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Research Trends and Prospects in Indian Linguistics

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Introduction: India is considered as a linguistic area on the basis of it's linguistic diversity. There are over a thousand languages with well defined grammars and five language families such as Indo-Aryan, Dravidian, Austro-Asiatic, Tibeto-Burman and Andamanese (Sentinelese). These language families are distinguished on a linguistic basis and each family has been studied extensively except the Andamanese. There are 216 languages with more than 10,000 native speakers and 1,652 languages and dialects in total in India. However, as it is argued, languages in India act as facilitators rather than barriers in communication. The constant interaction between the speakers of these languages for thousands of years due to multi/bilingualism resulted in convergence at various levels including those of sounds, words, sentence patterns and discourse features.

As of today, the Indian constitution recognizes 22 major languages of India in what is known as 'the 8th Schedule' of the Constitution. They also happen to be the major literary languages in India, with a considerable volume of writing in them. They include, besides Sanskrit, the following 21 modern Indian languages: Assamese, Bangla, Bodo, Dogri, Gujarati, Hindi, Kashmiri, Kannada, Konkani, Maithili, Malayalam, Manipuri, Marathi, Nepali, Oriya, Punjabi, Tamil, Telugu, Santali, Sindhi, and Urdu.

Among them, Hindi is the National Official Language. English, which does not have a place among the national languages, serves as the Associate Official Language. The People of India also reports that there are 25 writing systems that are in active use as in 2000s. However the major scripts are 14, out of which 12 originated from the Brāhmī. Like the Greek alphabet, it had many local variants and gave rise to many Asian scripts such as Burmese, Thai, Tibetan and etc.

Let us now examine some academic backgrounds of Indian languages under these various circumstances. Language as the most important medium of communication and education, occupies an important place in the national policy on education in India since there are many languages spoken today. Therefore, the promotion and development of languages listed in the 8th schedule of the Constitution including English, other foreign languages and minor languages have received constant attention. To correspond it interestingly, Indian government put the separate team for languages. In fulfilling the constitutional responsibility, the Department of Higher Education is assisted by autonomous organizations and subordinate offices as the followings:

1. Central Hindi Directorate, New Delhi.
2. Commission for Scientific and Technical Terminology, New Delhi
3. Kendriya Hindi Sansthan, Agra
4. Central Institute of Indian Languages, Mysore
5. National Translation Mission,Mysore
6. National Council for Promotion of Urdu Language, New Delhi.
7. National Council for Promotion of Sindhi Language, Vadodara
8. English and Foreign Language University, Hyderabad
9. Rashtriya Sanskrit Sansthan, New Delhi.
10. Maharishi Sandipani Rashtriya Veda Vidya Pratishthan, Ujjain.
11. Mahatma Gandhi Hindi International University, Wardha

As is clear from the above, we may come to know that how much India takes care of languages. These organizations work in the field of promotion and development of languages in India. It should also be noted that all organizations are supported by linguists or department of linguistics. They are naturally recognized to co-ordinate the development of Indian languages through scientific studies, to promote inter-disciplinary research and bring about the mutual enrichment of languages. Thus they contribute towards emotional integration of people of India. In other words, it is generally believed that Indian linguistics brings out in clear focus as follows

- To co-ordinate the work of all Indian languages including tribal and foreign languages
- To bring together all the research and literary output from the various linguistics streams to a common head
- To formulate and execute collaborative projects in the area of inter-disciplinary research and development
- To develop suitable inter-disciplinary studies for giving linguistic orientation to languages teachers
- To develop methods, materials and aids for teaching Indian languages and conduct language courses in India
- To develop suitable translation techniques and conduct training programs for translators

Unlike the huge concern from Indian government, however, it is not true that there are many linguistics departments in India. According to University Grants Commission, there are 490 universities and 20,769 colleges India. But only 21 universities or institutes involve in the schemes as seen in the list below:

University of Delhi	Aligarh Muslim University
Sanskrit College	Ashutosh College
Barkatullah Vishwavidyalaya	Hyderabad Central University
Andhra University	North-Eastern Hill University
University of Kerala	Annamalai University
Deccan College	Jawaharlal Nehru University
Central institute of Indian languages	Northwest Indian Language Institute
Banaras Hindu University	Gauhati University
Tamil University	Punjabi University
Pondicherry Institute of Linguistics and Culture	Lucknow University
Kashmir University, Kashmir	
Central Institute of Hindi, English & Foreign languages University	

