

**Applied Linguistics**  
**Professor Rajesh Kumar**  
**Indian Institute of Technology Madras**  
**Lecture 16**  
**Language and Multilingualism**

In this course on Applied Linguistics at this stage now, we would like to revisit the idea of language and we need to understand language in a way, so that we understand the notion of multilingualism. The notion of multilingualism is one of the crucial elements in understanding issues in applied linguistics, though this is part of the general understanding about language that language can only be defined as multilingualism.

Language with its nature which is embedded in its structure is fluid. So, fluidity is the nature of language and embedding of fluidity in the structure of language helps us define language as multilingualism. Mostly, when people talk about multilingualism or for that matter bilingualism, it is discussed and debated, deliberated as numerical term in mathematical value, where multilingualism means someone who speaks more languages, many languages.

And least multilingualism tells you is multilingualism is something, when people speak more than 2 languages, which naturally defines the term like bilingualism as someone who speaks 2 languages. The idea of bilingualism and multilingualism and their numerical definition that is, the definition of bilingualism and multilingualism in their numerical values gives birth to term monolingualism.

Throughout the course and in my research in general and there is entire school of thought, which is based on the idea that entire notion of monolingualism is not a viable idea. And this is pretty much apparent, this is apparent when people use language in society. This is pretty much apparent when people communicate with each other.

Yet, in my experience so far, it has been one of the most difficult issues in dealing with the idea of language in many domains of linguistics, where the notion of monolingualism is kind of engraved in stone. However, we will make another attempt to deal with the idea that monolingualism is kind of fictitious, it does not exist in real world and therefore, the entire notion of bilingualism and multilingualism has to be looked at afresh.

Let me repeat it again, the very fact that the fundamental nature of language is fluid. That is to say, language does not seem to be an accountable entity. The fact that language starts at one place and merges into another at another place and there is variation within tells us that we do

not know how to count total number of languages at all. And yet we would want to believe that language is something that we count.

And it so happened because we have named languages and thus all these issues begins. So let us look at this thing with the idea of liberalism in defining language. We come back to this issue where language can be defined as multilingualism at the end of it. first we want to demonstrate to you how the issue of bilingualism and multilingual is has been dealt in literature so far.

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## Introduction

- Individuals and human groups have always moved from one place to another for one reason or another including search for food, work or trade.
- Conquests, Migrations and Colonization are three main factors for language contact. This lead to different kinds of synchronic and diachronic effects on languages and on speech communities
- This includes bi-/multilingualism, code-mixing, convergence and divergence, language shift and language death.



So here is what how it begins and here is how we see bilingualism and multilingualism being discussed in the literature. It is more or less an established fact that individuals and humans have always moved from one place to the other. The displacement of humans for one reason or the other and the reason could be anything ranging from search for food, work, trade, travel, tourism, religious activities and let us just keep counting.

The reason for travel and displacement would be anything. However, the entire history of human race is evident with displacement. So and since we talk about human history that is the history of human race, we can talk about many reasons, but primarily, inquest, migration and colonization. In some sense, one is the outcome of the other one supports the other are 3 main reasons, 3 main factors for language contact.

And if you look at the reason for human displacement, whether for the purpose of food or travel or work or trade or the displacement has taken place for colonization, sometimes when

people have migrated willingly and sometimes people have moved from one place to the other conquer another land.

A natural outcome of any one of these, which is good or bad, is not significant, but the natural outcome of all these reasons underlying human displacement is language contact. The speakers of one language have always got into contact with the other as an outcome of all these processes underlying these reasons. So, whether this is synchrony or diachronic, it has an effect on speech community.

So what the results are code mixing, so when speakers of different languages come in contact with each other, the natural development is the creation of pidgin and then nativization pidgin results into creoles. Then at a very different level, we see people mixing codes and then at a later stage, convergence and divergence place than we have language shift and this has also resulted in language death at times.

Whether it is convergence, shift or death of a language or languages or underlying process that result into these things like mixing or simply the process of Creolization or pidginisation all of these things can be looked at as part of multilingualism. So, these issues are relevant for discussing physical nature multilingualism in society. So this is this is one aspect of multilingualism.

