LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY AND NATIONAL UNITY: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF INDIA'S BORDER REGIONS

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Keywords	Abstract
Cultural Hybridity, Cross-Linguistic Identity, Multilingualism, Transitional Identity, Border Studies.	This comprehensive and critical study is going explore the complex interrelation of language, culture, and national belonging of the linguistic minorities who live in border areas in India theoretically. This qualitative study will critically analyze the nature of cultural hybridity, cross-linguistic identity, and multilingualism and how they play a proactive role in identity politics among the citizens of border areas. The previous investigations have constructed the base for further study in this regard. The researchers will lend a hand with previous data on this ground to institute the argument of this proposed study. By scrutinizing impertinent practices and narratives of linguistic minorities, this mindful research explores how national identity is constructed and contrasted in the border areas of India. The findings of this study will help its reader to understand the characteristics of cultural hybridity, problems of cross-linguistic identity, the nature of multilingual society, and the direction of transitional identity; finally, the conscious readers will come across the border studies- a trending field of post-colonial research.

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Introduction:

The relationship between nationalism and its boundaries is intricately tied to geographical location, cultural ties, political instability, and relations among neighbouring states. These factors play a crucial role in shaping the expressions and functions of nationalism across various regions. The concept of boundaries transcends physical limitations, encompassing significant symbolic dimensions as well. Nationalism and boundaries are crucial in preserving cultural heritage, promoting diversity, addressing conflicts and challenges, and enhancing economic development. "Political geographers and political scientists have for a long time perceived boundaries as fixed, stable empirical entities which divide the global space into bounded units that change mainly as a consequence of conflicts" (Passi, 69-88). In examining the challenges loyalists face in a globally interconnected environment, it becomes evident that preserving a distinct identity is a complex endeavour. The interplay of cultural influences, social media dynamics, and global communication systems can threaten traditional values and beliefs. This phenomenon raises significant questions about identity preservation and adaptation in a rapidly changing landscape. As individuals navigate these influences, understanding the strategies loyalists employ to maintain their identity amid external pressures warrants further investigation. Such research could provide valuable insights into the resilience of cultural identities in the face of globalization. "Results provide evidence in favour of regional science theories maintaining that there is an important role for physical obstacles in several types of economic interactions while also suggesting that the spatial decay function becomes steeper due to international borders" (Capello et al., 2018).

History of Border Studies:

Border studies in post-colonial research in general and linguistic study of the borderland in contemporary language study especially are in the loop. In this regard, Border regions have created a phenomenon of linguistic discourse among the linguistic researchers of various countries, including India. "Applied linguistics is an international, multilingual field concerned with issues about languages and literacies in the real world and with the people who learn, speak, write, process, translate, test, teach, use, and lose languages in myriad ways. It is also fundamentally concerned with transnationalism—crossing cultural, ideological, linguistic, and geopolitical borders and boundaries of all types, especially nation-states" (Vertovec, 2009). The cultural originality, linguistic legitimacy,

and national identity of smaller cultural communities situated in India's border regions are facing significant challenges. This concern is not limited to India, as similar dilemmas can be observed globally, including contexts such as India-Bangladesh, India-Pakistan, India-China, the United States-Korea, the United States-Arab nations, China-Australia, and Morocco-France, among others. Within India, the same problem can be identified in Kashmiri pundits in Delhi, Tamils in Mumbai, Bengali in Hyderabad, Gujarati Jain in Bangalore, and between the habitants by the fence within.

Review of related literature:

