



## LANGUAGE AS A BRIDGE: UNDERSTANDING AND RESOLVING COMMUNICATION BARRIERS

\* Laxmi V. Ambhorkar

\*\* Prof. Kavita D. Dharmadhikari

\* Research student, Department of Geography-Post Graduate Teaching and Research Centre, Sir Parashurambhau College (Autonomous), Pune-30

\*\* Head of Department, Defence and Strategic Studies, SPDM College, Shirpur, Dhule (MH)

**Abstract**

This research paper dives into the complex dynamics of language diversity and its impact on effective communication. In today's globalized world, where interactions facilitate development and cultures, the role of language as both a facilitator and a potential barrier in communication cannot be overstated. This research paper navigates through the complexities of linguistic diversity, exploring the multifaceted nature of language barriers and their influence on interpersonal and intercultural communication. By examining challenges this paper further shed light on profound effects of language barriers on interpersonal relationships, business transactions, healthcare interactions, education, and societal integration. The paper synthesizes empirical evidence, theoretical frameworks, and practical insights to propose comprehensive solutions for enhancing communication across languages. It advocates for proactive measures, including language education, translation tools, intercultural training, and policy developments, fostering a more inclusive and connected global community.

**Keywords:** Language barrier, communication, diversity, strategies

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In an ever-evolving world characterized by globalization and interconnectivity, the diversity of languages stands as both a testament to humanity's rich cultural heritage and a potential barrier to effective communication. Language plays a significant role in speech, understanding, and communication which is primarily crucial in acquiring and producing knowledge. Also, a fundamental aspect of human civilization, serves as a conduit for thoughts, emotions, and information. However, this seemingly unifying force can also become a formidable barrier, impeding meaningful connections and mutual understanding. The varying structures, idiomatic expressions, and

cultural nuances inherent in languages often pose challenges that extend beyond mere linguistic differences, impacting interactions on personal, professional, and societal levels.

Indian Constitution recognized 22 languages as its official language. Apart from these languages a smaller number of languages are placed in school curriculum. Most of the tribal and minority mother tongues have no place in the educational system of India. The children who enter schools with these mother tongues are forced into a dominant language 'submersion' education with a subtractive effect on their mother tongues (Mohanty, 2009, p. 268). Domination of one language over the

other will be very harmful not merely to the members but also to the entire society. People not using their mother tongue gradually leads to its death. Death of any language means death of identity and culture. The Stance of mutual acceptance, mutual accommodation, complementary and preservative relationship between languages has not been affecting other language speakers. Gradually English is becoming a more hegemonic language in higher educational institutions in India. (1) The significance of this study lies not just in dissecting the issues but in offering proactive strategies to overcome language barriers. By identifying and understanding the obstacles, we pave the way for the development and implementation of effective measures. These solutions encompass linguistic education initiatives, innovative technological tools, intercultural competency training, and policy frameworks that advocate for inclusivity.

### Objectives

While studying about language barriers and communication barriers some objectives have been formed, they are as follows:

1. To explore the nature of language diversity and communication barriers arising from linguistic differences.
2. To evaluate existing strategies for mitigating language barriers and highlight the role of technology in bridging language gaps.
3. To propose effective solutions and best practices that can effectively mitigate language barriers, improve communication.

By addressing these objectives, the research paper aims to comprehensively explore the complexities of language diversity, analyze the barriers it presents, and

propose effective strategies to foster improved communication across linguistic divides.

### Data and Methodology:

#### Language Diversity amongst Society:

- It's estimated that there are around 7,000 languages spoken worldwide. Some societies exhibit a high level of linguistic diversity, with numerous languages coexisting within a relatively small geographic area.
- Others may have only a few dominant languages. Languages are deeply intertwined with cultural identity and heritage. They carry the history, traditions, values, and beliefs of a society.
- Preserving and promoting these languages is crucial for safeguarding cultural diversity and heritage. Many languages are endangered, facing the risk of extinction. Globalization and the dominance of major languages often lead to the decline of smaller, indigenous languages.
- Efforts to document, revitalize, and preserve endangered languages are crucial to maintaining linguistic diversity. Language diversity can pose challenges, especially in communication across linguistic boundaries. However, it also presents opportunities for cultural exchange, diversity appreciation.