As I have discussed in the beginning when we started, there are 2 main aspects of multilingualism or bilingualism. We add a point here; I am going to be using the 2 terms interchangeably that is, bilingualism and multilingualism. However, I do want you to keep in mind that in traditional literature, people have made the distinction between bilingualism and monolingualism.

Bilinguals are the people who speak 2 languages, at what fluency or frequency we are going to be discussing this shortly. However, bilinguals are people who speak 2 languages that is, 1 + 1. And multilingual are the people who speak 2 and more languages, this is the distinction, which has been made in traditional literature.

However, I am going to be using the term bilingualism and multilingualism interchangeably because we want to reach a stage at end of this conversation that bilingualism and multilingualism are not 2 different concepts. And therefore, an outcome of the definition of bilingualism and multilingualism, which is monolingualism, is not a viable concept.

So with this note, I want to begin with the 2 aspects that have contributed to the understanding of bilingualism. So one is the degree of bilingualism and the other is the function of bilingualism that is, the use of 2 languages in different domains. Let us look at some of the definitions of bilingualism where Diebold has defined it as someone who has minimal competence in another language.

(Refer Slide Time: 11:18)

### Definitions

- Diebold (1964): Someone who has minimal competence in another language and is at the initial stage of acquiring another language is also a bilingual.
- Bloomfield (1933): A bilingual is someone who has 'native like control' of two languages.
- Weinreich (1953): Practice of alternately using two languages.
- Haugen (1953): Bilingualism is achieved at the point where a speaker can first produce complete meaningful utterances in the other language.



Or is at the stage of acquiring another language is called a bilingual. So, we will analyze this later, first look at the other distinction, Bloomfield has called a bilingual someone who has native like control in two languages, so there is a huge difference between Diebold and Bloomfield in terms of defining bilingualism. Weinreich on the other hand calls a bilingual who practices 2 languages alternatively.

Now one Weinreich's definition of bilingualism is based on the use of language, not on the basis of acquisition or formal properties of language. Whereas, Bloomfield's distinction definitely employs formal properties of language in terms of its acquisition in nature. However, it is not clarified in the definition or in the detail of the definition at length when Bloomfield (1933) discusses this in famous book "language".

Haugen (1953) however claims bilingualism is achieved at a point where a speaker can first produce complete meaningful utterance in the other language. So, this can be taken as the minimal point in bilingualism, where it is only talking about meaningful utterance, the capacity to produce a meaningful utterance in another language.

So if we look at these 4 definitions of bilingualism, we look at we put Haugen and Diebold in one side and Bloomfield and Weinreich on the other. Where, in terms of familiarity with language however, we will have to put Bloomfield in terms of talking about competence in defining bilingualism and Diebold is also talking about acquisition.

But Bloomfield is different in the sense that he is talking about total control over 2 languages, but rest of the people are not talking about total control on 2 languages. So we need to take a look at these definitions of bilingualism from various perspectives in order to understand the traditional definitions as well. Whereas, keep in mind all of them are talking about 2 languages and that is pretty much apparent.

(Refer Slide Time: 13:50)

### **Spectrum of Bilingualism**

- Speakers can acquire the languages in question at different ages during their lifetime.
- Bilinguals can have different levels of proficiency in the languages they know.
- The functions and status that the languages in question have in a given speech community define the patterns and amount of language use.



In terms of discussion on spectrum of bilingualism, we see that because can acquire language at different stages during their lifetimes and still be bilingual. Whereas, in some cases bilinguals can have different levels of proficiency in the language they know. And also the function and status of languages have, in a speech community be defined the on the basis of the patterns and the amounts of language use.

So the acquisition, structure and use are underlying the definition of bilingualism event in at a stage when we consider bilingualism with as 2 distinct, going through the acquisition of 2 distinct languages, going through the proficiency in terms of structure of 2 languages and going through the ability to use 2 languages in a speech community.

So even though we see a clear emphasise on 2 languages that is 2 is numerical value for the purpose of defining bilingualism, we do see an underlying discussion about the form and

function of language, underlying distinction about acquisition, form and function of language. Looking at the formal and functional properties of language, all these inks are at play in defining and understanding bilingualism.