"The cultural, political, religious and historical configuration of the Eritrean frontiers makes it difficult to demarcate a particular Eritrean identity, distinguishing it from Sudanese ethnic and religious identities or historical-politico and ethnic Ethiopian identities" (Tronvoll, 1999). "For some time, hybridity has been a prominent theme in cultural studies. It follows older themes of syncretism in anthropology and creolization in linguistics. In cultural studies, hybridity denotes a wide register of multiple identities, cross-over, pick-'n'-mix, boundary-crossing experiences and styles, matching a world of growing migration and diaspora lives, intensive intercultural communication, everyday multiculturalism and erosion of boundaries" (Pieterse, 2001). "Most available alternatives to cultural imperialism tend to implicitly or explicitly espouse neoliberal ideology without critically scrutinizing its implications. Grounded in an inter-contextualhybridity theory, critical cultural transnationalism emphasizeshybridity as a practice of hegemony. Such a theory is useful because it helps us illuminate the slippery and interstitial workings of power in transnational contexts that ostensibly declare themselves nonpower zones of cultural mixture" (Krady, 2002). "The need to improve our knowledge of individual and societal multilingualism is linked to globalization. The intensification of international contacts, the internationalization of the economy, and the mobility of the population have produced more opportunities to research multilingualism and have also highlighted the importance of this research. Research on multilingualism has also benefitted from technology" (Cenoz, 2013). "Multilingual people have a special challenge involving executive function. Monolinguals who hear a word need only compare it with their single stock of arbitrary phoneme (sound) and meaning rules, and when uttering a word, they draw it from that single stock. But multilinguals must keep several stocks separate" (Diamond, 2010). "In this contribution, we focus on cross-border migration and how it is related to processes of identity formation. We conceive cross-

border migration as a movement across the borders of (nation-) states, regardless of whether it occurs long-distance or nearby. It differs from commuting in that the people concerned settle in a place, an environment that differs from the region where they originated. In a stable border context where cross-border flows of people are effectively regulated, the impact is quite different from that of cross-border flows that are transient and actively discouraged" (Madsen & Naerssen, 2003). "Capturing landscape ontology cross-culturally is about understanding this variation, identifying its limits, and exploring the balance within and across languages. The variation in underlying ontology is a matter of great practical importance, as understanding the correct reference of landscape terms and place names is essential to many major areas of human joint endeavour, from mapping to international law" (Burenhult & Levinson, 2008).

Culture and Language in Border Studies:

Cultural hybridity manifests among individuals residing in border regions where distinct cultural communities from two different countries converge and among diverse cultural groups within various states of a single country, such as India. "At the most elementary level, cultural interdependency can be observed in the number of people crossing between two countries. Hybrid culture can first be seen mainly in the people of border areas of India, especially in India-Pakistan border areas, Bangladesh-India border areas, and China–India border areas. India is a multicultural and multilingual country where 29 states and seven union territories carry different cultural identities with their unique cultural heritage and traditions. The people who live in the border areas between two countries or states bear the culture of both countries and the states. This hybrid culture holds some unique identities within. In India, cultural differences and language disputes have brought some predicament and inimitability too in the Tamil Nadu- Kerala border, Maharastra - Gujrat border, Andra -Telengana border, and West Bengal – Bihar border. "As an 'emblematic notion of our era', hybridity, or more precisely cultural hybridity, is a neutral phenomenon, an 'effort to maintain a sense of balance among practices, values, and customs of two or more different cultures" (Albert & Páez, 2012).This hybrid culture makes the language difference and linguistic diversity of the people of border areas available and impacts their lifestyle, food habits, prejudice, customs, rituals, religion, belief system, heritage and tradition. Historical exchange, cultural diffusion, geographical proximity, globalisation, media, language contact, migration, mobility, border identities, trade and commerce,

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urbanization and multiculturalism play a dynamic role in integrating different cultures, which brings into being a hybrid culture. Border areas are the middle ground where the two cultural representatives interact, communicate, and exchange their thoughts and ideas in socio-political, economic, and religious contexts because of geographical proximity. "Linguistic hybridity, as an element of cultural hybridity, is closely related to everyday practices associated with work, food, clothes, hygiene, health, leisure, etc. Organic/unconscious and intentional/conscious forms of hybridisation occur in linguistic creativity" (Demaska, 2007). The migratory nature and mobility of the people in border areas cause cultural transmission and exchange, which mixes up the two different cultures. Trade, business and commerce in border areas smooth the progress of cultural hybridity. The exchange of non-material or abstract forms of cultural components such as language, practices, beliefs, norms, ethics, principles, rituals, customs, and heritage fabricate in-betweenness and uniqueness – the hybrid form of culture among the people of border areas. "It should also be emphasised that the borderland creates the possibility of choosing, shaping attitudes, values, and ideas based on the values of both or many cultures, where you can draw patterns from the traditions of people living nearby, adopt their patterns, modify your own or consolidate them. Borderland inhabitants can be "such and such, despite their different characteristics, assigning them to a specific denomination or ethnicity" (Nikitorowicz, 2001).

