

Gandhi and the Standardisation of Gujarati

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The process of linguistic standardisation usually sets up one dialect as the yardstick to judge the correctness of a language. It not only relegates other dialects to the periphery but also actively produces and reproduces structures of inequalities. Gandhi initiated a systematic effort to standardise the Gujarati language in the 1920s through the Gujarat Vidyapith which published a dictionary with a set of rules for correct Gujarati writing. It is this form of Gujarati that has been recognised by the state government as the standard language. This article explores the notion of language standardisation and the inherent inequalities within that process, the context of Gujarati standardisation, Gandhi's role in it, and the problems and contestations involved in the linguistic standardisation in Gujarat.

Efforts to standardise the Gujarati language first began in the opening decades of the 19th century with the publication of dictionaries, grammars and school textbooks. However, the standardisation process remained disorganised until Gandhi took the initiative in the 1920s to mediate through the Gujarat Vidyapith, a university established by him, and which published the Gujarati dictionary known as the *Jodanikosh*. He also took considerable interest in the implementation of the standard Gujarati propounded by the Gujarat Vidyapith. On the occasion of the publication of this dictionary in 1929, Gandhi wrote: "After the publication of this dictionary no one has the right to do as his fancy dictates in the matter of spelling" (Gandhi 1970c: 213). This quote which appears in Gujarati in every edition of the dictionary seems to reflect a sense of finality and closure about the Gujarati language. The significance of this Gandhian inspired dictionary consists in the fact that the orthography system adopted by this lexicon is the one recognised by the Gujarat government and used as the standard language in the state.

Introduction

Linguistic standardisation invariably involves setting up a particular form of language as the yardstick, or norm to judge its correctness. The standardisation process receives official recognition and over a period of time government institutions, writers, publishers, journals, newspapers, universities, and educational institutions begin to adopt the "standard" language as the "correct" form of language, thus achieving a "common sense" reality. The process of standardisation also tends to relegate linguistic variations within a region to the periphery. The basic premise of this paper is that the language standardisation process is neither neutral nor natural. The decision to recognise a particular variety as normative and standard is ultimately a political one supported by cultural and economic factors. A recognised language or a standard language is thus a dialect with considerable cultural, political, and economic clout.

This paper highlights the role played by Gandhi in the production of a standardised Gujarati in the first decades of the 20th century. On a number of occasions Gandhi expressed not only his opinion on the Gujarati language and literature but also on what constitutes "true" or standard Gujarati. The symbols, images, metaphors and representational idioms that circulate in Gandhian textual matrix convey complex notions of identity, language and culture. Gandhi mediated the standardisation process in a significant way partly because of the moral authority and partly because of the political power that he wielded in Gujarat. It is the Gandhian-inspired and codified Gujarati that has been approved by the government and it is this form that is used widely in the

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state. However, behind the process of standardisation there remains concealed the templates of power and the unequal accesses to standard language. In Gujarat it has been the language of the dominant classes which was projected and recognised as the standard language. Precisely because of this elite bias, standard language acts as a filter in educational and job markets. Because the standard language is basically the language of the elite classes, their children stand a better chance than others in getting admission into elite institutions and job markets. In other words, because of the intrinsic linguistic bias in favour of the dominant classes, language standardisation also acts as a template in perpetuating inequalities in society. Issues such as these are hardly discussed and debated in the public domain in Gujarat.

What makes the standardisation process particularly interesting in the Gujarati context consists in the fact that even after nearly 200 years complaints describing the language situation as “chaotic” still persist. Presently there are at least three orthographic systems in operation in Gujarat which seem to complicate the situation. Two of these systems are government recognised. A group of Gujarati scholars, linguists, journalists, and teachers have raised serious questions about the feasibility of the present standard language and the wisdom of unwarranted reliance on Sanskrit-based rules for orthographic purposes. The efforts of this group of scholars known as the Unjha Spelling School have not been taken too kindly by the proponents of Gandhi-inspired standard Gujarati. At a deeper level the ongoing contestations between various groups reflect the struggle of the Gujarati language to establish an independent identity by moving away from unnecessary dependency on Sanskrit.

This paper is divided into four sections. The first section looks at the concept of language standardisation within the theoretical framework of Pierre Bourdieu, the second delineates the context of Gujarati standardisation, the third focuses on Gandhi’s role in the codification of Gujarati and the fourth highlights some of the problems and contestations involved in language standardisation in Gujarat.