(Refer Slide Time: 15:24)

### Aspects of Bilingualism

Mackey (1968) points four aspects that must be considered in describing bilingualism:

- Degree: Degree refers to the issue of 'how bilingual' the speaker is by assessing comprehension and expression in terms of phonology, grammar, semantics, stylistics and lexicon in skills such as listening, reading, speaking and writing.
- Function: Function deals with the patterns of use and the roles these languages play.



There are several aspects of bilingualism as well. Mackey (1968) talks about 4 of them. And first is degree, the other is function, the second alternation and the 4<sup>th</sup> is interference. By degree Mackey means the interface to the issue of how bilingual the speaker is by assessing comprehension and expression in terms of phonology, grammar, semantic, stylistics and morphology. It is tested by listening, reading, speaking and writing.

That is to say, if the degree of bilingualism determines the ability or capability of bilinguals in these domains of listening, reading, speaking and writing. The functional aspects of bilingualism deals with the patterns use and role of language in different domains of life.

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- **Alternation:** Alternation deals with amount of alternation that takes place between the languages in question. This determines the function of the language for the speaker as well as the speaker's fluency in the languages.
- **Interference:** Interference is defined as the use of features belonging to one language while speaking or writing another.



Alternation deals with the amount of alternation that takes place between one language and the other. And this determines also the function of language for the speakers as well as the speaker's fluency in language. So the function of language in different domains and the fluency of the use of language in different domains. The fluency with which alternation takes place is part of the alternation aspect of bilingualism.

As the same time, interference is defined as the use of features belonging to a language while speaking the other, so the use of the features of one language while speaking or writing, and when the feature interfere with the other language and this will be interference aspect of language. We have discussed some of the ideas of these things in second language acquisition when we have looked at contrastive analysis in second language acquisition as well.

(Refer Slide Time: 17:40)

### **Types of Bilinguals**

- Compound and Coordinate bilinguals
- Natural and Structure bilinguals
- Simultaneous and Consecutive/Successive bilinguals
- Balanced and Dominant bilinguals
- Folk and Elite bilinguals
- Additive and Subtractive bilinguals



Then we do see that there are several types of bilinguals defined in literature. this is by no means an exhausted list of the types of bilinguals, it differs from scholars to scholars and it also differs from which type of linguistics we are talking about in particular, which type of social linguistics we are talking about to deal with the issues in applied linguistics.

However, some of the people may not agree with this term, but some of the commonly known types of bilinguals in literature are compound and coordinate bilinguals, natural and structural bilinguals, simultaneous and consecutive or successive bilinguals, balanced and dominant bilinguals, folk and edit bilinguals and just same time, additive and subtractive bilinguals.

We are going to be discussing all of them however; I do want you to go through some of the examples of these types of bilinguals for us to understand the traditional distinction and definition of bilinguals. We have looked at the spectrum, types and the definitions; we also want to look at some of the types of bilinguals in the practice.



(Refer Slide Time: 19:03)

## Compound and Coordinate bilinguals

- Description is based on the understanding at what time and how the two languages are mapped in the brain. Ervin and Osgood, however, were concerned with how these different types of bilinguals come into being based on their language use. Ervin and Osgood merged Weinreich's concept of compound and subordinate bilinguals and called it 'compound'.
- According to them compound bilinguals develop through their experience of using the two languages simultaneously in various domains whereas coordinate bilinguals use one language in one domain and the other language in another domain (for instance Language A at home and Language B at work).



So who are compound and coordinate bilinguals? The description of compound and coordinate bilinguals is based on understanding at what time and how the 2 languages are mapped in the frame. This sounds complex, but it is not too difficult. How these different types of bilinguals come into being is based on their language use.

So and this for understanding of this, Osgood and Ervin have merged Weinreich's concept of compound and somebody in bilinguals in one and have called Compound bilinguals.