When we talk about diversity of languages in India, it is observed that there are 720 with native and endangered language are preserved in India. In urban and developed regions of India, the linguistic landscape is characterized by a prevalence of major languages and multilingualism due to migration, commerce, education, and urbanization.

(Table 1)

Hindi	As the official language of the Indian government, Hindi holds a dominant position in administrative, educational, and formal communication spheres. It's widely spoken in urban centers and serves as a lingua franca in many regions.
English	English is used extensively in business, education, administration, and the media. It serves as a link language, facilitating communication among people from diverse linguistic backgrounds.
Regional Languages	Different states in India have their own official languages, such as Marathi in Maharashtra, Tamil in Tamil Nadu, Bengali in West Bengal, and many others. These regional languages are used for both formal and informal communication.

India is also home to numerous indigenous tribal communities, each with its distinct language, culture, and traditions. These tribal languages often face the risk of extinction due to various social, economic, and political factors.

(Table 2)

Tribal Languages	There are over 100 tribal languages spoken by indigenous communities across India. For example, languages like Gondi, Santali, Khasi, and Bhili are spoken among various tribal groups.
Oral Tradition	Many tribal languages have primarily oral traditions with limited or no script. The transmission of knowledge, customs, and folklore occurs orally within these communities.
Threat of Extinction	Due to factors like globalization, urbanization, migration, and socio-economic pressures, many tribal languages are endangered. With younger generations often opting for dominant languages like Hindi or regional languages, the native tongues are at risk of fading away.

Examples:

Santali language spoken by the Santal tribe, primarily found in the states of Jharkhand, West Bengal, Odisha, and Bihar. Santali is a Munda language and holds significant cultural value for the Santal community. Despite efforts to preserve it, the language faces challenges due to the encroachment of dominant languages and modernization. Efforts are being made to document, promote literacy, and revitalize Santali to ensure its survival and preserve the unique cultural

heritage of the Santal tribe. The coexistence of developed urban societies with dominant languages and indigenous tribal communities with their diverse native languages reflects the intricate tapestry of linguistic diversity in India, highlighting both the richness and challenges faced by these varied linguistic groups. (2)

#### Communication Barriers:

- In regions where multiple languages are spoken, misunderstandings can occur due to linguistic



differences. For instance, a Hindi speaker might interpret certain phrases or words differently when spoken in a regional language, leading to miscommunication.

- Despite Hindi and English being widely used in administrative and educational settings, many individuals, especially in remote or tribal areas, might have limited proficiency in these languages. This can hinder effective communication with government authorities, resulting in difficulties in accessing public services or understanding legal documents.
- When translating between languages, especially in diverse regions like India, nuances, idioms, and cultural connotations might be lost. For instance, translating a phrase from Tamil to Hindi might not capture the cultural depth and nuances present in the original language, leading to misinterpretation.
- Socioeconomic disparities can exacerbate language-based communication barriers. For example, individuals from lower socioeconomic backgrounds might have limited access to education in dominant languages, hindering their ability to effectively communicate in formal settings.
- Many tribal and indigenous languages in India are marginalized, leading to a lack of resources and educational support. This neglect creates barriers when members of these communities interact with government agencies, healthcare providers, or educational institutions.
- Sometimes, there can be biases or stereotypes associated with certain languages or dialects. This bias might lead to discrimination or exclusion of individuals who speak non-dominant languages, affecting their ability to communicate freely and effectively.

#### Examples:

Consider a scenario where a government official communicates policies or instructions primarily in

Hindi during a community meeting in a region with diverse linguistic groups, including speakers of Tamil, Telugu, and Kannada. Individuals who are not proficient in Hindi might struggle to understand the details, leading to misunderstandings or incomplete comprehension of vital information. This language barrier could affect their ability to access government services or fully participate in decision-making processes.

This example illustrates how language diversity in India can contribute to communication barriers, impacting various aspects of daily life, governance, education, and social interactions. Addressing these barriers requires efforts to promote multilingualism, provide language access, and foster inclusive communication strategies that consider the diverse linguistic landscape of the country.