1 Standardisation, Linguistic Capital and Inequalities

Usually standardisation denotes the historical process by which a speech community develops a special dialect for use as a medium of discourse in science, education, administration, and literature (Byron 1978: 397). A standard language is the language that results from direct and deliberate intervention by society. In what has come to be regarded as a classical theoretical framework in sociolinguistics, Einar Haugen has described the process of language development and standardisation in terms of fourfold tasks or stages: language selection, codification, norm implementation and elaboration (Haugen 1983: 269-89).

An important aspect of language standardisation involves what is known as the process of “variant reduction” because the process of standardisation is usually achieved through the suppression of non-standard linguistic variants in a given region. Such process may include the deliberate intervention by government or non-governmental regulatory authorities. Before canonisation, most standardised languages coexisted with other dialects and language varieties within a given region. But after the

recognition of the standard variety there is a devaluation of all other varieties of language. In stressing the need for uniformity and correctness in language use, the primacy of writing, and the idea that the standard language as the only valid language of the speech community, standardisation process also entail discursive practices which are hegemonic (Deumert 2004: 2).

The linguistic standardisation process in which the non-standard varieties are relegated to the periphery also involves power relations and domination. It is here that ideology gets entangled with the process of language standardisation. Standardisation entails structural changes in a language but often these basic changes are seen by many people as inevitable and even as “natural”. It has been pointed out that structural changes in languages do not take place in a socio-political vacuum, and no history of a language can be adequate if it does not take account of this. Variation and change in a language that has undergone standardisation cannot be wholly independent of the process of standardisation itself, as the ideology of standardisation is to a greater or lesser extent present in the minds of speakers of the language (Milroy and Milroy 1997: 75).

The French sociologist and philosopher Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002) sought to unmask inherited categories and taken for granted ways of thinking which are used in legitimising social and cultural practices. He also interrogates established templates of power and domination and the structures which sustain them. Bourdieu looks at the social world not as a harmonious entity but rather as template of fierce contestation and competition. Out of this ongoing field of contestations arise social and cultural distinctions, aesthetic tastes, classes, cultural and linguistic capital, symbolic power and domination. One of his central concerns centres on the question as to how the dominant classes maintain their power through the production and reproduction of dominant ideas. He is concerned about the ways in which hierarchy and status are projected as natural and inevitable. It is not just about differences and hierarchies – it is also about inequalities which ride on the back of these differences and hierarchies.

What is of interest to us is the theoretical work of Bourdieu pertaining to language and its relation to power and domination. Bourdieu’s conceptual framework of linguistic capital is particularly useful in theorising about language standardisation. Usually when we speak of capital, we think mainly in terms of economic capital. He speaks of symbolic capital, cultural capital, linguistic capital and economic capital. Bourdieu also moves away from the strict Marxian notion which tends to see all forms of capital as variations and combination of the basic economic capital. In ways that are interesting and convincing, Bourdieu links cultural capital to creation and maintenance of social inequalities. In Bourdieu’s theoretical framework, language forms an important form of capital (Bourdieu 1995: 78-89). Here, linguistic capital denotes the possession of and facility in high-status language or languages which are used by social groups who have cultural, social, political and economic power. Linguistic capital is the resource which caters to the demands of a specific market. An interesting point in Bourdieu’s theory consists in the idea of the uneven distribution of linguistic capital. This notion of uneven distribution is intrinsically related to language

standardisation because usually what is projected as “standard” language is the language of the dominant social groups. According to him, some people and groups have more linguistic resources within their reach than others. And this resource forms a definite capital since they can use this resource to their economic, social and cultural advantage.

For Bourdieu, educational institutions are key reproductive locations of cultural capital. For example, linguistic capacities act as a filter through competitive examinations for admissions to elite educational institutions. These institutions, in turn, are springboards for high-salaried job opportunities in the competitive market. Those who do not have access to linguistic capital exemplified in language standardisation are left out of such educational and job opportunities. Within the capitalist system and free market economy, though educational institutions are open to all in theory, only those who have the linguistic capital can gain access to these educational and career opportunities. In other words, linguistic advantages and disadvantages are translated and transformed into educational advantages and disadvantages. For Bourdieu, linguistic capital is transformed into educational capital, and further into social and cultural capital and thence into economic capital. Linguistic capital, in his theoretical framework, has a cumulative effect which perpetuates inequalities in society (Bourdieu 2000: 72-102). Thus, linguistic capital tends to reproduce social stratification and patterns of domination.