And here is what it means. Compound type of bilingualism develop through the experience of using 2 languages simultaneously and this use of 2 languages simultaneously happens in various domains whereas, for keep in mind, the use of 2 languages in different domains and the capacity to use 2 languages in different domains is resulting into compound bilingualism.

However, the coordinate bilinguals use one language in one domain whereas, the other language in another. It is pretty simple, use of 2 languages in different domains that is, use of language A in one and language B in the other use of 2 languages in various domains simultaneously will be compound bilinguals. Whereas, the use of one language in one and the other language in another one will be coordinate bilingual.

That is pretty much simple as it is, but it is important to keep in mind that it the underlying definition of these 2 and it has Weinreich's definition of bilingualism embedded in it.

(Refer Slide Time: 21:16)

### **Natural and Structure bilinguals**

- Natural bilinguals are speakers who acquire both languages in a natural setting and not with structured instructions. On the other hand, structure bilingualism is where a language is acquired in a structured environment like a school or from a tutor. It is possible that the natural bilinguals acquire one language in one domain and another language in another domain.



Natural bilinguals are the speakers who require both languages in a natural sitting and not with instructions. And this is interesting and I remind you at this point the issues related to language acquisition, in particular first language acquisition. Remember, what is the definition of a natural bilingual?

A natural bilingual is one who acquires 2 languages simultaneously and effortlessly without instructions. Whereas, structural bilingualism is something and those who use structural bilingualism are people who have acquired language in structured environment in schools from a tutor. So what is underlying in the definition of natural bilingualism is...

Natural refers to effortless learning and structure refers to conscious effort in learning at school or from a tutor, but the focus is on 2 languages. This will be relevant in our discussion little later as well and we are going to be looking at this shortly.

(Refer Slide Time: 22:46)

### **Simultaneous and Consecutive/Successive bilinguals**

- Those who acquire two languages as 'first languages' or L1s are called simultaneous bilinguals. This is also called "bilingual first language acquisition".
- On the other hand, children who hear one language at home until age three and come into contact with another language later from their neighbourhood, larger community or school after the age of three are called consecutive or successive bilinguals.



Another type of bilingualism or bilinguals is simultaneous and consecutive bilinguals. Those who acquire 2 languages as first language or 2 L1s are called simultaneous bilinguals. So in a way, natural bilinguals are going to be simultaneous bilinguals as well. This is also called bilingual first language acquisition that is, the when the acquisition of 2 languages have taken place simultaneously.

And now look at what they mean by successive bilingualism, where a language has been acquired before 3 years of age and the other language is acquired little later that is after 3 years of age. Now, this is a hair lying distinction of language acquisition and hair lying distinction that has been meet in the process of language acquisition because this is going to run into difficulty.

And if you have looked at the process of first language acquisition carefully and you understand the notion of critical period hypothesis as well, then you understand what we are discussing here. That simultaneous bilinguals or consecutive or successive bilinguals are going to be more or less without any distinction because the benchmark that they are putting here that is 3 years of age is not going to bring much of a distinction between in the process of acquisition.

So in other words, if someone begins to acquire a new language at 3 years or 4 years of age and we want to measure proficiency in language that was acquired or that is started. The process of acquisition of language that is started before 3 years of age and the process of

acquisition of the language that has started after 3 years of age and we measure it at a later stage in life let us say 10 years or 12 years.

Either before critical period or after critical period is going to be completely meaningless because the result is going to be almost similar. However, that depends upon the familiarity and the continuous familiarity with the language of a speaker. We come back to this again, but it is important to keep in mind the distinction, the idea of natural and structure bilinguals, at the same time the notion of simultaneous and consecutive or successive bilinguals.

(Refer Slide Time: 25:21)

### **Balanced and Dominant bilinguals**

- The term balanced bilingual is used for speakers who are equally proficient in both languages in all domains of speech. Dominant bilingual are those speakers who are dominant in one language. The less dominant language is called the subordinate language.



Balanced and dominant bilinguals, these terms are used for speakers who are equally proficient in both languages in all dominant speech and that will be a balanced bilingual. So when a person who uses 2 languages with total control in all different domains of speech will be a balanced bilingual. However, dominant bilinguals are those who have one language as the dominant language.

