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LINGUISTIC MARGINS AND DIGITAL COLONIALISM: WESTERN PAHADI LANGUAGES IN HIMACHAL PRADESH

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Abstract: The paper attempts to understand how linguistic imperialism and digital colonialism affect the western Pahadi or Himachali languages. Digital technologies have been considered a boon for civilizations all over the world. The fundamental question is what happens to the Western Pahadi languages in a wider context where digital technologies are used in the context of linguistic imperialism and digital colonialism. Negi (2022) had identified forty-one languages in Himachal Pradesh. Out of these, twenty-five belong to the Indo-Aryan family and remaining sixteen to the Tibeto-Burman family. Out of these, the tribal languages of Himachal Pradesh are classified under two major language families: Tibeto-Burman (TB) and Indo-Aryan (IA). Many of the Western Pahadi languages have been declared endangered languages. With the help of concepts of linguistic imperialism and digital colonialism, the context of Himachal Pradesh has been analysed to reach a conclusion. The paper illustrates that the digital environment in the state reflects structural and ideological inequalities which is a cause of concern as it is reducing visibility and vitality of Western Pahadi languages. It is clear that digital technologies give more space to dominant languages like Hindi and English, which Skutnabb Kangas refers to as 'killer languages,' and have marginalized the languages of Himachal Pradesh. Due to the low prestige of these languages in relation to the dominant languages, substantial presence of these languages is negligible in the digital space. The condition of the Western Pahadi languages is almost similar in offline as well as online formal settings.

Keywords: *linguistic imperialism, digital colonialism, Himachali languages, western Pahadi languages, endangered languages*

Introduction

Himachal Pradesh is a linguistically diverse state where numerous languages are spoken belonging to different language families. They are known as Western Pahadi languages due to their geographical presence in the western part of Himalayas. But the linguistic diversity could not be taken for granted, it needs to be protected and the languages existing in the state need to be preserved. The linguistic diversity in Himachal Pradesh has come under crisis owing to various factors starting from the speakers' level to the government level. The marginalization of western Pahadi language is taking place in contemporary times due to linguistic imperialism and digital colonialism. The paper undertakes to look

into this in a wider perspective taking the linguistic landscape of Himachal Pradesh in consideration along with emergence of digital technologies in the state. Negi (2022) had identified forty-one languages in Himachal Pradesh. Out of these, twenty-five belong to the Indo-Aryan family and remaining sixteen to the Tibeto-Burman family. Out of these, the tribal languages of Himachal Pradesh are classified under two major language families: Tibeto-Burman (TB) and Indo-Aryan (IA).

According to the *Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger*, several languages in Himachal Pradesh are endangered, particularly within the Western Himalayan region. These include mainly the Indo-Aryan and Tibeto-Burman language families. The situation is not due to linguistic limitations only, there are several reasons behind this. Their decline is not due to linguistic limitations but to social and institutional factors such as reduced use in homes, lack of intergenerational transmission, and absence from school curricula. The script for the languages have not been evolved so far. Although script does not exist and every language could be written with the help of IPA symbols, no initiation in this regard has been taken in the state so far. Christopher Moseley in *Encyclopedia of the World's Endangered Languages (Ed.)* states that the scholars working on endangered languages follow a five-grade scale to determine their status of endangerment. The scale consists of potentially endangered languages, endangered languages, seriously/severely endangered languages, moribund languages, and extinct languages. Western Pahadi languages which are endangered are at various stages as per this scale. Since most of these languages are unofficial and often unscripted, they receive little state support and are not taught in the formal classroom settings, leading younger generations to shift toward dominant languages like Hindi and English. They are also forced to study Sanskrit language at school level. As a result, the indigenous languages have limited visibility in education, administration, and digital spaces, making them increasingly vulnerable despite their deep cultural and historical significance in the region. The problem is not that these languages cannot perform such functions, but that they face many limitations, as they often have no standard script, no textbooks, and no developed learning materials. The Himachal Pradesh Official Language Act, 1975 (amended in 2019) establishes a hierarchical linguistic framework where Hindi and Sanskrit are institutionalized, while other Western Pahadi languages remain on the periphery in administrative and educational contexts. This is also clear from what Negi argues:

> "Now people prefer living in the urban centres for better education and employment opportunities. This has led to change in language usage pattern and the population is fast changing from a predominantly monolingual Pahari to multilingual Hindi speaker. The multilingual environment in cities has given rise to diaglossia where a language takes a low variety role which is used in informal settings and the other takes high variety which is used in formal settings" (Negi 75).

