as well as the Vernacular Dispatch one and a half century ago. It is as cryptic and esoteric for the uneducated citizen as was Persian in 1836, and already in 1950 Nehru, presented with a Hindi translation of the Constitution of India, complained that he could not understand it – no more did he understand the Urdu translation. Official Hindi today has become the new symbol of oppression and of the power of the State (Rai 2000), so that in the early sixties, close to the end of the period when English should remain the associate official language, the leader of the supporters of English, Frank Anthony, clearly voiced what many non Hindiphones as well as non Anglophones thought: "The new Hindi is a negation of secular democracy": it has become a symbol of religious sectarianism, it is the ruin of minor regional and local languages[31]. Besides, it is English and not Hindi or other languages which secures good jobs, partly because official Hindi, due to its artificiality, could not impose itself even in central administration. We are consequently left, in the beginning of the 21st century, with a situation burdened by as much tension

[28] Seth Govind Das and P.N. Tandon, who favour Sanskritized Hindi, do not hesitate to blame those who refuse nagari as a national script to betray the nation. P.D. Tandon for instance writes on the 8th of April 1949 : « those who oppose acceptance of Hindi as a national language and nagari as the single national script are still following a policy of anti-national apeasement ». Similar accusations are still commonly heard in the form of suspicions against Muslims: « foreign script, alien culture », « semitic language », etc. The presence of *Mein Kampf* in popular bazars (noted in the recent years and still 2007) may have indirect links with this conception of the Hindi language as an Aryan symbol opposed to Urdu as a semitic foreign symbol.

[29] It is the language question (besides differed till the last year of the debates of the Constituent Assembly) which compelled Nehru to rely on votes and not to the consensus he privileged. And it is the question of the script, ultimately of the script for numerals, which was the more difficult of these votes, wined by one voice only: "The question of numerals was the most controversial of all the issues debated in the Assembly" (Dvidedi, 1981 : 19).

[30] Here is the text of Article 351, in view of developing Hindi "so that it may serve as a medium of expression of all the elements of the composite culture of India and to secure its enrichment by assimilating, without interfering with its genius, forms, style and expressions used in Hindustani and the other languages of India specified in the Eighth Schedule, and by drawing, whenever necessary or desirable, fort its vocabulary, primarily from Sanskrit and secondarily from other languages".

[31] Report of the Committee of Parliament on Official Language, quoted in Dvivedi (1980 : 210).

and inner contradiction as Macaulay might have contemplated one and a half century before.

English remains the language of the elite and can hardly serve as the integral expression of an authentic project for social democracy – from the central government to the actors most crucially concerned, the underprivileged masses who remain largely marginalized from the conception, the expression and the implementation of developmental devices. It is however the only trans-regional trans-religious language, supposedly able to transcend local chauvinisms and group interests. As a matter of fact, group interests have taken a more and more visible shape during the period, in the form of identity claims sometimes leading to extreme violence: their politization ended in polarizing religious identities up to the point of secessionist claims in Punjab during the early eighties of in Kashmir just after, and in polarizing linguistic and regional identities up to the point of creating new States: a Telugu speaking Andhra was created in 1953 out of the Tamil speaking State, then a Kannada speaking Karnataka and a Gujarati speaking Gujarat, separated from Maharashtra in 1966, before a further "bifurcation" into Konkani speaking Goa-Diu and a Marathi speaking Maharashtra in 1994, Hindi speaking Aryana was separated from Punjabi speaking Punjab in 1966, Nagaland was separated from Assam in 1971, and the year after Mizoram (Mizo speaking), Meghalaya (Khasi speaking), Tripura, etc. This process seems a never ending one since in 2000 again, the Santhali speaking Jharkhand was carved out from the Urdu/Hindi speaking Bihar[32]. English in such a context may appear as an integrative force barring any chauvinism, because of the secular ideology it conveys as well as the lack of link with any local culture. It thus remain for quite a few, as it was for Nehru, the language most fit to express the idea of India as a nation, beyond group identities, whether minor or major, beyond the local roots necessarily articulated in the mother tongue. A novelist like Salman Rushdie shows it in a gorgeous way in *Midnight Children* or *The Maure's Last Sigh*, and Shashi Tharoor argues for it in a more sober way: "There are many of us, but, among India's multitudes, we are few. We have grown up in the cities of India, secure in a national identity rather than in a local one, which we express in English better than in any Indian language. We rejoice in the complexity and diversity of our India, of which we feel a conscious part; we have friends of every caste and religious community, and we marry across such sectarian lines. We see the poverty, suffering and conflict in which a majority of our fellow citizens are mired, and we clamor for new solutions to these old problems, solutions we believe can come from the skills and efficiency of the modern world. We are secular (…) and, in Indian politics, we are pretty much irrelevant (…). We tell ourselves we are able, but not electable" (2000 : 42-43).