And other is less dominant, which will be called a subordinate language. The distinction is significant, and we see such a notion at play in real world in real life and we use the language in several domains and it is crucial as well.

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### Fluidity of Language

- The assumption that bilinguals have two separate codes is not really valid.
- Boundaries are not always clear and have fuzzy areas.
- Research on bilinguals suggests that the interactions between a bilingual's two languages result in cross-linguistic influence between the two language systems.



So this with this so far, we have seen the idea of bilingualism and multilingualism with respect to their definition that has come up time to time. The factors underlying those definitions, the spectrum of the use of language in several situations, what could probably result into multilingualism that is the context of multilingualism bilingualism?

And then the types of bilinguals or multilingual that have emerged on the basis of language used or the process of their learning and acquisition. Even at the time when bilingualism refers to 2 languages and multilingualism refers to 2 + 1 or 2 + many, 2 + others.

We see surprisingly and not so surprisingly, the things that are in control of the situation, the things that dominate these distinctions are the idea of acquisition of language, the idea of a structure of language and idea of the use of language. Very crucially underlying are these 3 ideas. At the same time, what we also see in dealing with multilingualism are the notions of acquisition structure and function.

At the same time, the types of languages and the distinction is also made in terms of form and function of language. So, most of the notions of language that we have seen and most of the aspects of language that we have discussed beginning from acquisition, structure and change are in play in defining multilingualism.

And multilingualism perhaps is the most obvious phenomena of society, is one of the most critical issue in society, where the outcome of study of language is at play in describing this in society rather. So when we broaden this issue and we see that languages do not have rigid

boundaries, languages do not obey rigidity and people who speak language at the convergence areas of 2 languages have capacity to speak 2 languages with equal proficiency.

And then, not only these 2 rather they also have the capacity to speak certain other things as well. So the entire idea makes us see the point of fluidity of language. This entire idea of fluidity that is, lack of rigidity in language boundaries is what gives language life. The more rigid the use of the language, the easier the death of the language is. The more fluid the more open language is, the larger longer its life is guaranteed.

So, the process of acquisition of language, the structure of language and the use of language. Form of language and the function of language, competence and performance both whether we are looking at language from psychological perspective, language as a behavioral phenomena or language as a mentalist phenomena. All of them have embedded point about fluidity of language in it and that is pretty much apparent.

So how one language merges into other has some limitations on it, but that creates a completely new kind of language. This has also been discussed in cognitive science with the question that (bi) Do bilingual speakers have 2 grammars in their minds? Do multilingual speakers have many grammars in their minds? What is the language, what is the grammar of multilingualism?

For the purpose of simplicity in this decision so far, discussion at this stage, what appears following from the discussion is, the underlying grammar of language in human mind has capacity to deal with multilingualism. And therefore, multilingualism appears to be the norm, it is not that people learn one language at one time and second language at the other time and then many languages at various different stages.

That might be apparently true as well in some cases. However, the internal grammar of language in one mind has the underlying pattern of multilingualism embedded in it. Therefore, not only on surface but that is not only as “E” language, but also as “I” language, the norm is multilingual grammar. Internal grammar of human mind is actually the grammar of multilingualism that can accommodate and take care of multilingualism at all stages.