Possession of such linguistic resource also serves as a status symbol. Linguistic exchanges are also relations of symbolic power in which power relations between speakers or their respective groups are actualised (Bourdieu 2005b: 37). In Bourdieu’s thinking, various cultural practices such as preferences in literature, music, type of education and art predisposes tastes to function as markers of “class”. In this regard, he moves away from the Kantian concept of aesthetics which sees taste as an acquired disposition to “differentiate” and to “appreciate” (Bourdieu 2005a: 466). Indeed, for thinkers like Kant, culture embodies the finest achievements of the human mind and the ability to differentiate and appreciate such achievements mark the “taste” of cultivated minds. He looks at the issue of aesthetics and squarely places “taste” as a function of social class. In other words, taste functions as a mark of distinction to separate one social class from other social classes. In the symbolic order of hierarchies and distinctions taste transforms itself as an expression of one’s class position. So, usually the upper classes show a preference and “taste” for what is perceived as classical literature, classical dance and classical music. As he points out, taste is the source of the system of distinctive features which are perceived as a systemic expression of a particular class of conditions of existence (Bourdieu 2005a: 175). Standardised languages usually reflect a huge bias towards the language of the upper strata of society.

For Bourdieu linguistic standardisation also involves forms of symbolic domination. In many instances, standardisation process involves implicit coercion, which he calls “symbolic violence”. He uses the term to mean the imposition of a dominant culture, chiefly within the framework of educational set up. It refers to the process by which minority groups are encouraged to accept

the dominant culture as superior and legitimate and their own culture as inferior and illegitimate. Indeed, Bourdieu investigated the French society of the 1960s on the basis of empirical evidences. Many of Bourdieu’s conceptual and theoretical frameworks can be useful in understanding and analysing the dynamics of language and language standardisation elsewhere.

2 Mapping the Context

Before proceeding further, it may be fruitful to delineate the context in which Gujarati standardisation began to take shape. It needs to be noted that in Gujarat the standardisation process actually began with the emergence of colonial modernity. And one of the major elements in the codification process of Gujarati was the emergence of modern educational system in the first decades of the 19th century. Colonial modernity also resulted in social reform movements in Gujarat and the growth and evolution of Gujarati literature in the 19th century is intimately connected with the reform movement. The notions of progress and development which were implicit in social reform also percolated into the debates about the state of Gujarati language and literature. We need to note that many of the debates taking place in the 19th century such as the correct form of Gujarati language, proper orthography, and uniformity were largely absent – almost non-existent – in the previous centuries.

The printing press had a far-reaching effect on Gujarati society. For the first time, the Gujarati language appeared in print on 29 January 1797 in the *Bombay Courier*, which was a government notification about stray animals. In Gujarat, the first printing press was started by the London Missionary Society in Surat in 1820. Printing mediated the evolution and development of literature and literary forms in unprecedented ways and without print technology, “it would have been difficult, if not impossible, for most modern prose forms like the novel, autobiography and essay, to flourish to the extent they have” (Mehta 1992: 120). Between 1817 and 1867 nearly 78 printing presses were started in Gujarat, indicating an increase in the size of the reading public. Between 1831 and 1886 there were 94 newspapers and journals which began publication in Gujarati (Yashaschandra 2003: 594-97). It is interesting to note these significant shifts that were taking place in the language market as a result of changes in technology.