But yet, even for this minor Anglophone elite -- with the exception of the 0,3% speakers with English as their mother tongue and of the minority of intellectuals sharing Tharoor's legacy – English remains a foreign language. A language learned soon in life, but always more or less associated to what many consider as the "fatality of the colonial fate", with the alienation resulting from a mandatory bilingualism[33].

In the contemporary education system, the "three language formula" adopted by the Constitution and later revised by the Kothari Commission in 1966, requires that school children learn their mother tongue first, then the regional language and the official language. Although implemented everywhere except in Tamil Nadu, it reflects the contradictory tensions between the wish for national integration and the respect of

[32] On this complex question of the role played by clear cut categories in the "Linguistic States" following the States Reorganisation Act of 1956 and its colonial antecedents, see Montaut 2004.
[33] The formula is Ragavendra Rao's (1985).

minority rights, an awkward compromise which rarely allows children to be taught in their mother tongue if it is a non schedule language. Even schedule languages like Urdu are strikingly disfavoured compared with Hindi or English. Hasnain & Rajyashree (2004) mention the perverse effect of the lists among which the student has to chose his topics, referring to cases where "at a point of time Urdu was bracketed with science and Urdu and Urdu speaking students could only opt for Urdu at the cost of science in secondary schools. Besides, the poor facilities for Urdu teachers training often leads to position in Urdu being left vacant, "to be abolished subsequently or diverted to some other subject",[34] and the unavailability of Urdu textbooks has resulted in the "total disuse of Urdu in the State of Uttar Pradesh, except for the backyard of the traditional madrasa-maktab system".[35]

3. No salvation without English ?

3.1. The market realities

Between center and periphery, between mass and elite, is the compromise difficult to find or is it simply impossible to find? How indeed could an equal weight given to the official language, the regional language and the mother tongue, to English and to Hindi, when universities have systematically imposed English as a teaching medium and as a medium for evaluation during exams for all scientific subjects including human sciences?[36] The very notion of university in India is linked with the success of the pro-English modernists in the early 19th century, and the foundation in 1857 of the first universities, in Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, with their deemed colleges, corresponds right from the beginning to the exclusive valorisation of English – to such an extent that the vernacular languages were totally suppressed, even as a subject, from the curricula in Bombay university in 1862. The Indian university tradition was born from the conviction that it was impossible to teach modern knowledge and do scientific research in local languages, although as soon as 1843 Delhi College (the very College stigmatized by Macaulay) had produced numerous reference books in the various fields of mathematics, from trigonometry to algebra, as well as in astronomy, blood circulation, or various technologies such as water mills, steam boats, etc., thanks to the efforts of Ramchandra et Munshi Zakaullah (Habib 1998 : 348-352). Given the reluctance against Hindi in Dravidian surroundings and against regional languages in Hindi speaking surroundings, English finally remains the only language creating unanimity all over India in secondary schools. If, as noted by Pandit in 1977, "mandatory bilingualism" fails where as grassroot bilingualism is a traditional speciality of India, it is because the choice of English, in conformity with its exclusive use in higher education, does not need to be imposed.

Whatever the strength of « linguistic loyalties », the passion for English has today stronger reasons, whether institutional or economic, than in colonial India. It is no longer conceivable to acquire a thoroughly vast culture without English, whereas it was still conceivable until Independence.

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[34] Sources in *Muslim India* 9, 1983 (quoted in Hasnain & Rajyashree) : out of 211 posts in government schools for Urdu medium teachers, 53 are lying vacant, while, out of the remaining 158, 63 are occupied by non trained teachers who simply know Urdu.

[35] Ansari, A., 1997, "Inadequacies of constitutional protection of minority languages in India", *in* S. Singh (ed.), *Language problem in India*, New-Delhi, Institute of Objective Studies. Quoted in Hasnain & Rajyashree 2004.

[36] A university can impose the use of a language other than English for exams only if it can prove that the level will not be downgraded because of this choice – which is generally the case for literature in Indian or other languages only – and the Supreme Court alone can take a final decision in case of contestation (Jain 2003 : 616).

It is English and not Hindi which is the language of government and administration, a choice largely due to the artificial character of Hindi's syntactical and lexical modernization (Koul 1994). Consequently it is English and not Hindi (nor other regional languages) which leads to attractive careers, Hindi being an advantage only at the lower grades of the civil service. In the federal government for instance, mail is systematically written in English (almost 95% of it), and this even when answering letters written in Hindi. Debates in Parliament are held in English, and the language in the Supreme and High Courts is English – in conformity with the provisions in the Constitution, providing there is no objection from Parliament (article 348). In prestigious examinations leading to top careers in administration such as the Indian Administrative Service (IAS), excellence in English is more and more a pre-requisite. Already in 1965, 18% of the candidates admitted where from Tamil Nadu only, a State which had only 8% of the national population but more English medium schools than many others. Reversely, there was not a single candidate admitted from Gujarat, a State which at that time had not developed English medium education. During the eighties, a notable decrease in the proportion of successful Tamil candidates appeared to be related with a decrease in the English level in the schools of the State. As expected, the ratio between the population and the candidates admitted in IAS is particularly high in the Northern States where English medium schools are a tradition. Regarding the very prestigious scientific examination of the Indian Institutes of Technology (IIT), it is theoretically acceptable for a candidate to present without an excellent level in English, but such cases are very rare, an indication that scientific excellence is formed only in English medium schools. Among those rare cases of students who have chosen Hindi and not English, the example of Shyam Rudra Pathak is interesting: he submitted in 1885 a 96 pages memoir on bio-gas written in Hindi. The memoir was not evaluated, a series of contestations and even trial went as far as to reach Parliament, and the affair was disclosed in the medias. A translation was asked, which the Institute did not provide quickly, so that the affair dragged on for years, giving time to the unhappy candidate for losing his job at Tata Electronic & Co....[37].