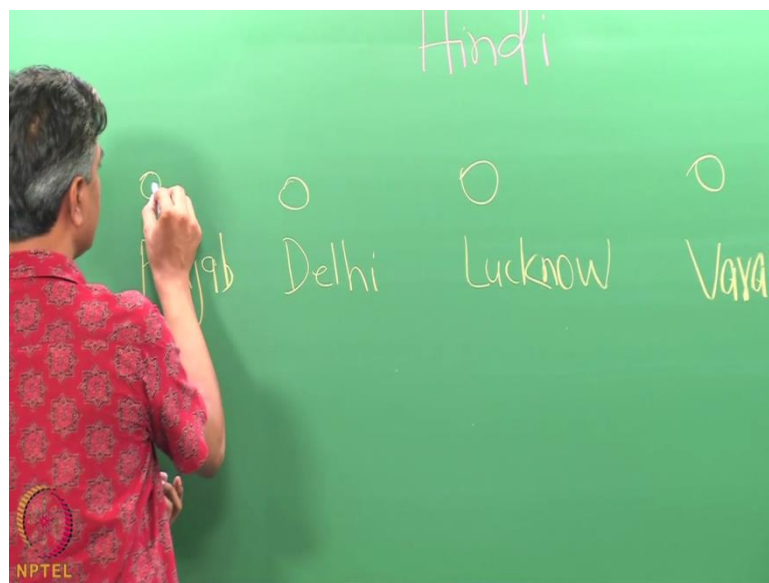
Therefore, there is no question existence of various grammars in human mind. The grammar of language in human mind is one, it has its generative foundation and what it has is the capacity to come up with new things, so the grammar of human mind does not even individual lexicons from different languages rather, it has the capacity to build one.

At the same time, the grammar of human mind has the capacity to use language and it does not care for language A or language B. And therefore, this justifies the existence of multilingualism in human mind. So the notion of “I” language, the grammar of multilingualism in human mind and the fluid nature of language, all indicate towards language being multilingualism.

Language is inherently multilingual in nature therefore, the multilingual capacity of human being is not a unique phenomena. Humans are by definition multilingual. We will make one more point to stress this point. If we look at language, all the languages can only be understood in terms of continuous, when we...

We will take 2 examples; we will discuss the idea of Hindi and let us say Tamil. Let us start with Hindi, Hindi spoken at many places differently. And so when we run a single line through these dots, we create a continuum. So let me create a continuum of a very small very small geography beginning from Delhi and Kolkata.

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So here is what we are talking about. So when we talk about Hindi, we are talking about points like this one that is, Hindi of Delhi or for that matter, we can talk about Hindi of Punjab, then Hindi of Lucknow, Hindi of Varanasi, Patna and let us say Kolkata. Please understand that Hindi certainly use in all these places. Now, what I want you to see that when we run a straight line, we see a continuum.



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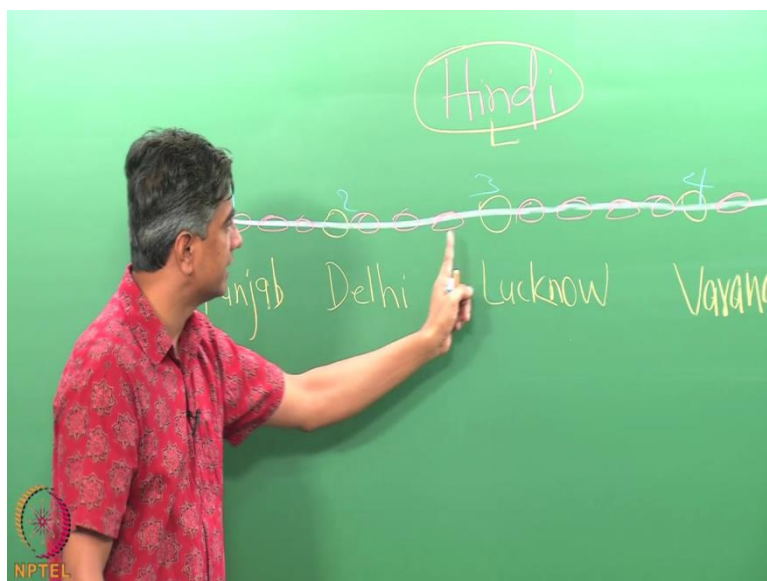


And this is where this language is spoken. Now, the issue is, at all these places there are distinctions in at the level of sounds, words and sentences. But, at the end of it we define it as one language. However, what is relevant to keep in mind is what people speak are these Hindis 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 to name. Keep in mind that it is not just 6, it could be 600 in between as well and beyond.

We have so many types of Hindi that we do not have the total number of types. What people really speak are besides. So this is how we can define Hindi that, what we call language Hindi is really a kind of phonemic incarnation that is, it is just a name, it is just an idea when you say language, probably nobody speaks but has different incarnations and this is what people speak.