The Indian subcontinent is not rich in terms of having linguistics journals to different categories. As of today, only 9 journals are listed in India while there are more than 630 journals in the world. Apart from the quantity aspect; the coverage of Indian

contributions in the databases in the study of language is only partial and does not reflect the total Indian productivity. Hence, the scenario of Indian output drawn on the basis of the number of languages, government concern and data may not reflect the real Indian situation. It is not surprising that not even a single Indian journal is listed in SSCI and A&HCI. Interestingly, there was only one journal of linguistics of Indian origin in 1980s. After 1980s, linguists initiated the need to bring the existence of such a powerful database and its importance in the world of knowledge to the notice of Indian linguistics. They also brought to light India's place in linguistics at the international level. However, contemporary Indian linguists seem to seldom cite other Indian scholars. The citations are highly slanted towards the publications and research done abroad. As of today, most of studies usually focus on language teaching, typology, historical linguistics etc. However it also indicates that grammatical research is not theoretical, it only describes the specific language structures without reference to the theoretical issues. In other words, there is no contribution to the mainstream. Therefore, out of globally by less than 30 journals listed in the SSCI, India's place or the contribution from the Indian linguistic community is near to nothing. A research article makes an impact if it is read and used by others in their research output. If it is not used, it is of no consequence in the discipline. Moreover, citation mostly presents inside Indian journals such as:

- Indian Linguistics
- Indian Journal of Applied Linguistics
- South Asian Language Review
- Indian Journal of Linguistics
- Language In India
- PILC journal of Dravidic studies
- International Journal of Dravidian Linguistics
- Bulletin of Phonetic Studies
- Journal of Tamil Studies.

Therefore it is naturally regarded that India is a kind of a testbed for experimentation for the universal languages. They apply theories to their own languages to check the validity. Besides, the theoretical linguistics, however, India also enjoys a good reputation that many researches are carried in language teaching and translation.

Research areas in the recent years: This is a short introduction to some of the research areas where Indian linguists have worked in the recent years. Linguistics encompasses a number of sub-fields. An important topical division is between the study of theories and the study of its application to other relevant areas. Thus

linguistics is in general widely divided into two parts i.e.; theoretical linguistics and applied linguistics. One is narrowly defined as the scientific approach to the study of language itself and the other is approached from the variety of directions which are relevant to it and influence its study. In this paper, I have personally analyzed the Indian journals which are available on the websites to see the current trends or topics in Indian linguistics as follows:
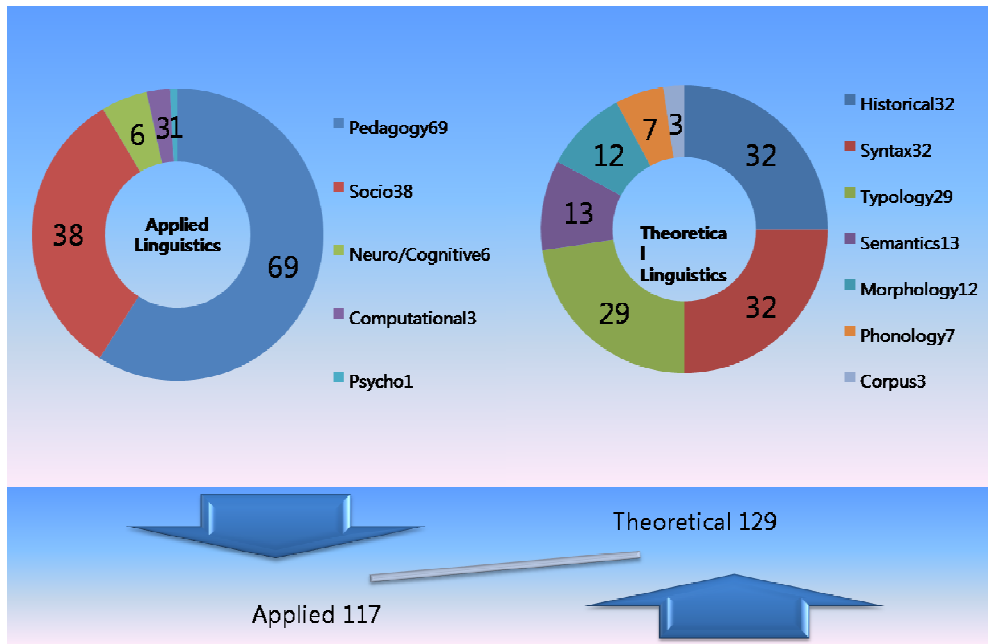
As seen the table above, the two main streams are researched in a balanced way in Indian linguistics. They are engaged in a wide variety of interests covering all major areas of theoretical and applied linguistics. Much work with pedagogy concerns language teaching and translation in India. Linguistics is used to study how language varies between different text types, times, regions, speakers etc. In these kind of studies, linguistics is a theoretical discipline, but from its beginnings it has had languages learning and teaching as one of its possible applications in the direction of how linguistics can heighten awareness of differences, identify problems, appreciate the relevance of universal grammar and take account of the learner's and teacher's environment. As mentioned earlier, one major role of the Indian linguistics is to