Whatever the field of specialization (except for regional literatures), there is no doubt that being educated in English is a great advantage for practical purposes. And indeed, education in English medium school has increased at a very quick pace during the last years: national enrolment in the upper primary sections (grads I to VIII) of English medium schools rose by 74% between 2003 and 2006, according to the National University for Education Planning and Administration (NUEPA). The highest jump is recorded in Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra[38].

If at the end of the 19th century the wish for mastering English echoed the "service seeking mania", not without servility, according to its detractors, today the lucrative job mania even more requires English. The blooming proliferation of the call centers in big

[37] Krishna 1991. Mallikarjun (1985 : 59-83) quotes numerous other cases, including in the field literacy. The National Literacy Mission conducts literacy campaigns in the regional languages, including Tulu in South Karnataka where it was a considerable success, but the national competition for essay in literacy and adult education is limited to Hindi and English. As for the admission exams for Management schools, they are all in English.

[38] There are still more than half of the Indian school children who enrol in Hindi upper medium primary school (783,74, 227, or 52% in 2006, more than in 2003 where they were 50%). But the general tendency in the whole country is to shift from the regional language to English as shown by the decrease in the (nation wise) proportion of enrolled children from 2003 tp 2006 (for Marathi, 9% to 8%, for Telugu, no change, 6%, for Tamil, 6% to 5%, for Gujarati, 5% to 4%, for Kannada, 4% to 2%, for Assamese 2%, no change, for Urdu, 2%, no change, for Malayalam, 3% to 2%). As expected, English medium primary school are massively dominating in the Northern States (90% of the schools).

cities during the last decade is a particularly striking example. For a few hundred rupees you can buy the directions for use, the first of such pamphlets has been published in a book form in 2004 by Arjun Raina, under the significant title: *Speak Right for a Call Center Job: A Complete Guide for International Interface.*

Among the some thirty call centers based in Delhi, the ten biggest employ between 1000 and 5000 employees, the smallest have between 40 and 50 employees. These delocalized call centers, which control the sales by phone for American and British companies have as their customers distant buyers who may be residents in London, Toronto, Manchester or any western English speaking city. The operator who answers them on the phone must not only speak in a non regional English[39], which he/she learns during the formation, an intensive training of four to six week, but also know the commercial rivals in the given sector, the name of all the relevant shopping centers and their location there, the legal systems prevailing in the country if for instance he sells life insurance contracts, and he must have a minimal knowledge in law in order to minimize the possible contestations or grievance regarding insufficient or wrong information. The center Infovision in Delhi provides various formations in the form of intensive trainings (8-10 hours a day) according to the degree of qualification aimed at (that is to say the kind of sell and the variety of customers dealt with by the operator once properly qualified) and according to the level of the candidate. The center selects only thirty among the some 300 persons who apply for the job as "Anglophone" candidate; the criteria for qualification are speed, perfectibility and linguistic competence rather than diplomas. Salaries vary from a minimum of 7000 rupee without extra (3 to 4 thousands) for a beginner with no previous experience to 25 to 35 000 Rs after two years experience. The staff is provided transportation in private car and food during working hours[40]. Progression is thus far quicker than in any other job, in the short term, but such well-paid jobs have their drawbacks: jobs in call centre are highly unstable (they are often chosen by brilliant students in order to self finance their studies), they always result in tension, fatigue, lack of long term perspective as well as boredom too, so that very few are the people who stay more than two years in call centres. The risk of jeopardizing one's studies as well as health risk (high blood pressure particularly) has caused in the recent years many colleges to ban call center recruiters from campus, like Venkateshwara College in Delhi. Yet the boom is powerful enough to have been staged in May 2008 at a Belgian theatre (Inabox de Hang) in *Call… Cutta* by the Berlin collective Kaegi & Wetzel with the Rimini Protokoll, which shows a girl operating for Descon in Bangalore.

Although English may enable people to earn quick money and is still the language of power as well as of the national and international markets, the lower working exchanges at work are almost entirely in Indian languages and dialects. It is true in the agricultural universe which still largely dominates in India (4/5), but it is also true in industrial surroundings: various lingua franca are reported to develop there among workers from various origins, which differ from the standard official Hindi almost as

[39] If he answers from Delhi or Madras a British customer, the customer from Bedford or Soho is not aware of that, since he is simply calling a London electronic or paramedical company.