It is clear from this that the speakers of Western Pahadi languages are becoming multilingual Hindi speakers. This could appear as a positive development as far as multilingualism is concerned but this development is not simple, it has complex and wider implications for the Western Pahadi languages because there is a continued decline of the number of speakers speaking these languages. This is not the kind of multilingualism that should be expected to flourish in India. India inclusive and balanced multilingualism should be the guiding principle. Therefore, it becomes important to understand the reasons behind this. It is a well-known fact that some of the bigger (killer in terms of Skutnabb Kangas) languages in India are overshadowing the Western Pahadi languages spoken in Himachal Pradesh and in other words it could be stated that Western Pahadi languages are pushed to the margins. The presence of Hindi and English has been significantly noticed in Himachal Pradesh at the cost of Western Pahadi languages which is an alarming signal for taking the preventive measures to conserve and promote linguistic diversity existing in Himachal Pradesh. It is clear that digital technologies give more space to dominant languages like Hindi and English, which Tove Skutnabb Kangas refers to as 'killer languages,' and have marginalized the languages of Himachal Pradesh. As Tove Skutnabb Kangas explains the status of languages in her comprehensive book *Linguistic Genocide in Education—or Worldwide Diversity and Human Rights?:*

> "The top languages in terms of number of speakers are the really very big killer languages. English is the foremost among them…More than ninety-five percent of the world's languages have fewer than one million speakers each" (46).

She states that the top languages having larger numbers of speakers are really very big killer languages. English is at the top among all these killer languages. The speakers of these languages have more structural power and material resources as compared to the speakers of other languages and this is one of the reasons that the speakers of top languages are increasing. She further states that less than 300 languages (big and middle sized languages) are spoken by 95% of the world's population. This implies that 95% of the languages are spoken by 5% of the world's population. This is an alarming situation in the world. The situation of Himachal Pradesh is much more critical as compared to the situation of the world where the number of speakers of Western Pahadi languages are diminishing as intergenerational transfer of these languages is facing serious problems as they are shifting to Hindi multilingualism.

The Politics of Language in 21st Century

Languages have been the centres of politics since time immemorial and the same is happening still in the 21st century. Earlier this kind of imperialism flourished in the form of colonial education and English as the medium of instruction but in the 21st century the

scenario has changed. In the contemporary situation three interconnected concepts exist which include linguistic margins, linguistic imperialism and digital colonialism in the context of this paper to understand this. The linguistic margins mean the languages are reduced to the peripheral positions through a systematic setup. This is accomplished with the help of an ideology which is spread in the form of a mental imperialism known as linguistic imperialism. This ideology emphasises the uselessness of some languages and reduces the languages to the peripheral positions and it is accomplished with the help of a kind of technology leading to the idea of digital colonialism. The languages are reduced to the peripheral positions through systematic planning. This process advances through three interconnected factors which include ideology, policy and education. The targeted languages are excluded from the policy and education through the ideology (see Skutnabb-Kangas 2000; Pennycook 1998). Skutnabb-Kangas states that education is provided through dominant languages and the mother tongues are excluded, forcing children to study dominant languages. This is evident from the following:

> "But today the education of both majorities and minorities in most western countries (and also elsewhere) functions in conflict with most scientifically sound principles about how education leading to high levels of multilingualism should be organized. As has been shown, education participates in attempting and committing linguistic genocide in relation to minorities" (Skutnabb-Kangas 569).

It implies that the scientific principles which should be the foundation stones of education are ignored deliberately which could bring high levels of multilingualism. In this way education is merely used as a tool of committing linguistic genocide in relation to minorities. In other words it could be stated that no efforts are made to promote a high level of multilingualism through education. This in return gives rise to the phenomenon of linguistic imperialism.