How did the initial efforts in language standardisation look like in Gujarat? A convenient place to begin would be by looking at the publication of Gujarati dictionaries and grammars in the 19th century which sets in motion the process of language codification. In the early decades of the 19th century several Gujarati dictionaries and grammar books were published both in Gujarati and in English. The list is rather long and for the sake of brevity we shall mention only a few. Drummond’s *Glossary* which was published in 1808 was the first bilingual dictionary of Gujarat. Dalpatram Bhaghubhai published *The Dictionary of Grand Commercial Language of Western and Central India* in 1846. Among bilingual dictionaries Karsandas Mulji’s *Gujarati-English Dictionary* (1862) is noteworthy. Another bilingual dictionary, *The Dictionary of Gujarati and English* was published in 1863 by Shapur Edalji and mid-19th century saw the publication of several

Gujarati monolingual dictionaries. Kavi Hirachand Kanji published the *Gujarati Kosavali* in 1865. The first major monolingual Gujarati dictionary was produced by well known Gujarati poet and reformer Narmad, entitled *Narmakosh* in 1873 (Jani 2005; Singh 1991). One of the first institutional efforts towards Gujarati standardisation was undertaken by the Gujarat Vernacular Society which was established by Kinloch Forbes in 1848 with the help of his friends. It began the task of compiling a Gujarati dictionary with proper orthography (Parekh 1932: 9).

One of the first to articulate rather perceptively the complexities involved in the standardisation of the language in the 19th century was Narmad. In the 1873 edition of *Narmakosh* we find rather elaborate set of rules for writing in Gujarati. He wrote in 1873: "From the time I started writing about the correct form of written Gujarati, I have been an advocate of the principle: 'write as you speak'. Twice or thrice I had formulated rules for writings but then I did not desire to follow them everywhere". Narmad noted the reasons for his reluctance as follows: "It is not feasible to formulate permanent rules for the correct form of Gujarati writing until mutual interaction between people increases, there are a good number of writers, many dictionaries, and the regional language has achieved certain degree of uniformity. The objective of formulating the present rules in view of the correct use of Gujarati is to initiate a discussion and to exercise some control over those who study in the schools" (Narmadashankar 1998: 91).

In spite of the discussions, and the publication of dictionaries in the 19th century orthographic uniformity was less than satisfactory as the following testimonies suggest. Shapurji Edalji wrote in 1868 that the Gujarati "language is in such an unsettled state and authoritative standards are so far wanting, that uniformity of opinion does not exist among any class of Gujaratis as to the legitimacy or otherwise of words in their vernacular". According to Edalji "if a jury of twelve Gujaratis were called upon to fix the exact and diversified sense of words, there would be a scene of confusion and contradiction" (Edalji 1868: 4). Navalram Pandya, educationist and social reformer, wrote in March 1872: "Each one declares a word to be either literary or *apabramsh* as he thinks. And accordingly there is an outburst of spellings in schools. There seems to be no way out of this situation." (Jodanikosh 1967: 4). In 1878, *Trübner's Oriental Series* noted about the Gujarati language that its "orthography is doubtful and has to be settled" (Cust 2000: 61). J F Blumhardt, who published the first ever catalogue of printed Gujarati (and Marathi) books of the British Library in 1892, made the following observation: "Gujarati authors are so extremely lax and irregular in spelling their names, even in their native character, that to adopt their own forms would inevitably result in endless confusion, and it is therefore necessary to follow a systematic and fixed principle of spelling for cataloguing purposes" (Blumhardt 1892). In 1914 Jhaveri pointed out that there were "no uniform rules existing" in Gujarati for the correct spelling of words as well as for "the correct pronunciation of words" and this problem is "engaging the close attention of Gujarati scholars". He summarises the situation as follows: "Much discussion has taken place but no definite conclusions have yet been arrived at. A committee was appointed by the Sahitya Parishad, and it has submitted a report

(in April 1912) in which an effort is made to lay down some guiding principles in respect of this subject" (Jhaveri 1914: 8). This shows that though there had been some efforts towards homogenisation and standardisation of Gujarati, the results were far from satisfactory.

3 Gandhi, Gujarati and Language Standardisation

It is against such a background that Gandhi initiated the standardisation process. Gandhi began his work in India in 1915 after his return from South Africa and chose Ahmedabad as the centre for his activities. He felt that being a Gujarati he could serve India only by identifying himself "completely with the life of Gujarat" (Gandhi 1965: 94). He himself wrote extensively in Gujarati and inspired a new generation of Gujarati writers. Gujarati literary figures not only listened to Gandhi but were also inspired by his nationalist ideas. At the 12th Gujarati Sahitya Parishad in his presidential address he asked Gujarati writers to keep the common people at the centre of their writings. Gandhi brought an entirely new idiom to politics and civic life through the notions of truth, non-violence, non-cooperation, and satyagraha and the Gujarati language played an important role in shaping and moulding these ideas. S Yashaschandra writes: "By writing in the Gujarati language, Gandhi corrected it, moulded it, and fashioned a new semiotic productivity that gave a new meaning to the society that used that language" (Yashaschandra 2006: 136).