[40] A waged tailor earned from 2 à 3000 rs, the minimal salary amounting to 30 rupees a day in agriculture et 50 in industry in 2003. Other call centres may pay less for beginners and slightly more for experienced workers (from about 180 to 500 dollars in Purple). During the last year an important crisis is reported to strike call centres because, on one hand, other job availabilities have recently opened (engineering), making student unemployment less dramatic and, on the other hand, the working conditions in call centres are more and more criticized, particularly on internet, people complaining of being pressurized and even verbally assaulted (racist insults).

much as from English. According to Jason Baldrige's enquiry ([1996] 2002) on the verbal interaction among workers between themselves and with their immediate superiors in the TISCO Company of Jameshedpur[41], the lingua franca developed by the workers is a simplified Hindi with integrates various dialectal and regional words in a language mixture closer to a pidgin than to any specific mother tongue spoken by a given community there. Such pidgins, which are determined by the necessities of communication and not by official directives, exist all over India. Some are quite well known, such as the speeches used in big cosmopolitan megalopolis (Bombay Hindi or Calcutta Hindi), or in big slums such as Dharavi in Bombay were Marathis, Biharis, Tamils and Kannadigas mix and interact daily together. But there are also non urban lingua franca such as the Sadari in the tribal Bihar and Orissa developed by tribes with non inter-intelligible Austric mother tongues which have chosen an Indo-Aryan non standard speech for the basis of their common language rather than any of their own languages or any regional standardized language in order to be able to trade with all other tribal communities in Orissa or Bengal as well. Some of these speeches have been described as Languages of Wider Communication, between pidgins and creoles, by Acharya & al. (1987). Other, such as Nagamese (a mixture of Indo-Aryan Assamese and various Tibeto-Burman Naga languages) have already become full fledged creoles, and have their own channels in the medias (radio or TV) with a wide and diverse sphere of use (Shridhar 1975, 1985).

It is not English which is used as an inter-language at the grassroot level neither for economic transactions nor for daily exchange. The major regional languages are no more used for these purposes, at least not in their standardized form which is the one taught in school. This standardized formal level of the languages (Hindi particularly but other major regional languages too), far from really allowing communication between the various dialectal speeches at a grassroot level, has usually resulted in the same perverse side effects as had previously Persian before 1836 or later English for low educated classes. Hindi is probably the most striking case, since it subsumes extremely different regional varieties (331 according to Srivastava 1994) and it is the official language is some of the less literate States in Northern India (Rajasthan, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh). The imposition of standard Hindi, as soon as the first years of primary school, to children whose mother tongue is a so-called "dialect" of Hindi non recognized as a teaching medium, amounted to create what some scholars labelled semi-lingualism or even a-lingualism.[42]. Such is for instance the case of Bundelkhandi speakers, a "dialect" of Hindi spoken in Madya Pradesh[43], of Chattisgarhi speakers, another "dialect" of Hindi

[41] Tata Iron and Steel Company, one of the most ancient industrial group which employs workers from several States of India.

[42] Such cases have been commented by Geeta B. Nambissan ("Language and schooling of tribal children : issues relating to medium of instruction" in *Language and the state* (1985 : 178-200). See also Shailendra Kumar Singh "Suicide of language identity" (ibid. : 220-225). Theoretically, as part of the Minorities Rights in the Constitution of India (articles 29, 30), a given linguistic community have the right to register the children in a school using their language as teaching medium providing this language is recognized for such purposes and there are at least fourty children in the school and ten in the class. Practically, such directives are seldom implemented. None of the 100 tribal mother tongues spoken in Orissa is used in primary schools, although 81 were recognized as « school medium » in 1981, 58 in 1990: Ho, Kurukh, Mundari, Kharia (Austro-Asiatic) as well as Maithili had, among others, been suppressed. Note that the same is true for some major languages when they happen to be in a the situation of minor languages in a district: this is particularly frequent for Urdu in Hindi-speaking States.

[43] The Hoshangabad Science Teaching Program, which reaches 50 000 primary schools in the early nineties, records the following results: After five years in a Hindi school, the children are unable to understand and to communicate in the language, because the local variety of their 'Hindi' is linguistically very distant from the regional standard variety. Commenting these results, Sumi Krishna (1991: 92) concludes: "Hindi had made these children inarticulate students". The distress of these children taught in Hindi when the standard variety is not their mother tongue can only compare