develop methods, materials and aids for teaching Indian languages and conduct languages courses and to develop suitable translation techniques and conduct training programs for translators. While other areas of applied linguistics such as neuro, cognitive, psycho, computational linguistics and etc are less stressed, sociolinguistics is also emphasised in India since the complexities of regional, social, ethnic, economic, cultural and linguistic practices are very relevant. It is also notable that IT is in discord with linguistics inside India although many Indian linguists seem to cooperate with IT outside India.
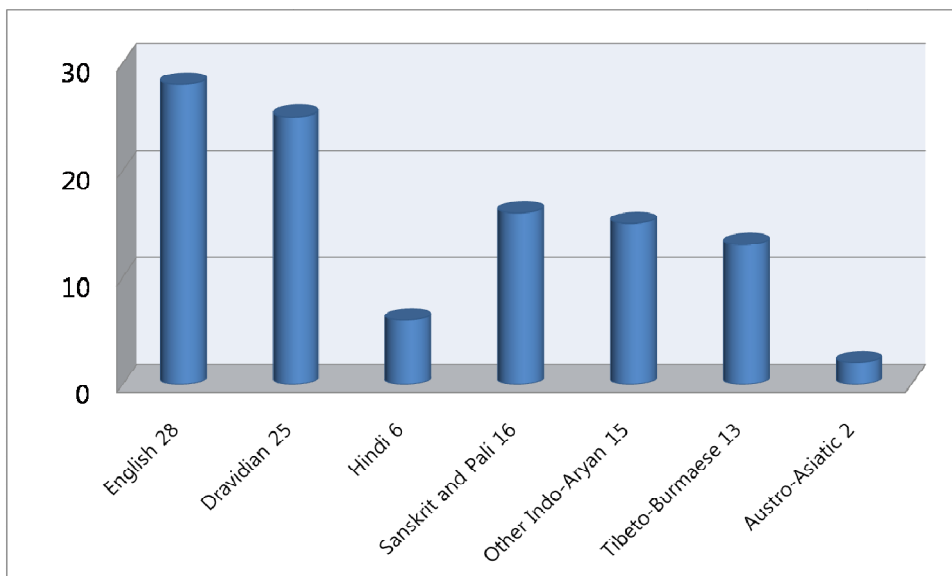
Whereas applied linguistics refers to the use of linguistic research in language teaching, translation, social structures and other areas, theoretical linguistics is concerned with finding and describing generalities both within languages and among languages. Theoretical linguistics is often divided into a number of separate areas such as syntax, typology, morphology, phonology, historical,etc. In India, it raises an interesting point that diachronic linguistics is researched through time. Due to the strong historical background, Indian linguists enjoy examining how languages change and how languages such as Sanskrit, Pali and etc are described with some theoretical areas. Besides historical linguistics, India keeps an eye on both syntax and typology which is the core of theoretical linguistics. The first to start making extensive use of deep theories in Indian languages is typology that studies and classifies languages

according to their structural features. In India they usually deal with the distribution of structural patterns among Indian languages. In addition syntax referring to the study of the principles and rules for constructing sentences in natural languages is also directly used in any Indian languages. One thing which I have to call attention is corpora in India. In fact, much work with corpora concerns language variation. Thus, corpora are increasingly used in lexicography today. Although, the direct research is more or less not enough in India, many projects are going on in India. Before describing the status of corpora in India let us see what languages are researched in linguistics in the recent 3 years.