Linguistic imperialism is a concept professed by Robert Phillipson (1992) which states that the colonial rule ends in the colonized states at one point of time but the dominance of certain languages continues even after that. The dominance of the English language is not the outcome of natural process but through a systematic process of ideology imposed through institutions. During the colonial rule language was used as a vehicle of control by emphasising the importance of English to modernity, rationality and also for civilization. The colonial education system that propagated a systematic linguistic hierarchy, the structure clearly reflected and reproduced the governing political power of that time. This linguistic hierarchy doesn't end with the end of colonial rule but it still persists and leads to what is known as neo-colonial domination and in this way the indigenous languages are reduced to periphery and English occupies the power through governance and education make it more prestigious than indigenous languages. In this way the colonial education policies established the English language as a dominant and superior language. English

was presumed as the language of development and it was established through educational structures and the local languages are considered as obstacles in the path of development representing backwardness.

He further argues that linguistic imperialism proceeds along with the structure of imperialism which existed in various domains including communication, culture, education, media, economy and politics. It entails exploitation, injustice and inequality based on hierarchy which perpetuates the dominance of big languages. Linguistic imperialism is structural in nature because the dominant languages are provided with more material resources and other infrastructure. It is primarily ideological which leads to the glorification of the dominant languages through beliefs, attitudes and imagery. This also involves stigmatization of local languages so as to establish the linguistic hierarchy. It proposes a different kind of hegemony where dominant languages are promoted as being "normal" and other local languages are subjected to a lower position in the hierarchy being "abnormal". The rights of the speakers of dominant and other languages are also unequal. The speakers of dominant languages have more rights as compared to the other languages existing in the community. As explained above there is also consolidation of dominant languages and pushing other languages to the margins or excluding them. It is also a form of linguicism like racism, sexism, and class which existed in many societies. It is not like that there is no resistance against linguistic imperialism, it is resisted by scholars and communities (Phillipson, 1992, 2009).

If one tries to understand this in context of British education policy in India one will understand that Macaulay's Minute on Indian Education (1835) was a foundation stone in establishing this kind of linguistic imperialism which emphasised the creation of a class which would be Indian in blood and colour but English in taste and it also led to development of linguistic hierarchy where local languages were placed at the bottom.

Alastair Pennycook (1998) goes beyond political and economic effects of linguistic imperialism and states that it also works at the epistemological level. What constitutes knowledge is also determined through the use of the English language. The other languages have no say regarding what constitutes knowledge. What is rational is also decided by the use of English. What is scientific and what is not scientific is also reflected through the language. English is the language which decides what is to be established as truth as it is claimed to be the scholarly language. What is to be known and thought is also decided by the English language. It could be concluded that English has occupied almost every domain at the epistemological level. It becomes imperative to understand here that in this way the local or lesser documented languages are excluded from all these domains and as a consequence promotes linguistic imperialism. Alastair Pennycook goes even further and expresses the inequality existing between the languages and states that this inequality spreads through systematic implementation of an ideology where some

languages are considered civilized and fit for knowledge and others are considered backward and unfit for knowledge. In this way the minority languages are reduced to periphery. As Alastair Pennycook explains:

> The point here is that if on the one hand we need to understand how, as language teachers, we walk in Crusoe's footsteps, how European languages and cultures have been forced upon other people, we need, on the other hand, to consider how that footprint in the sand, the threatening mark of the colonized Other, has left a long cultural imprint through the discourses of colonialism. (16)

This clearly shows that English language teachers are walking in Crusoe's footsteps and forcing European languages and culture. Similar ideas were proposed by numerous scholars and it was held that states propagate linguistic hierarchy which was one of the outcomes of the colonial era and in this way the native languages are discriminated against and are reduced into obscurity. Canagarajah (2005) comes out with the idea of linguistic globalization where dominant languages are used at the cost of local languages. Similarly, Annamalai (2001) states that education policies which take multilingualism into consideration perpetuate linguistic hierarchy rather than dismantling it. He further states that multilingualism in India is never considered as an asset but is managed through dominant languages Hindi and English. This is similar to what has been stated by Negi in the context of Himachal Pradesh. As E. Annamalai points out, "The common feature between national bilingualism and school trilingualism is the predominant bilingualism in English and Hindi, the two official languages of the Union as well as the two link languages of the country" (53).