influenced by Dravidian tribal languages[44]. Practically, the use of standard Hindi as a medium in schools, far from reducing the distance between official Hindi and regional Hindis ("local speeches"), dramatized the consequences of this distance, by lowering the status of such speeches[45]. A similar conclusion was reached by Tiwari (1995), in a report published in the *International Journal of Dravidian Linguistics* after it spent ten years unnoticed by the very commission which had asked for it. The title itself is very much telling: "Linguistic deprivation among the socially disadvantaged in Bihar". The author shows that the children from lower-middle and lower classes, who master only to their 'dialectal' speeches (Bhojpuri, Magahi, Maithili), cannot manage to master standard Hindi, and remain limited to the 'restricted code' (in Bernstein's terms); this language restriction increases their economical distress, preventing them to ever become "empowered" actors in a region known for its feudal ways. Nambissan (2000) convincingly argues that dalit and tribal children are not given equality of chance at school due, largely, to the negative attitude towards their native language, an attitude fostered by the competitive dynamic in favour of 'powerful' languages as well as by the implicit power of the market. The role played by market forces in this attrition process of minor languages (Romaine 2002), particularly the role of the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) imposed by the New Economy Policy has been rightly emphasized by Hasnain (2006a), making the provisions for protecting "endangered" languages more and more irrelevant: "if the dominant group is not going to get benefits from [it], the policy will not be implemented at all (…) No language can escape the wrath of linguistic market". On the whole, "developmentalism and the power of development in the context of restructured globalized world have far reaching implications, much more than the colonial mission of "civilizing the barbaric natives'" (Hasnain 2006b).

3.2. Attitudes in front of such realities: what about as something else than a market?

With the above mentioned consequences of teaching in the language(s) of power only, we are back to the initial schism between the ruling elite and the mass of the dominated people: the persistence in India of English as the lingua franca of politics, education and commerce, notes Di Bona (1998 : 370) echoes or results from a persisting schism between the world of success and achievement and the larger world of those left alongside the road to success. To know English means to belong to the elite, not to know

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with the distress recorded by Gandhi taught in English (see infra). Useless to say that in tribal zones the general result is a "linguistic de-tribalization". (1991: 72). The situation far from having improved, has rather further deteriorated, according to Udayan Narayan studies on the state of tribal languages (Communication in Jaipur festival, January 2008).

[44] According to S. Saxena et K. Mahendroo (1995), who supervised in the nineties a literacy program in Raipur district, the instructions given in the text books were not understood by the children, and even the simplified Hindi used by the field workers did not allow for communication. Although a specific text book in Chattisgarhi was available, thanks to the efforts of a group of young dynamic teachers, it was severely criticized as a potential trigger of disintegrative forces, and not used in the classroom. At the same time, most teachers felt that only the teaching in the standard language will free the pupils from their 'backwardness'. Even worse: the authors relate that two workers of a literacy campaign lost their jobs because they contested local elections in favour of the Kisan Mazdoor Sangathan against the powerful Malguzar family: when they were sanctioned out of their job, they were served a conference in purely shoubh Hindi mainly aimed at humiliating them. The situation is of course going to drastically change with the official recognition of the new State of Chattisgarh.

[45] "Why does the police prepare charge sheets in unreadable language and always give a bad copy to the victims, specially if he or she is poor ? Why are land records maintained in such esoteric language that it requires a Patwari to interpret them, seldom without a bribe ? How could there be any communication in Hindi with people of Jhabua who are going to be affected by Sardar Sarovar ? How could a migrant worker of Chattisgarh explain her pain and suffering to a labour officer who does not understand Chhattisgarhi ? Standard languages divide society" (in Gupta & al., *Language and the state* (1995: 144-151). Jhabua belongs to the area where the Narmada dam has severely endangered the traditional patterns of life and society.

English means being relegated in the provincial margins of intellectual life, the road for success today is English, as it was in 1850, and government school teaching in regional languages are left to those who cannot afford English medium private schools. Education in the major languages only, and particularly in English, has resulted in increasing this schism and marginalizing more and more the disadvantaged, which constitute the bulk of the 19% dropping-out schoolboys in primary schools today. That is why Di Bona (1998) concluded in condemning English education as "deeply anti-democratic", as well as did Gandhi in his own terms (*see infra*).

It is fairly clear how the new competitive dynamics of languages, supported by the institutionalization and politization of the language hierarchies, echoes the change in the social tissue, more and more distant from the old pattern which was the soil for the traditional grass root multilingualism. The reasons for the proliferation of enquiries and critical analysis of the school system, aiming at improving literacy rates (still around 60%, with huge disparities between urban and rural populations, haves and have-nots, boys and girls), are also obvious: what is at stake is the fate of the lower classes, hence the possibility of a truly social democracy in India.

Given the depth and width of the question, it may be vain to summarize the sociolinguistic studies quantifying and comparing the subjective attitudes of speakers vis-à-vis English and major regional languages in the various areas of verbal interaction (family, friends, school, university, entertainment, work, etc.), because they are only concerned, by necessity, with a very limited sampling of the population and cannot represent the mass.[46]. It may equally be irrelevant, in this context, to collect the various contexts for code-switching with English: whether one enjoy or hates the new "Hinglish", the language of the English speaking urban bourgeois classes in the Hindi belt, propagated by Z TV for instance, it has hardly any relation with the "Hirdu" claimed by some scholars to re-unite the common origin and history of the two languages separated by politics. It may finally be vain also, in this context, to analyse the degree and forms of the native "appropriation" of the Indian "brown" English.[47]. The point is that the Indian masses, crucial as they are for the national project of the Founding Fathers who made the Constitution of India, do not master English, and do not master the regional standard when their mother tongue is a minor language or a local variety of the regional language, and are, finally, illiterate up to about 60%[48]. Has the national project of the fifties been successfully implemented, we may wonder.