This is indicative of the fact that all kinds of the Indian languages get into the researches which are mostly considered to be theoretical linguistics. However English is researched as a tool of language teaching in the Indian context. There is no direct research on English itself. It supports and develops investigation and research within the area of second language teaching. Thus a wide range of the selected languages is covered in Indian linguistics including tribal languages.

Corpora building with IT and some major projects: There are certainly welcome studies that corpora have proved their value both in linguistics and technology. Information obtained from corpora has challenged the intuitive language study since its observations are inadequately found. In India, language technology used to be in its infancy, linguistic activities used to be in traditional mode, and language education used to follow centuries-old pedagogic process. India is a linguistic area, it preserves large number of living languages of various ethnic and linguistic communities. However due to the lack of corpora these languages suffered from the scarcity or the death of languages. However, in recent times some sporadic attempts are made for designing corpora in Indian languages. The first corpus in India was the Kolhapur corpus of Indian English in 1988 to serve for a comparative study among the American, the British and the Indian English. However ,it has little relevance to any Indian languages and it has some limitations of the corpus. At present, the growth of information technology is engaged in developing corpus in Indian languages. As is obvious, language data is the key factor in terms of research and development in the area of language technology. Therefore collection of linguistic data began to form Indian languages corpora acknowledged by the ministry of information technology. Thus the following agencies in India are engaged in developing corpus in Indian languages:

Agencies	Languages
Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur	Hindi, Nepali
Indian Institute of Technology, Mumbai	Marathi, Konkani
Indian Institute of Technology, Guwahati	Assamese, Manipuri
Indian Institute of Sciences, Bangalore	Kannada, Sanskrit
Indian Statistical Institute, Kolkata	Bangla
Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi	Sanskrit
University of Hyderabad, Hyderabad	Telugu
Anna University, Chennai	Tamil
MS University, Baroda	Gujarati
Utkal University, Bhubaneswar	Oriya
Thapar Institute of Engg. and Tech., Patiala	Punjabi
ER&DCI, Trivandrum	Malayalam
C-DAC, Pune, Maharastra	Urdu, Sanskrit

We believe that designing tools and systems for language technology in Indian can be best achieved after the generation of corpora in Indian languages with IT. The referential value of corpus is increased over the years due to technological growth and attitudinal change. Now we may see that it is manifested in new application of linguistics in India.

In this paper, we also seek to draw attention to some major projects that India has undertaken or will undertake. This briefly demonstrates some general ideas that result in Indian linguistics. Recent linguistics projects, particularly under the

government of India has concerned itself with trying to employ a methodology for data collection, to create database for Indian languages, to develop and promote minor Indian languages, to develop programs of language teaching and to popularize Hindi. The linguists in India prepare themselves for such projects. In fact a lot of what goes under the areas of different issues is to develop and promote Indian languages. It needs linguistics to delineate the methods, materials and the tools for all languages in the field of languages. Projects undertaken by the Ministry of Human Resource Development are listed below. Several have their own special interest but they are mutually co-related.

- New linguistic survey of India
- Hindi Corpora Project
- Development of Sanskrit education
- Language development project
- Development and Promotion of Minor Indian Languages
- Linguistic Data Consortium for Indian Languages
- Corpus Planning Activities

One notable project mentioned above is a new linguistic survey of India (NLSI). More than a century has passed since Grierson's *Linguistic Survey of India* (1898~1927) was begun. Thus the need for a fresh linguistics survey of India is urgently felt, particularly at the official level in terms of the structure of the various speech, scripts, history, demography etc. Hence the suggestion for a New Linguistic Survey of India also springs from the conception of India as a linguistic landscape. Most of Indian linguists have been conducting the NLSI supported by the ministry of human resource development. The objectives of the NLSI can thus be divided into three broad areas of interest and activity, each interacting and intersecting with the other.