Now the fundamental question which arises is where other languages are if the national bilingualism is predominantly in English and Hindi. This implies that other Indian languages are pushed to the margins because two dominant link languages are favoured in the country. This again favours linguistic imperialism.

According to Pierre Bourdieu (1982; 1991) language is not only a medium of communication but also as a mechanism of power. The social position of a person impacts the language one uses and the people interact according to their positions and accordingly they have power according to their different rights, one superior and other inferior. Linguistic interactions are the reflections of the participants' social positions. On the analogy of economic market he uses the word linguistic market in order to make this idea understandable. Building on this discussion, Bourdieu further clarifies how schools and labour markets together produce linguistic hierarchies:

"The unification of the labour market (including the development of the state administration and the civil service)—which played the most decisive role in devaluing dialects and establishing the new hierarchy of linguistic practices." (49)

He means thereby that schools and the labour market collude together to establish a linguistic hierarchy where one language is made superior and valuable and other as local dialects which are represented as inferior and valueless. The educational and economic opportunities are available for some languages at the cost of local languages existing in the area and in this way pushing them to the margins. Along with this it is worthwhile to understand the idea of Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o to make the discussion comprehensive and to visualize it in a wider perspective. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's *Decolonising the Mind* (1987) is one of the most influential texts to explore the relationship between language and power. He argued that linguistic domination is central to the process of colonization of mind. The imposition of European languages not only suppresses indigenous speech but also changes the mental structure of the colonized. According to him, language was not only a medium of communication but as a vehicle of culture and identity. The argument is clear from the following from Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o:

The choice of language and the use to which language is put is central to a people's definition of themselves in relation to their natural and social environment… Language has always been at the heart of the two contending social forces" (Ngũgĩ 4).

It is clear from this that the choice of language and the use to which language is put is most important because it defines people in connection with their natural and social environment.

It is worthwhile to understand what constitutes digital colonialism which existed in India and Himachal Pradesh. In their influential work *The Costs of Connection* (2019), Nick Couldry and Ulises Mejías argue that there existed a kind of colonialism which is propagated through various digital infrastructures existing in contemporary India. They theorized a new concept called data colonialism where colonialism is professed and propagated through data. This kind of colonialism proceeds through numerous dimensions but here the focus is on how it is used linguistically and as a result strengthening linguistic colonialism. Various digital platforms support dominant languages and the knowledge propagated through these languages and accordingly it is pre-determined whose experiences will be spread and remain visible on the digital platforms. The other experiences which are in local languages are not visible on digital platforms due to lack of digital support for these languages. Like linguistic imperialism, digital colonialism again preserves the linguistic hierarchies which are colonial and get the digital support through various digital infrastructures. The culture and communication in local languages doesn't find space and structures to make themselves visible on various digital platforms. In this

way local languages are lost to obscurity. In this way there happens to be silencing of lesser documented regional languages by excluding them.

It is clear from the above discussion that intersection between linguistic imperialism and digital colonialism is of prime importance to understand marginalization of local languages in context of Western Pahadi languages existing in Himachal Pradesh because their consolidated consequences are responsible for the contemporary linguistic scenario of Himachal Pradesh.

Western Pahadi languages in Himachal Pradesh

The documentation of 25 languages spoken in Himachal Pradesh was done by The People's Linguistic Survey of India (PLSI). Two major language families existed there: Indo-Aryan and Tibeto-Burman. On the basis of linguistic features, these languages can be grouped into four broad categories: Pahari languages, Tibeto-Burman or indigenous languages, Pahari languages with Punjabi influence, and outer languages. Through this classification the impact of historical, geographical, and sociocultural interactions have been shown. It is clear that tribal languages (Indo-Aryan and Tibeto-Burman both) are more prone to endangerment as compared to Pahadi languages existing in the state due to lack of support in primary education (Negi 22). This is clear from the following:

> In Himachal, language policy and language-in-education policy are accused of ignoring local languages because these policies don't have a role for the local languages. Himachal Pradesh does not have an independent education policy and they follow the national policy on education (NPE). NPE recommends use of local languages in education as medium of instruction along with the recognized languages Hindi or English. (Negi 22).