#### Existing strategies:

- Promotion of multilingualism through language education programs enhances communication skills across different languages. Schools and institutions offering language courses or bilingual education contribute to better understanding and interaction among diverse linguistic groups.
- Employing professional interpreters and translators helps facilitate communication in various settings, including healthcare, legal proceedings, business negotiations, and public services. These individuals bridge language gaps by accurately translating information between parties.
- Utilizing translation software and applications such as Google Translate, Microsoft Translator, or other AI-powered tools assists in real-time translation of written or spoken language. These tools aid in instant communication and understanding across different languages. (3)

#### Use of Technology:

- Mobile applications and software, equipped with



advanced algorithms and machine learning, facilitate instant

translation of text, speech, and images across multiple languages. These tools support real-time communication, making interactions smoother and more efficient.

- Online platforms and apps dedicated to language learning provide accessible and interactive ways for individuals to learn new languages. They offer structured courses and personalized learning experiences, aiding in overcoming language barriers.
- For businesses and organizations operating internationally, localization and globalization tools help adapt content, websites, and products into multiple languages, catering to diverse linguistic markets.
- Many social media platforms incorporate translation features, enabling users to translate posts and messages into their preferred languages, fostering communication among users worldwide.

#### Result and Suggestions:

- Establish programs that focus on preserving and promoting indigenous languages within tribal communities. This could involve documentation of oral traditions, creating written scripts, and developing educational materials in local languages.
- Implement bilingual education programs that incorporate indigenous languages alongside the national language(s). This approach ensures that children from tribal communities can learn in a language familiar to them while also gaining proficiency in broader languages used in national contexts.
- Use a person who is familiar to remote tribes in a country as a communicator between those people and government so that tribal communities will be

aware about all government initiatives and programs.

- Collaborate with tribal leaders, community representatives, and language experts to develop inclusive policies that recognize and protect the linguistic rights of tribal societies.
- Train and employ bilingual individuals from tribal communities as interpreters and translators. They can bridge communication gaps in various settings, including healthcare, legal proceedings, and administrative services.
- Establish a network of trained interpreters proficient in indigenous languages who can assist government agencies, hospitals, courts, and other institutions when interacting with tribal communities.
- Establish open communication channels for feedback and suggestions from tribal communities regarding language-related services and policies. Regularly seek input and adapt strategies based on community needs and preferences.

#### Conclusion:

The exploration of language as a bridge to understand and resolve communication barriers illuminates the intricate tapestry of linguistic diversity and its profound impact on societal interactions. As showcased throughout this research, language serves as both a unifying force and a potential barrier, profoundly shaping interpersonal connections, cultural integration, education, governance, and myriad other facets of human interaction. Educational initiatives promoting multilingualism, technological advancements in translation tools, intercultural training, and inclusive policies emerge as key pillars in bridging linguistic divides. Emphasizing the importance of cultural sensitivity, linguistic inclusivity, and collaborative efforts, these strategies pave the way for fostering empathy, understanding, and effective communication across diverse linguistic landscapes. The role of technology as an enabler in bridging language gaps

cannot be overstated. Translation software, language learning applications, digital platforms, and speech recognition technologies offer promising avenues for instantaneous communication and comprehension, transcending linguistic boundaries and promoting connectivity on a global scale. Ultimately, the endeavor to comprehend and address language barriers signifies an ongoing commitment—one that seeks not merely to dismantle obstacles but also to celebrate the richness of linguistic diversity, fostering unity amidst differences, and building bridges that transcend the confines of language. In embracing this endeavor, we take strides

towards a world where language serves as a bridge—a conduit fostering understanding, connection, and harmony among diverse cultures and communities.

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**Cite This Article:**

Ambhorkar L.V. & Prof. Dharmadhikari K.D. (2023). LANGUAGE AS A BRIDGE: UNDERSTANDING AND RESOLVING COMMUNICATION BARRIERS. In *Aarhat Multidisciplinary International Education Research Journal*: Vol. XII (Number VI, pp. 185–190). AMIERJ. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10518167>