- A profile of the Indian linguistic space in terms of the structure of its speech varieties, their distribution and their interactions;
- A catalogue of the ways and means by which Indian linguistic diversity is expressed in terms of its language/literary artifacts, and;
- A knowledge base for the means by which the potential of the diverse Indian languages to interface with technological advancements can be realized.

As of today, under the globalizing onslaught of English, languages indigenous to India are facing inevitable death. English, formerly perceived as a symbol of linguistic

imperialism, is now accepted as the primary vehicle of economic globalization. This is so alarming that some of its leading academics and linguists are trying to reverse the trends, challenging the supremacy of English as a global language by asserting Hindi or Urdu as its official mode of communication. The imposition of Hindi is carried under the name of Hindi corpora project undertaken by Mahatma Gandhi International Hindi University. Its aim is to create databases for varieties of Hindi and to popularize it. Through these projects we may also think about what they are currently focusing on.

Conclusion: In this paper, we have taken into consideration   the status and current trends of linguistics in India. Now it is high time for us to turn our attention toward the prospects.

As well known, linguistics was pursued in ancient India for many centuries. Panini (5~6 century BC) is often considered the founder of linguistics. His sophisticated grammar of Sanskrit in the text *Ashtadhyayi* continues to be in use to this day. Moreover the Indian grammatical tradition is believed to have been active for many centuries before Panini. The South Indian linguist Tolkappiyar (3rd century BC) wrote the *Tolkappiyam*, the grammar of Tamil and Bhartrihari (5~6 century AD) had a significant influence on many of the foundational ideas proposed by Ferdinand de Saussure. Thus the influence of the Indian linguistics on the description of different historic development of linguistics in the ancient time dominated the paradigms. However, in the present study they do not affect the evolution of the linguistic paradigm. Instead they focus on how linguistic paradigm serves their languages. In this aspect, there are successfully applied to the description of different paradigms. Although there is no single SSCI and A&HCI journal in India and no Indian linguist rules the linguistic paradigm, Indian linguistics has made great and powerful strides that the contribution of a systematic set of teaching or teaching practices based on particular theory of language and language learning, disciplines obtained in theories and some significant comparison studies are generally recognized. Thus we may analyze Indian linguistics as shown in the table below:

Strength	Theoretical application Typological work Language teaching
Weakness	Theory development Computational linguistics

Opportunity	Bio linguistics Theory checking Socio linguistics
Threat	Lack of awareness Less interest in minor languages

Therefore, we meet our prospects that Indian linguists work on the task of corpora generation in all Indian languages. This will bring new opportunity to the Indian linguistics to survive. And what they need is a concerted effort for tribal languages. By focusing on the corpora development they can document minor languages in a multi-linguistic society. As seen earlier, by the end of next decade, they will also present the new linguistic map of India. With the both quantitative and qualitative resources, we may understand Indian life, culture, people, society and heritage through languages. In addition, they also facilitate language teaching programs and do the continuation of research on typology. Now let us take our issues in the field of Indian languages where they are less stressed. In my opinion, it is naturally suggested to research on the generation of sociolinguistics and language testing. In the multilingual, multiethnic countries like India, the need for sociolinguistics can be hardly underestimated. Language variations in social and regional aspects, through mutual isolation and interaction constantly reshape individual and social identities, which in turn have their impact on the environment of planning. Moreover, language use in education, administration and mass communication can fundamentally alter the character of the polity and thus influence the orientation and affect the foundation of planning itself. The linguistic and cultural pluralism in India is threatened by planned action in favor of one language and one script and people's indifference. The linguists in India, however, are neither prepared nor preparing themselves for such a role. Inter-disciplinary subjects such as sociolinguistics, psycho-linguistics are not fields for incompetent linguists, sociologists and psychologists. We would, therefore work in this perspective that language policy, the role of Hindi, identity with language and the relation between Hindi and Urdu in particular are taken into consideration. Language, Discourse and Culture are the key issues in recent academic research on linguistic communication and literature. Both as perspective and methodology, discourse is in the center stage of research on language and culture interface, and the focus is on the workings of language ideology in relation to other social processes. The studies show in specific detail how language ideologies underpin cultural issues, including art and culture.

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