One of his earliest views on "standard" Gujarati (though he never used this term directly), can be seen in a speech given in London in 1909 to support the third Gujarati literary conference which was to be held at Rajkot. Gandhi requested the leaders of the Rajkot literary conference to appoint a standing committee of Hindus, Muslims and Parsis proficient in the language "with the duty of watching the trends in the Gujarati writings of all the three communities and of offering advice to the writers". He added: "It should also be possible for writers with ideas to have their writings corrected through this committee free of cost" (Gandhi 1966a: 460). In 1920 Gandhi expressed his views on the state of Gujarati language as follows: "Our language Gujarati is used by three classes of people: Hindus, Muslims and Parsis. Each class has developed its own dialect and, besides, the three communities keep so much aloof from one another that none of them acquires acquaintance with the language of the other two". He locates the development of Gujarati within the framework of nationalism, which had just begun to emerge in Gujarat. He delineates the conditions for the uniformity of Gujarati language as follows: "When the feeling of oneness is born among us, when especially we come to have all our education in schools through Gujarati and Gujarat comes to be respected by Gujaratis, all of us will learn to write one and the same language" (Gandhi 1966b: 155).

In 1928 Gandhi told his audience at the Gujarat Vidyapith: "We want to ensure the spread of the Gujarati language, to see that it shines forth, that it is able to express our deepest thoughts" (Gandhi 1970a: 394). However, Gandhi was very much concerned about the state of the Gujarati language, a state which he described as "chaotic". He wrote in 1928: "The present chaotic state of spellings acts as a hindrance to the development of the

language". In the same article he pointed out that among "all languages of India, Gujarati is found to be the only one in which laxity in regard to spellings is possible" (Gandhi 1970b: 406). At one point Gandhi felt that the Gujarati language is "in a state of widowhood" (Gandhi 1976b: 420). He also expressed concern at the lack of uniformity in Gujarati orthography (Gandhi 1967: 22).

Gandhi took the initiative and constituted a committee with Maganbhai Desai as its chairman in order to look into the question of Gujarati spellings. After circulating the basic rules for spelling among Gujarati scholars this committee outlined the objectives of the standardisation as follows: there should not be much change in the existing orthographic system; the rules should be easily acceptable; and writers and publishers should not face difficulties. Meanwhile the Gujarat Vidyapith appointed a spelling committee consisting of Ramnarayan Pathak, Chotalal Purani, Kalidas Dave and Narahari Parikh. Since this new committee accepted the basic principles outlined by the Maganbhai Desai Committee, Gandhi wanted it to take up the task of publishing a new Gujarati dictionary. The Vidyapith took up the financial responsibility for the publication of this dictionary (Kalelkar 1967: 24-25).

Published in 1929 it was the first dictionary which sought to standardise Gujarati orthography with a set of 33 rules (*Jodanikosh* 1967: 16-20). Normally standardisation must justify the reasons for choosing certain norms to judge the correctness of language and spellings. This is what Gandhi has to say on this issue, "It may be asked: How is one to accept that the spellings given in this dictionary are correct while those in others are not? The answer is that it is not a question of deciding which spellings are correct and which are not. The principle followed in the compilation of this dictionary is that the spellings adopted by those who have a good knowledge of Gujarati and who try to write grammatically correct Gujarati be as correct" (Gandhi 1970c: 213). Obviously, the argument used by Gandhi is circular. He says that the dictionary adopts spellings used by those who have a "good knowledge" of Gujarati and who write correct grammar. without saying anything about what constitutes "good knowledge" and what makes it correct. Setting up one form of language as the standard to judge correctness rests on a questionable assumption because in an absolute sense the so-called standard language is not more "correct" than other regional varieties and dialects.