Language and National Belonginess:

Language serves as a fundamental component of culture and cultural heritage, embodying a civilisation's diverse perspectives and initiatives. It is further enriched by the norms, values, and teachings of its own and other civilizations' ethics, principles, and literary traditions. Language evolves and adapts to social and historical changes, reflecting its flexible nature. While this can lead to losing originality, it also helps protect against linguicide during language contact. Therefore, understanding language contact is crucial. In border regions, the interaction of multiple languages often leads to their enrichment through contact. Various geographical, social, and cultural phenomena contribute to this linguistic interaction, resulting in language change, blending, shift, and maintenance. The consequences of language contact include the reconstruction of syntax, vocabulary enrichment, and pronunciation changes. At this point, linguists developed the Switching Theory, which provides a theoretical framework for understanding how native speakers transition between

their native language and another language. International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences defines "Code-switching (CS) as the mixing, by bilinguals (or multilingual), of two or more languages in discourse, often with no change of interlocutor or topic. Such mixing may occur at any linguistic structure level, but its occurrence within a single sentence, constituent, or word has attracted most linguistic attention" (P-2065). When speakers of different languages engage in social interactions, they may seek to identify, blend, and converge the similarities in phonemes, morphemes, syntax, sentences, and pragmatics of the respective languages. The speaker's approach is one of caution; they strive to maintain the originality of their native language while consciously incorporating elements of the other language into their conversation. Without knowing how to keep the language, theoretically, the speakers try to preserve the originality of the language. Discourse analysis is "The systematic and rigorous analysis of language in use as a form of social practice" (Fairclough, 2013, p. 3).

Linguistic Hybridity and Identity:

This study employs discourse analysis to examine how cultural hybridity impacts language differences and linguistic diversity. It plays a crucial role in fostering linguistic creativity, language revitalization, code-switching, blending, and promoting language learning. Overall, hybrid culture has a positive influence on linguistic diversity. Language and culture are intertwined, reflecting a culture's values, norms, and traditions, symbolising its identity. Language and its expressions reflect the values, ethics, principles, and beliefs of the culture they come from. Culture influences language and linguistic identity through societal norms, usage, socialization, and attitudes toward language. "The complex and dynamic relationship between language and self, encompassing how language shapes and reflects an individual's or group's sense of identity, belonging, and cultural affiliation." (Edwards, 2009). Linguistic identity is a more comprehensive matter of personal issues where personal belongings and habitation take part. "Linguistic identity refers to how individuals and groups use language to construct, negotiate, and express their identities, including their cultural, social, and personal identities." (Joseph,2004).

Linguistic identity is also associated with an individual's emotional, social and cognitive implications. "Linguistic identity encompasses the cognitive, emotional, and social aspects of language use, and how these aspects intersect with an individual's or group's sense of identity,

culture, and community." (Kramsch, 1998). Cross-linguistic identity is a personal and specific concept. It involves a complex interplay between an individual and language within post-structural, translingual, transcultural, and critical discourse contexts. Psychological and linguistic factors influence this multidimensional relationship and ultimately shape a cross-linguistic identity that is rooted in personal experiences and connections to multiple cultures and languages. "Cross-linguistic identity refers to the complex and dynamic relationship between an individual's linguistic identity and their experiences, affiliations, and connections across multiple languages and cultures" (Kramsch 12). Cross-linguistic identity, according to Block, is "the process of negotiating and constructing multiple linguistic and cultural identities across different languages and contexts" (Block 23). Cross-linguistic identity in multicultural, post-colonial, and post-modern circumstances enriches itself with the values and norms of opposite cultures. Cross-linguistic identity is the mirror of cultural heritage. In this way, cross-linguistic identity preserves the linguistic heritage of a particular cultural community.