This project aimed at protecting minority rights by a politic of positive discrimination, while at the same time promoting the notion of a secular democratic nation, a difficult contradiction between the with to erase group specificities (the section of the Fundamental Rights constructs a notion of citizenship devoid of any reference to

[46] The results are quite divergent according to the populations and regions studied, Bengalis being probably the most attached to their mother tongue, and Panjabis at the other extreme (Mukhherjee 1996). According to Anniko Henthal ([1998] in Thirumalai 2003), conversations within the family among educated urban people occur mostly in the mother tongue, but Tamils alternate L1 and English whereas Bengalis do not. As for friendly conversations, they occur in English (41%), or in alternance L1/English (65%), Hindi is exceptionally used among Tamils and Bengalis (for commenting Hindi programs seen on TV).

[47] See on these points the pioneering work of Braj Kachru (1986) and his followers.

[48] In spite of the many studies and statistics, it is difficult to exactly evaluate the ratio of literacy in India, and there is considerable divergence in the figures (depending on what is meant by literate, loss of literacy following school dropping , etc.: 64% according to the more optimistic, National Readership Survey). According to Sharma (2000-2001) who compares various results, «about half of the population enters the millenium unable to sign their name, qui compare divers résultats, and the two thirds of this half are women. And Indian illiterate people are half of the world illiterate population. Just remember that only 53.04% villages have at least primary schools somewhere near by.

cast, religion, language, etc.) and the wish to protect disadvantage groups (the section of the Minority Rights emphasizes these specific references). The very idea of protecting disadvantaged groups implies of course that they are constructed into identified categories – whether thinking of languages (non scheduled or minor languages as opposed to scheduled languages) or of social groups (SC, ST, OBC)[49]. As a matter of fact, the construction of distinctive categories has been shown to increase, leading to the making of "inner boundaries", from colonial India throughout Independent India, both in the field of religion (Hasan 2004) and of languages (Montaut 2004). Linguistically, what increased too was the deficit of the disadvantaged en favour of the Anglophone elite.

If we now try to answer the question of language attitudes in light of this question, we could start listening to the more personal reflections of some of the main actors of Indian culture now. For lack of space here, I will only consider the two extremes.

The first position is Shashi Tharoor's, already mentioned above. Tharoor views English as the ideal and in fact only vehicle for expressing the nation, an idea of the nation in disjunction from any community belonging which ordinary stems for a particular local language and culture. The English language is thus paradoxically associated with the expression of secular democracy, in a context where communalism is more and more perceived as disintegrative force threatening democracy. Tharoor's vision, unaware of his own cast until other schoolboys question him about it, is not radically different from Nehru's, and does not fully embrace the position of the optimistic neo-liberal or of the businessman who only care for immediate profit, even at the cost of their own people, sold to the interests of a globalization which directly serves a tiny fringe of the population, and indirectly a more considerable minority (the middle class), but never the lower classes. The way Tharoor relays Nehru's ideology is eloquent in its soberness (2000: 15): commenting Nehru's address on the Independence night, right after the Partition blood bath, he emphasizes its last sentence -- "it is fitting that at this solemn moment we take the pledge of dedication to the service of India and her people and to the still larger cause of humanity" – as characteristic of an elevated thought. Such a "dedication" finds no room in group identities, since they define us by what divides, and make us believe that it is more important to be a Muslim, a Bodo or a Yadav than an Indian. When our politicians, he goes on, have created a discourse loudly claiming for Assam for Assamese, Jharkhand for Jharkhandis, Maharashtra for Marathis, who still believes in an India for Indians? (2000: 58). In such a view, the nation, its English voice, non-alighment, are consonant with democracy. But the inherent contradictions in its very foundational, the Constitution, pave in a certain manner the way for those politicians who are today blamed for threatening the principle of secularism.

This viewpoint is radically confronted by many intellectuals who, since Gandhi, have experienced English as alienation: "The pillory began with the fourth year", says Gandhi. "I know now that what I took four years to learn of Arithmetic, Algebra, Chemistry and Astronomy, I should have learnt easily in one year, if I had not to learn them through English but Gujarati. My grasp of the subjects would have been easier and clearer. My Gujarati vocabulary would have been richer. I would have made use of such knowledge in my own home. This English medium created an impassable barrier between me and the members of my family, who had not gone through English schools.

[49] Scheduled Casts, Tribal Casts, Other Backward Casts and Tribes. What is a minority language is more ambiguous and no has ever been sought for according to Thakur (1999: 28-9) quoted in Hasnain 2006a).