Efforts at language standardisation usually gain momentum with institutional recognition and government approval or what Haugen terms as the stage of "implementation". Gandhi wanted the municipal schools to follow the spellings given in the *Jodanikosh* and made obligatory for the teachers. With this objective, he asked Kalelkar to "get the spellings adopted in all other educational institutions in Gujarat" (Gandhi 1970d: 335). The 500 copies of the first edition of the dictionary of 1929 were sold out quickly and very soon the work for the second edition began. It was published in 1931 and welcomed by prominent scholars and writers. Moreover, authors, publishers and teachers began to follow the spelling system standardised by the Vidyapith. It got a further boost when in 1936 the 12th Gujarati Sahitya Parishad approved it. It passed a resolution asking for the cooperation of Gujarati scholars in making the new standardisation even more widely accepted. The third edition published in 1937 was

recognised by the Bombay University. Within a short period of time, the dictionary began to be recognised as an important step in Gujarati standardisation. Gradually, schools in Gujarat started implementing it. The third edition observed that with "the recognition of the dictionary in 1936 some of the problems and difficulties of spellings have settled to some extent". But it also felt the need of further efforts to make the standard spelling use even wider among the people. The responsibility for this, it was felt by the dictionary compilers, rested with the teachers, writers, newspaper owners, journal editors and publishers (Desai 1967: 11-15).

In 1940 the government of Bombay issued a notification approving the spellings standardised by the Gujarat Vidyapith. Among other things, it highlighted the debate which had been going on for some time in Gujarat about the correct spellings of Gujarati words. The notification pointed out that the spellings given in the dictionary had been accepted by the Gujarat Sahitya Parishad, the Bombay University, some Gujarati publishers, and some newspapers and journals. The Bombay government also recommended the adoption of the spellings by the state's educational and publishing institutions. According to this notification only those works which followed the spelling rules set forth in the *Jodanikosh* would be approved and carried in school and college textbooks (Gandhi 1967: 22).

However, it should not be concluded that with the publication of the *Jodanikosh* and efforts to implement the codification norms, the problem of standardisation was over. In February 1940 we see Gandhi in an agitated state about Gujarati spellings. He wrote rather strongly in *Harijanbandhu*: "The anarchy prevailing in Gujarati spelling is perhaps unparalleled in any other language. It is not found in Marathi, Bengali, Tamil or Urdu. I have not heard of it in any other Indian language. It is to be found in no European language." He continues using even stronger language: "What epithet except barbarous can one apply to a people who speak a language with unorganised spelling? Man's language develops as he progresses. A man can be judged in several matters by the language he speaks" (Gandhi 1967: 22). It is interesting to note the word used by Gandhi in Gujarati – *jungli* (barbarous) – to indicate a people who speak a language with unorganised spelling. In Gandhi's linguistic calibration, cultured people used "proper" language with correct spelling.

4 Gujarati Standardisation: Contestations

According to many Gujarati scholars, writers, and teachers, Gujarati orthography is still in a state of instability, chaos and confusion. Manishi Jani highlights the language situation as follows: "Of the five lakh students who take the board exams (in Gujarat), some one and a half lakh fail in their mother tongue"

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(Jani 2005: 21). The problem of orthography is not limited to students alone; even professors have difficulty, as the following testimony shows. "I retired after having taught the Gujarati language for 40 years... But I never felt the confidence that my spelling is correct" (Trivedi 2005: 147). This may sound surprising, given the fact that the *Jodanikosh* tried to fix the problem way back in 1929. It would appear that the situation which was described by Gandhi as "chaotic" continues to exist.

This state of confusion and instability in spite of standardisation was highlighted by a group of Gujarati language scholars, lexicographers, writers, and teachers in a conference convened in Unjha on 9-10 January 1999. The All Gujarat Orthography Convention, known as the Unjha Jodani Parishad, sought to simplify the existing Gujarati orthography. According to the Unjha-Jodani school, one of the chief confusions consists in the way the 'i' and 'u' sounds are written.

These scholars suggested that if the prevailing confusion is to be solved, then these differences ought to be abolished and that such reforms would make writing easier for students and ordinary people. If we go by the evidence, the efforts of the Unjha School seem to be bearing some fruits in the sense that more and more writers and publishers have begun accepting the Unjha-spelling. This school sees itself as a democratic movement which is interested in dialogue and debates. The Gujarati weekly *Naya Marg* has adopted this new system of writing. However, this system is not recognised by the Gujarat government. Moreover, the Vidyapith has not yet shown willingness to engage in a constructive dialogue with the Unjha school of orthography.