Border Studies and Multilingual Experience:

Whether national or international, border areas are characterized by multiculturalism and multilingualism, showcasing significant differences, variety, and diversity. Sociolinguist defines "Multilingualism as the coexistence of multiple languages within an individual, a community, or a society, and the ability to use these languages in various contexts and for different purposes" (Kramsch 12). Several linguistic minority communities coexist in border regions, where individuals encounter multiple languages in their social environments. The psychological interpretation differs in this context, focusing more on internal processes, cognition, and cognitive abilities. Psycholinguists consider "Multilingualism is the cognitive ability to process, store, and retrieve multiple languages, and to switch between them in communication." (Grosjean 23). The situation in such kinds of meeting grounds forced me to learn more than two languages besides the mother tongue of the residents. Here, multilingualism has a significant role in social cohesion, cultural perpetuation, economic prosperity, communication, expression, and exchange. A particular linguistic community lives with cultural values in a specific geographical location. However, such cultural originality is lost in a post-colonial context, especially in the border areas. Multiculturalism, multilingualism, and globalisation have banished the originality, harmony, and commonality of the concerned cultural

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population in such areas. Despite all these, multilingualism has some dynamic role in this postmodern socialsituation. "Multilingualism plays a central role as the vehicle of a new linguistic dispensation. We apply the metaphor 'edge' to explore how multiple languages are deployed in, and intensively shape, the postmodern world" (Aronin and Politis, 2015). Multilingualism improves communication and is essential for effective interaction among individuals from different linguistic backgrounds. Multilingualism eliminates barriers to communication between individuals or communities with different languages, fostering inclusivity within social institutions. Other means include engagements with popular culture, new digital and other media, chatrooms, and other virtual social networking and gaming spaces, and interactions with community members (including relatives, near and far) who have their transnational histories and may frequently invoke aspects of cross-border experience or feelings of simultaneous existence" (Duff, 2015).In this context, multiculturalism and multilingualism foster inclusivity across diverse socio-cultural environments, educational settings, and social institutions.

Significant Challenges to Language Minority Community:

Each cultural community is intricately intertwined with the broader national context, influencing and being influenced by the nation's culture, politics, economics, and overall progress, both directly and indirectly. This relationship underscores the importance of understanding cultural dynamics in studying societal development. Every linguistic population is identified as the wealth of its nation. Regarding community, national identity is "the collective belief in, and identification with, a shared history, culture, and destiny" (Hutchinson 12). Every major and minor population possesses a distinct national identity. Language minorities, in particular, are not exempt from this observation. Each of these groups is an integral part of the nation, which exists in association with and for their benefit. The sagacity of belongingness of an individual or community to the nation constructs the national identity. It refers to "a person's sense of belonging or identity tied to one or more nations or states, shaped by shared cultural heritage, social construction, sense of belonging, and distinctiveness" (Smith, 23). In border areas, mixing different states, nations, and cultures often leads to identity crises, fueling identity politics and border studies. It is "the complex and multifaceted identity that individuals or groups form and maintain across national borders, often due to migration, globalisation, or other forms of transnational connection" (Levitt 23). The transitional identity of

border habitats presents a complex interplay of cultural displacement, identity crises, social isolation, racial discrimination, economic challenges, and psychological stress. However, these communities also play a crucial role in preserving cultural heritage, fostering economic prosperity, contributing to nation-building, and cultivating a sense of belonging. Their involvement and contributions are thus of significant importance in understanding the broader implications of border dynamics.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, this explorative study sheds light on the intricate and dynamic relationships between culture, language, and national identity among linguistic minorities in Indian border areas. It underscores the richness of cultural interactions and the vibrant identities that emerge in these regions. The findings highlight how these communities navigate their linguistic heritage while engaging with broader national narratives. By understanding these connections, we can appreciate the complexity of belonging and identity in a multicultural landscape, emphasizing the need for inclusive policies that respect and celebrate linguistic diversity. This study contributes to the academic discourse and calls for greater awareness and sensitivity towards the unique challenges and contributions of linguistic minorities in border regions. The study highlights the complex challenges linguistic minorities face in border regions, particularly regarding their identity crisis. It underscores the profound impact of hybrid cultures on linguistic diversity, demonstrating that the interplay of cross-linguistic identities plays a crucial role in preserving linguistic heritage in multicultural borderlands. The findings reveal that cultural heritage and linguistic adaptability thrive within a multilingual context, suggesting that transitional identities foster a heightened awareness of national belonging among individuals. This underscores the importance of recognizing and supporting these diverse communities' linguistic and cultural dynamics.

AUTHOR(S) CONTRIBUTION

The writers affirm that they have no connections to, or engagement with, any group or body that provides financial or non-financial assistance for the topics or resources covered in this manuscript.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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SOURCES OF FUNDING

The authors received no financial aid to support for the research.

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