The situation in contemporary India in general and Himachal Pradesh in particular is the same in the context of linguistic imperialism where Hindi and English are considered of paramount importance but other languages are considered to have less value or not value. English is a second language in India and Hindi is the official language but the actual scenario is quite different. The colonial linguistic hierarchy is still persisting in Himachal Pradesh where English is claimed to be an international language and Hindi as a national language and the Western Pahadi languages existing in Himachal Pradesh are forced to be at peripheral positions like informal language situations. The non-Hindi languages like Western Pahadi languages of Himachal Pradesh are marginalized.

According to the *Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger*, endangered languages exist in almost every state of India but the number is higher in the Northeast and Central-East regions, where tribal populations are more dominant (UNESCO, 2010). In context of

Himachal Pradesh, the following languages have been listed as definitely endangered: Kinnauri, Baghati, Bharmauri, Chambeali, Churahi, Hinduri, Kanashi, Kului, Mahasui, Manchad, Mandeali, Sirmauri, Spiti, and Tinan (UNESCO 2010). In addition to it, Kangri language spoken in Kangra, Hamirpur, Una and a few parts of Mandi and Chamba is also listed as a definitely endangered language (UNESCO 2024). It is clear that the idea of linguistic imperialism by Robert Phillipson (1992, 2009) is existing in Himachal Pradesh in the context of Western Pahadi languages which are non-existent in formal spaces of communication including schools, colleges, universities and various digital spaces. Only very few Western Pahadi languages existed in the digital spaces symbolically which are mostly for non-serious communications including jokes, comedy, humour and religious purposes.

The major domains in the state which include communication, culture, education, media, economy and politics carry a structure of linguistic imperialism as in these domains only dominant languages Hindi and English are used. The speakers of Western Pahadi languages are discriminated against and are exploited on the basis of a linguist hierarchy existing in the state where Hindi and English are at the top. These circumstances in the state perpetuate injustice and equality. This is not the whole truth as the dominant languages Hindi and English are provided with more material resources and other infrastructure. As a result it becomes clear that linguistic imperialism here is structural. The government policies invest in Hindi and English languages through many ways like writing textbooks, curriculum and official communication systems in these languages. The government, the universities, colleges, and schools establish departments for Hindi, English and Sanskrit and they also use technologies which favour the first two languages as these technologies can be accessed through these languages and other languages are left out by providing no funding or little funding and minimal institutional recognition. This is not only structural but ideological too because there is an underlying ideology behind this. The ideology glorifies Hindi and English in Himachal Pradesh through beliefs, attitudes and by creating appropriate imagery. It stigmatizes Western Pahadi languages. In this way there exists a hegemony where Hindi, English and Sanskrit are promoted as being "normal" and other languages are put at the bottom in the hierarchy. The speakers of Hindi and English have more rights as compared to the speakers of Western Pahadi languages. Hindi and English are used in every school, government office, court and various competitive examinations and in this way the speakers of these languages are privileged. Sanskrit is also taught in every school. The speakers of western Pahadi language cannot use their mother languages in all such domains and in this way their rights become limited to access services in the state. There is consolidation of Hindi and English in the state and other Western Pahadi languages are at the margins. This could be considered as a case of linguicism like racism, sexism, and class in the words of Phillipson. It could not be inferred that nobody resists against this kind of linguistic imperialism. There have been scholars and community members who express their resistance against this and advocate

for the promotion of their mother languages for the conservation of their cultures and identities through the languages.