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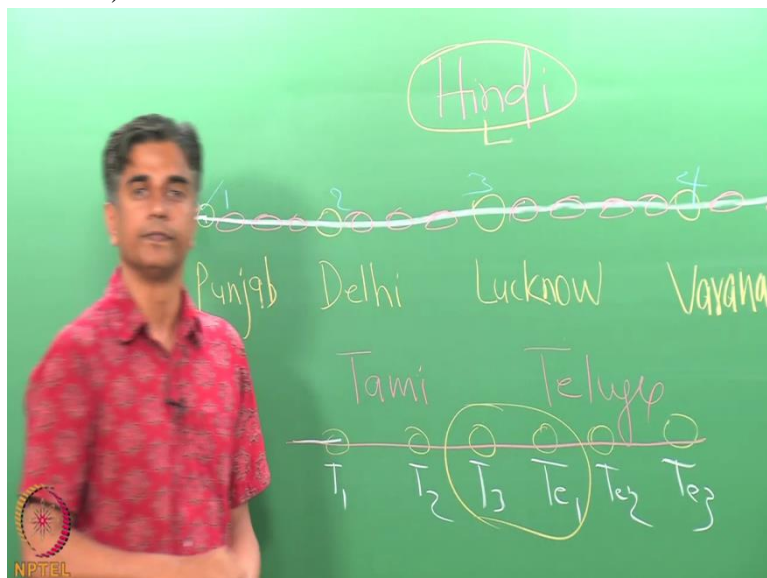
So we can look at different varieties of Hindi on a continuum. And it is different varieties of the language that people speak in the real world. This is what I mean when I say nobody speaks this, people rather speak these and I have just given you some names of Chandigarh, Delhi, Lucknow, Varanasi, Patna and Kolkata, you can go this way all the way to Lahore and Kabul and you can go that way all the way including Shillong to Rangoon.

That is not important, we are not talking about geography, we are talking about a continuum of language and existence of different varieties in between, where people speak different varieties and not what the ideal variety refers to. Therefore, languages can be looked at a continuum and here is the significant point that I want you to understand.

Which is the ability of a speaker to negotiate between 1 to 6 and probably the other 600 in between is multilingual capacity is what refers to multilingual capacity. So Hindi speaker by itself is a multilingual speaker, a Hindi speaker has the capacity today with all its varieties and negotiate with the speakers of the different varieties of Hindi will be possible because of the multilingual grammar of human mind.

Because embedded multilinguality at the level of “I” language. And this multilinguality is also apparently visible at the level of “E” language too. Such a phenomenon is applicable to every single language. Now, we are talking about the continuum of language within, we can also see such a continuum beyond, which is at the convergence areas of 2 languages, where we move from one area of let us say Tamil and Telugu.

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There are places in between where people speak one kind of Tamil and then all of a sudden, you start Telugu. So this is Tamil 1, this is Tamil 2, this is Tamil 3 and then we all of a sudden starts Telugu 1, Telugu 2 and Telugu 3. When we create a continuum, what is the language of this? The capacity for the speakers of these 2 languages, the speakers of this place, who speak Telugu and Tamil with equal competence.

And they have the capacity to negotiate with these kinds of Telugu or this kind of Tamil also creates a bilingual situation a multilingual situation. Therefore 2 things, the idea of multilingualism is not about  $N + 1$ , so the idea of multilingualism is not  $N + 1$ , the idea of multilingualism is embedded in language itself.

The capacity to navigate and negotiate through different languages and the varieties of different languages within is part of multilingualism. It embeds bilingualism as well therefore, there is not a distinction viable distinction between the 2 terms, multilingualism and bilingualism and finally where we started with the notion of monolingualism therefore is not a viable concept.

Every single individual, every single speaker of a language will have the capacity to deal with the varieties of the same language at different stage. Therefore, the concept of monolingualism is not a viable one. Rather, we need to look at what we mean by monolingualism afresh and then we will end up understanding language as multilingualism.

This is going to be helpful in understanding the internal nature of language that you have seen so far and it is going to help us understand the issues that are related to language in the real world in greater details with a fresh perspective on language, thank you.