What exactly is the problem contained in the Gandhian inspired *Jodanikosh*? According to many scholars of the Unjha-Jodani school, the rules containing a number of exceptions and alternatives given in the Vidyapith dictionary have caused a huge amount of confusion. The rules make a clear distinction between the *tatsam* (Sanskrit) and *tadbhav* (Sanskrit derivative) words. For example, the first rule of the *Jodanikosh* says that the Sanskrit *tatsam* words should be used in its original form as a result of which Gujarati students must know the distinction between Sanskrit words and their derivatives. This distinction becomes important since some Sanskrit words are required to be written in Gujarati as long (*dirgha*) and others as short (*hrisva*), though while pronouncing there is no difference between them. But how will the Gujarati student know which words are Sanskrit and which are Sanskrit derivatives? If a student asks the teacher why it is pronounced as "short" but written differently, all that the teacher can say is that that is how it is written in Sanskrit. Somabhai Patel writes about the plight of Gujarati students thus: "The student is required to know first of all the distinction between Sanskrit and Sanskrit-derivative words in Gujarati, and secondly, because of the first rule of the *Jodanikosh*, the student is also supposed to know Sanskrit. This is because if you do not know Sanskrit, then you will not know how words are written in Sanskrit". Patel adds, "If you want to know Gujarati spelling, then you should know Sanskrit spelling because without Sanskrit knowledge, you are not going to write 'correct' Gujarati. But most students are not going to know Sanskrit; therefore, they are not going to learn correct Gujarati spelling" (S Patel 2005: 69-70).

According to the advocates of the simplified version of Gujarati, (Unjha Spelling) the very foundation of Gandhian inspired *Jodanikosh* rules is based on a misplaced distinction. Many Unjha scholars, question why if there is no distinction in pronunciation, should there be an artificial distinction in Gujarati writing? According to Balwant Patel, a linguist, and the author of an award-winning grammar book, "Gujarati, which has evolved from Sanskrit, is a simplification of Sanskrit. Unlike Sanskrit, Gujarati grammar is not a spelling-based grammar. Thus, for spelling purposes, distinction between categories like Sanskrit and Sanskrit derivative is neither logical nor proper" (Gajjar 2005: 27). Vipul Kalyani asked in the Unjha Convention: "What is the need of Sanskrit language rules for Gujarati writing? Gujarati has borrowed so many words from other languages (Persian, Arabic, Urdu, English and Portuguese) and when these words are written in Gujarati, the rules of those languages are not applied. So, why this insistence only for Sanskrit words used in Gujarati?" (Trivedi 2005: 168). It would appear that issues such as these have not been addressed by those who are responsible for the Vidyapith dictionary. According to Ramjibhai Patel, one of the pioneers of the Unjha-Jodani movement, until the division between Sanskrit (*tatsam*) and Sanskrit derived words (*tadbhav*) is dismantled, correct Gujarati spelling will remain a subject limited to a few specialists (R Patel 2005: viii).

Language Rules

Because of the differences over the spelling system, the government set up a five-member committee headed by the well-known linguist K K Shastri. This committee formulated improved rules for spelling which the Gujarat government accepted on 9 November 2001 through a resolution. Now, the spellings suggested by the Shastri Committee are different from that of the government approved *Jodanikosh* (Rawal 2005: 22-24). But according to Manishi Jani, these "improved rules" are not implemented by the educational departments in the state (Jani 2005: 21). Interestingly, the institutions which are represented by the committee members themselves have not implemented the Shastri Committee recommendations and neither has the government run journal *Gujarat*. Even the school textbooks have failed to adopt the new spelling system (Rawal 2005: 22-24). So this new effort which has not found many takers for all practical purposes seems to exist only in the government resolution.

The basis of the prevailing confusion, according to the Unjha scholars lies in the efforts of the Gandhian school to base Gujarati spelling system mainly on the Sanskrit-based spelling. But why did the Vidyapith opt for a predominantly Sanskrit-based system, in the first place? I think we need to understand this Sanskrit option in the context of the Gandhian brand of nationalism. What is noteworthy in the nationalist discourse of Gandhi and those who followed his language perspective is the constant effort to project Gujarati as the "daughter" of Sanskrit. Implicit in such perspective is the invocation of the Aryan race theory popularised by Orientalists like Max Muller. In his Gujarati grammar book published in 1870, Taylor asked: "Who said that Gujarati was inadequate? Gujarati, the accomplished daughter of Sanskrit, how could it be inadequate?" (quoted by Taylor 1944: 1). Gandhi who quoted

Taylor in his speech at the Gujarati Sahitya Parishad, like most of his Indian contemporaries, took it for granted that Indians and Europeans spring from a "common" Indo-Aryan race. Among the nationalists there has been a definite effort to project Indian civilisation as the sole creation of the Aryans to the exclusion of the contributions of other cultural and ethnic groups. During Gandhi's time, the Gujarati language debate was influenced in a significant way by such nationalist identity constructions.