(…) I was fast becoming a stranger in my own home"[50]. Ray too, a well-known chemist, tried to oppose in 1932 education in a foreign language, foreign therefore bound to extinguish all creativity and originality: "Imagine for a moment what would happen if the English lads were compelled, first of all, to learn Persian or Chinese, and then had to read through the medium of such a tongue".

The depth of the ensuing alienation, has been described by the Anglophone writer Keki Daruwala: "Colonial history shows that language can be as domineering as any occupational army. It supplants myths, whole iconographies, world-view, ideology. It ushers in its own symbols and its own values. An armada of new texts sails in. Old dogmas and bigotries are swept away and exchanged for new ones"[51]. What is at stake is a deep modification of cognitive schemes, which may also permeate Indian languages and produce novels simply translating into the bhashas Western mentalities and forms of knowledge (Rao 1995)[52]. The educational and institutional system of the country now carries on the Western modern frames favoured by the colonial then national "great narrative" in such a way that it is even possible to ignore English and still be 'translated' by English and western values.

At the bottom of this alienation, variously described by its victims and similarly analysed, is a conflict between cognitive and perceptual patterns: the Western rational consciousness which has been inherited from the colonial past by the Indian national ideology relies on the externalization and objectification of the very notion of "culture", whereas such an externality is totally alien to the indigenous perception. The "Indian" feeling of belonging as an empathic relation with the moving intertwined layers of shared knowledge, beliefs and symbol, nature and culture, experienced from within and not seen as an historical legacy, experienced from the outside, has been described by many writers from as different intellectual and social stocks as A. Coomaraswamy, Nirmal Verma (2000: *India and Europe*), Ashis Nandy (1980: *The intimate Enemy*), Anantha Murthy (2008), Gandhi, as well as by foreigners such as Richard Lannoy (*The Speaking Tree*) or Eric Erikson (on Gandhi). In the absence of clear-cut demarcation between the outside and the inside, the I and the objects, man is not to be conceived as the central dominating figure in the universe but as a place for interrelation with the whole of the living (and non living) beings in the creation. As the part of a whole which gives him his identity as much as man contributes giving its identity to the other components of the whole, mankind participates in a global ecosystem where social equity and respect for nature cannot be separated from the local beliefs and their expression in myths or folk tales. The "Indian environmentalist credo" (Agarwal 1994), by offering strong alternatives to the western developmental conceptions, without any statu-quo-ist nostalgias towards past models, by digging innovative solutions from the wealth of tales and folk wisdom, confirms that the regional and local languages convey specific creative categories and mental frames. The whole work of Anupam Mishra (2007), in Hindi, is a witness for such creativity,

[50] (*Harijan* 1938).
[51] Cf. note 15.
[52] See also Ananthamurthy (2008) : "In reaction against the Orientalists and the Westernisers, some of our very intelligent and sophisticated writers have created a new kind of work of art which, apparently, looks Indian and original. Yet, in a very subtle manner, these works are also Indian equivalents of western models. The conceptual framework into which the material is organized is western. The material is Indian – the details of life, the myths, the folklore, the legends are all there, but you feel, "Why should I read this after reading Kafka or Camus ? » You cannot borrow the style of form of these writers without their philosophy, their concept of man", reprinted from 1976, "The search for an Identity" (paper delivered at a seminar on "Identity and Adulthood", in IIT Delhi in 1976).

particularly in the Rajasthani culture and idioms, giving ample evidence that we don't think the same in a regional language, taking into its folds the whole of the folk and literate culture, and in English. But a dialogue can start, as proved by the social forum in Bombay, between both modes of thinking, if the English culture/language is not given absolute prevalence – indeed is treated as one of the many non central traditions that India has incorporated for centuries[53].

Conclusion: the real predicament

If English becomes the only medium for 'real' serious education[54], such a chance for dialogue vanishes and the above commented schism has more and more dramatic consequences. Twenty years ago in a remarkable paper, the Hindi writer Krishna Baldev Vaid, who was a professor of American literature, developed the consequences of that growing schism associated with the growth of secondary English medium schools. He starts wondering why English failed allowing India its legitimate place within the cultural, particularly literary, dialogue between cultures in the world: why is the dialogue not in equal terms? Why (and even today when English Indian literature seemingly achieved that goal) are the regional literatures still ignored by their legitimate partners in the West, which is not the case for Chinese or Japanese literatures, with practically no evolution since 1950, although English should have helped transcending the de-colonization misunderstandings and bitterness. He then notices that English has created an "enchanted circle" and imposed among Indians themselves a mode of communication which bans the majority of Indians out of its "enchanted circle". Leaving aside the unprivileged, pair writers themselves largely ignore the creation going on in regional cultures other than theirs. Among our own literatures, he says, we know only the literature written in our mother tongue, or poor (English) translations of other literatures; *because we have relied on English,* we have failed creating a culture of literary translation and consequently failed establishing an internal dialogue among Indian cultures. Symmetrically, our cultural relations with the West have impoverished by getting limited to this "enchanted world", and have perverted the way we perceive each other[55]. Without acknowledging (and first knowing) what is going on intellectually and culturally outside the enchanted circle, there will be no scope for a true dialogue (in equal terms) with the West. The prerequisite for the international dialogue is of course the inner dialogue, which means, in the matter, gapping the schism created by English.