The idea of Alastair Pennycook (1998) is equally relevant in the state of Himachal Pradesh. What constitutes knowledge is decided by Hindi and English languages. What is rational and what is irrational is also decided by Hindi and English. In fact truth is also established through the usage of Hindi and English in the state. There is no scope for local languages because the education policies and state policies don't support these languages. Therefore, the actual truth and knowledge existing in the state which could be understood with the help of these local languages is excluded and never finds a place for becoming accessible for the global audience. This kind of linguistic imperialism is governing the scenario of the state as far as linguistic hierarchy is concerned. In the state of Himachal Pradesh the existing linguistic hierarchy leads to a kind of inequality where Hindi, English and Sanskrit have become dominant and superior languages and the Western Pahadi languages have been reduced into informal and inferior languages by declaring them unfit for knowledge transmission and knowledge generation tacitly. Hindi, English and Sanskrit have become the only civilized languages and other languages are at the peripheral level for informal usage where their speakers are decreasing day by day as per UNESCO discussed above. Then, again it is equally relevant here that the English teachers are walking in Crusoe's shoes and promote European and dominant culture and languages at the cost of local languages. One could understand the consequences of such settings in the digital space too, for it will be the direct outcome of what children acquire in their formal schoolings where certain languages are given preference over the others.

It is imperative to understand that the linguistic hierarchy which had been established in the state as a consequence of colonial era is still in progress in the state and Western Pahadi languages are discriminated against with the agencies of Hindi and English. As a result of this the native languages are reduced to obscurity and it becomes a matter of concern. The idea of Canagarajah as discussed above where he comes out with the concept of linguistic globalization is not far from the reality of Himachal Pradesh where Hindi and English are used at the cost of Western Pahadi languages. The local languages lack institution support and technological backup to flourish freely and the dominant languages Hindi and English have occupied the space of almost every formal domain. The state of multilingualism is not celebrated in Himachal Pradesh and it directly and indirectly perpetuates linguistic hierarchy which as mentioned above was the product of colonialism rather than dismantling it. Such linguistic hierarchy should have been dismantled but rather it is flourishing under the umbrella of Hindi and English languages. This is what has been stated by Annamalai in connection with multilingualism in India.

On the lines of Pierre Bourdieu, the power equation exists in the context of Western Pahadi languages in Himachal Pradesh. In Himachal Pradesh the participants who speak Hindi and English are considered relatively powerful in comparison to those who converse in Western Pahadi languages. The social positions become important as explained by him professing the idea of linguistic market. The binary of superior and inferior is created by the usage of languages considering both dominant and local languages. There is again a linkage of schools and labour market where the purpose is to establish a linguistic hierarchy where Hindi and English are made superior and valuable for the opportunities of growth are also available for the speakers of Hindi and English not for the speakers of Western Pahadi languages. The opportunities of growth include educational as well as economic both. The possible negative outcome of such manufactured circumstances is that Western Pahadi languages are declared inferior and valueless. One can easily find examples in many schools, government and private both where students are discouraged to converse in their mother languages. In this way they are conditioned to use Hindi and English. The presence of other local languages is diminished and it is not even conceivable that the languages will show their presence in the digital space. Social media on the other hand provide opportunities for local languages but the content which is generated in these languages by social media influences could not be considered as a medium of serious discussion except a few. The content is limited in quantity and substandard in quality.

Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's *Decolonising the Mind* (1987) warns us about the danger of imposition of European languages and the relationship between language and power proposed by him is equally applicable in Himachal Pradesh but in a slightly different sense. The displacement of African languages took place due to colonial education and dominance of colonial culture. The similar kind of displacement is also visible in Himachal Pradesh where Western Pahadi languages have been pushed to the margins by schooling which favoured Hindi and English. The problems faced in proper inter-generational transfer of Western Pahadi languages to the younger generations due to education, migration and low prestige attached to these languages is a form of actual language loss verified by him in the African context. The idea is again similarly applicable in the case of digital technology where dominant languages Hindi and English have the privilege to be used on digital platforms through algorithms and technological infrastructure. The linguistic hierarchy which existed offline has been transferred to online medium as well. The reason is that the Hindi-English combination is strengthening linguistic colonization. These languages changed the mental structure of the people due to the usage of dominant languages. It also impacts the culture and identity of the people existing in the state. This also changes the people's own definition as per the usage of languages.

It is clear that Western Pahadi languages in Himachal Pradesh exist at the linguistic margins. Western Pahadi languages are finely used in oral and cultural situations but on the other hand are almost absent in formal education. Similarly, these languages are rarely used in print media but a little presence of Western Pahadi languages is there in digital platforms for non-serious representations like humour, self-appreciation, comedy shows and religious songs. In this way, it became important that linguistic imperialism and digital colonialism produce and perpetuate linguistic margins.