We need to juxtapose the so-called "standard" Gujarati promoted by Gandhi and Gandhian institutions throughout the state with the actual multiple linguistic situation of Gujarat. When we piece together the ancient history of Gujarat, it reveals a highly complex and pluralistic traditions and cultural past. The accepted "standard" dialect is the speech of the area from Baroda to Ahmedabad (Cardona and Suthar 2003: 722). But apart from what is projected as "standard" Gujarati, there are large number of dialects in Gujarat such as Kathiawari, Nagari, Surati, Anawla, Patani, Patnuli, Charotati, Patidari and Parsi Gujarati, just to mention a few (Taylor 1944: 411-22). Tribal groups constitute nearly 15% of the Gujarat population with two districts having a tribal population of more than 50% and two districts with 45% (Shah 2000: 98). Tribals in Gujarat have their own dialects such as Vasavi, Bhilli, Gamit, Kokna, Dangi, Choudhuri, Rathwa and Tadvi. Nearly 15% of the Gujarat tribal population has to struggle to learn an alien language if they want to be in the competitive job market, at least in the private sector.

This is one of the ways in which language standardisation and the linguistic market creates inequalities. It is not merely a matter

of learning an alien language, but also one involving pressures to conform to the dominant culture. There is a definite trend among the Gujarati tribal population that is educated to conform not only to the Gujarati linguistic matrix, but also to give up their own language and culture. This is what Bourdieu terms as "symbolic violence" by which a dominant form of language in the form of standardisation is imposed on other cultures. The standardisation process through institutionalised legitimation forces linguistic minorities to accept the "standard" language which is the language of the dominant groups. Such a process is not "natural" but a deliberate one which entails a definite political process. As Bourhis has rightly pointed out, "the type of choice made to bring about language standardisation can become a revealing barometer of the different forces at play in multilingual societies and ultimately come to reflect society's views towards its weaker minorities" (Bourhis 1984: 11).

Conclusions

From what we have seen so far, those who were involved in the codification of Gujarati seem to have taken a highly Sanskrit view of the language. The non-Sanskrit influences and elements in the shaping of the Gujarati language are obviously excluded from such a perspective. Those who are engaged in the standardisation process usually belong to the upper strata of society and their efforts to project the "standard language" as Pierre Bourdieu has pointed out reflect a definite class interest. Out of the several existing variations a particular variety of

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language – Sanskrit-based – used by the dominant class was chosen as the standard Gujarati. The classical bias reflected in opting for the Sanskrit-based codification of the Gujarat Vidyapith and endorsed by the state government points to class interest because this standard language ultimately acts as a filter to the competitive job market. It would be simplistic to assume that everyone in a language community has equal access to and command of its language; in reality, access to and command of standard languages are unequal. This is especially true in the case of tribal groups whose dialects are far removed from the standard language.

The contemporary Gujarati language situation which has been described as “chaotic” is located in the way Sanskrit has been used as the foundation. It would appear that the Gujarati language has not been able to cut off the umbilical cords of

Sanskrit and establish its own independent linguistic identity. It seems reasonable to suggest that if the Gujarati language wants to develop an identity of its own, then it has to move away from the fossilised views of language. A reasonable view would suggest that Sanskrit is one of the many linguistic elements which have contributed to the development and evolution of the Gujarati language. The linguistic family, to which Gujarati belongs, shows complex evolutionary patterns. Given such complexities, an overemphasis on Sanskrit at the expense of the autonomy of present Gujarati, seems problematic. Unjha scholars seem to be suggesting reforms precisely in the direction of establishing an independent identity for the language. However, the language question needs further debate and discussions in the public domain in a multicultural and multi-lingual state such as Gujarat.

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