The state of affairs in translation is certainly far better today than twenty years ago, although there are still not enough direct translations between regional languages, but what has on the contrary fast worsened is the state of cultural awareness and knowledge, as stated by Pollock (2003:3) regarding the state of scholarly knowledge on literary culture:

> With different historical and textual critical methods added to the traditional repertory, vernacular intellectuals well into the 20th century produced works of enormous learning evincing mastery of

[53] On this location of English culture as one of the many "subcultures" of India, see Nandy's *Intimate Ennemy* (1980: 60sq, 107). Ramanujan's vision of Indian culture as essentially 'reflexive" (1999: "Where mirrors are windows"), that is, proceeding by commentaries and critical re-readings as well as uncritical enrichments of the works of the past, commentaries which may be quite subversive, in an interactive and multilayered model, goes well with the vision of Indian culture as a mosaic of subcultures with no hierarchic centre.

[54] Which it is fast becoming : poor state of Government schools, explicit selection of English medium private school as the only access to success and "good life", etc.

[55] My italics. Cf. also: "Intellectual inertia and educational errors that have landed us in this morass"..

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> the entire history of their traditions. Over the past fifty years, however, the ranks of this category of scholar have gradually diminished – so much so that the study of South Asian literary archives in their historical depths has lost two generations of scholars. There is now good reason to wonder whether the next generation will even be able to read Pingal texts in old Gujarati or *riti kavya* in Brajbhasha or ghazals in Indo-Persian. After a century and a half of Anglicization and a certain kind of modernization, it is hardly surprising that the long histories of South Asia literatures no longer find a central place in contemporary knowledge in the subcontinent itself, however much a nostalgia for the old literary cultures and their traditions may continue to influence popular culture.

Such a anxiety is not only valid for the scholarly sphere of production: the state of the educational machinery also affects the roots of creation. By no means does it result in endangering the constitutional languages, at least those having a regional status of major language: the market for Hindi and Malayali book market is flourishing, to take only extreme cases in the scale of literacy in major languages, but most of Malyali printing consists in translations of the cheapest American literature or Japanese mangas, whereas we could recently find in the Hindu as an example of the revival in Hindi writing a full column of Ramdas (???) 50th novel, a very poor accumulation of clichés and artificial imagination with equally poor and artificial language[56]. So, if "heavy" regional languages are not endangered as tools for communication, they are quickly ceasing (they already have ceased?) to voice Indian civilisation, if Indian civilisation relies on the complex and rich links between *mârg* and *deshi* culture, respectively the "frontyard" of the "high" culture and the "backyard" of the "little" traditions, in Ananthamurthy's words (2008: 198-9).

> The tradition of lively dialectical contention between the royal highway and the indigenous in India will be marginalized if globalization encroaches over everything: if everything looses out to the corporate world. This is the danger in India today. Even Yadavs, who are supposedly born into the lowly but noble cast of Krishna in India, have begun to rule in the manner of barbarians. Even the so-called sons of the soil, such as the Shiv Sena in Mumbay, seem only to eager to sign a memorandum of understanding with polluting and exploitative industries which threaten to deplete the fertile backyard. There is still a fertile backyard. But if this continues, there will be no place for either a leisurely frontyard or for a dark and fertile backyard, in the industrial and corporate no-man's land which we increasingly inhabit in India today.

Along with Anglicization and within the "certain kind of modernization" mentioned by Pollock, we can range language modernization, specially for Hindi, which evolved into such a lexically Sanskritized and syntactically or discursively Anglicized cryptic construct that it totally lost touch with the lived-in culture of people: "the new Hindi is a dead language", said U.N. Tiwari as soon as the mid sixties, becoming alien to the writers who started living in a Hindi lived-in culture such as Kamleshwar, Krishna Sobati, Krishna Baldev Vaid opened to the Urdu and Panjabi culture and language (Bhalla 2006). A dire statement echoed by Agnihotri (2002: 33) more than ten years ago, commenting the politization of the mutual alienation of Hindi and Urdu: "by the 1990s, the linguistic consequences of these primarily political moves were becoming increasingly transparent. A new generation had grown up: unfamiliar not only with Ghalib and Faiz but also with Kabir and Premchand; nor could they understand Prasad or Nirala (…).; the stapple diet was Bombay film Hindi. The damage that inevitably accompanies the loss of literary sensitivity in a community is there for everyone to see".

[56] Devoid of all the (bollywood-like) qualities which made the success of popular writers like Gulshan Nanda during the 70-80ies.

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