These tendencies create linguistic hierarchies and in this way also control technological infrastructures perpetuating these hierarchies. The linguistic dominance which persisted during the colonial era still exists in Himachal Pradesh. Consequently, it could be concluded that due to dominance of Hindi and English languages over Western Pahadi languages in Himachal Pradesh language has become a tool of stratification. Language decides who could speak, who could be heard and whose voices could be excluded.

Now it is important to have a glimpse of what challenges Western Pahadi languages are facing in incorporating them into education. There is a lack of textbooks and trained teachers in Western Pahadi languages. Institution support is also not there for these languages as the formal training programs are conducted through Hindi and English but sometimes Western Pahadi languages are used as a communication tool in limited ways. That is why there is a problem of inter-generation transfer of these languages and hence, their speakers are decreasing. The tribal languages out of these Western Pahadi languages are at risk of gradual extinction.

Society in general holds the attitude that Western Pahadi languages are inferior and impractical. They assume that Western Pahadi languages do not have any economic or academic value. Therefore, they neglect these languages and go for Hindi and English. This creates problems in inter-generational transfer of these languages as this mind-set discourages them from learning and using Western Pahadi languages leading to language decline.

The implementation of multilingual education in Himachal Pradesh faces multiple problems related to administrative hurdles. There are constitutional provisions and education policies which advocate for instruction in mother languages but due to lack of clear-cut frameworks and meagre funding Western Pahadi languages are not incorporated in curriculum and also lack structural preservation initiatives. Globalization also has its negative repercussions on Western Pahadi languages in Himachal Pradesh. Younger generations go to cities for education and employment and in this process they automatically adopt Hindi and English for enhancing their social and economic mobility. This also affects inter-generational transfer of Western Pahadi languages due to their preference for dominant languages over indigenous languages.

Conclusion

Linguistic imperialism and digital colonialism are to be handled in an effective way. In *Language Death* (2000), David Crystal emphasises six key factors which are important for revitalizing endangered languages. Applying his six key factors in the context of linguistic imperialism and digital colonialism, it is important for the speakers to enhance the prestige of their language in the community where Hindi and English are used as dominant languages. The speakers of Western Pahadi languages should gain wealth and in this way their language will gain importance over Hindi and English. They should also accumulate legal power over the speakers of Hindi and English and in this way their language will be noticed. There should be a massive strength of Western Pahadi languages in the education system. They demand that Western Pahadi languages should be integrated with multilingual education in Himachal Pradesh. The speakers should write their languages and they should also use electronic technology. They should use Western Pahadi languages in digital spaces.

Giving space to Western Pahadi languages in the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution will revitalize Western Pahadi languages. It will give them legal protection and also promote them in education and media. It will preserve the cultural and historical significance of these languages. But while doing this it is also important to note that it is not enough to include the languages in the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution as there have been languages which even after being induced in the Schedule are losing their vitality and their speakers are decreasing. Therefore, it is important to support their languages through schools, colleges, universities, media, and government use. Community efforts are also required in promoting their mother languages.

There is an urgent need of developing textbooks and training teachers in Western Pahadi languages. Western Pahadi languages should be integrated with the curriculum and the speakers should change their attitudes towards western pride languages and should foster linguistic pride in their languages. Digital documentation of languages and community led initiatives should tackle the impact of globalization to ensure effective inter-generational linguistic transfer. The National Policy on Education 2020 provides many solutions like incorporating Indian languages into the educational system, providing quality learning resources and implementing multilingual politics by promoting mother languages as medium of instruction. Revitalization of Western Pahadi languages could be done by implementing the policy guidelines effectively (Swadeshi 2022).

The solution lies in decolonizing language and technology which could be done on two levels by making the speakers aware about future endangerment of their languages and by promoting lesser-documented language in the technology. Protecting Western Pahadi languages matters in real life and online spaces both. It is not solely about preserving and

protecting languages but it is about justice, identity and the right of every community to be heard in various spaces.

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