


Fundamental Concepts in Sociolinguistics
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Linguistic Identity and language Movements in India

Welcome to class. Today we are going to talk about linguistic diversity and language movements in India. As we discussed in earlier last class, the linguistic identity. And an urge to assert this linguistic identity, sometimes leads to a violent conflict. And in the history, we can see the recent example of Bangladesh, creation of Bangladesh, erstwhile East Pakistan, which was triggered by language movement in 1952. And turned out to be a political movement. And finally got separated from erstwhile Pakistan and now Bangladesh.

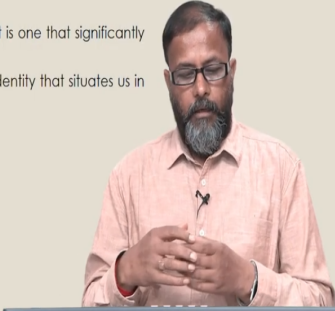
The history of Southeast Asia, is full of such movements, some movements turned into violent protests, and ultimately a lot of blood shed, case of Sri Lanka for that matter, Sinhalese versus Tamil, case of Bangladesh for that matter, Urdu versus Bangla. But India is an exception. We have a diverse situation, linguistically diverse situation here. But for hundreds of years, we have been staying together in harmony and peace with this diversity. That is the strength of our society. However there are some demands and undercurrents that we will talk about today. We are going to talk about linguistic diversity and language movements in India.

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Linguistic Identity

- Speakers of certain languages may feel oppressed if their language is not given formal recognition and equal support.
- Such sense of neglect has led to a number of socio-political movements by various linguistic communities across the world.
- our social order is developed alongside our linguistic allegiance, shared narratives, collective memories, and common social history.
- Language does not simply remain a social object, but rather it is one that significantly determines our associations and social functions.
- We derive meaning through it and construct a multi-layered identity that situates us in a given sociocultural space.



Now we need to understand the idea called linguistic identity. Identity is an umbrella term and we have a multi-layer identity. We constitute our social identity, construct our identity in

different contexts with different markers. So gender, class, caste, region, religion and language. They are indexes. And when I say I am a Hindi speaker, I construct my identity as a Hindi speaker in terms of announcing my membership to the Hindi speech community. And identify with the language Hindi. If I am a Tamil speaker, a Tamil identity.

But we need to understand that the idea called identity, linguistic identity, language is not simply a means of communication, a tool for communication, it goes beyond that. And it becomes a single thread, a bonding factor, to organize communities. It is a vigorous marker of our identity. We constitute linguistic identity along with the linguistic allegiance. So as a multilingual individual, I have multilingual identities as a Hindi speaker, I speak Bhojpuri I become a Bhojpuri speaker, in some certain you know group, I am a Hindi speaker. For a larger group, I am an English speaker. So these languages create circles and we constitute our identity within those circles. So it is a very complex phenomenon. And it is multi-layered.


Now we need to understand that speakers of a certain language may feel oppressed or neglected, if their language is not given formal recognition and equal support. So this discrimination, they may feel discriminated, and because when they find that their language does not get value, it threatens the bases roots of their linguistic identity. And such a sense of neglect, in the history of the world, has led to a number of violent protests. And that was aggravated to a level, where we have seen instances of separation like Bangladesh for that matter, is the best example, recent example Bangladesh war, 1971, which started long back on 21st February 1952. The language movement in favor of Bangla, when Urdu was imposed. And that movement and then we had a violent protest then the firing then the death of the activists. And which led to Mukti Bahini and then finally separation from erstwhile Pakistan. Take the example of Tamil and Sinhalese, conflict in Sri Lanka. So, it is not simply a political conflict. It has origins in language and culture. The Sinhalese versus Tamil in Sri Lanka, for that matter. And we have seen decades of bloodshed. Look at the cases in Spain for that matter, look at the cases of Quebec and in Canada for that matter or Scotts in Scotland or Ireland.

So such a sense of neglect of the language and practicing culture, may lead to violent protests and we have seen all around. Our social order is developed alongside our linguistic allegiance, we form communities, speech communities, and we have, I know, our linguistic identity. You might recall we talked about Martha Vineyard Island case study by William Labov and where linguistic expression became a tool to assert linguistic identity. And the

Islanders in order to distinguish themselves from the visitors in summer, deliberately and consciously, use some linguistic structures like the diphthongs, centralized diphthongs to make sure that they sound different, they wanted to sound different, to be different, to assert their difference. So we versus them. And you remember that Martha Vineyard island case study we did in our class and it happens all around. So a social order, so William Labov also displayed, demonstrated, how linguistic structures are related to social structures. So language becomes a vigorous marker of our identity. And it constitutes a community, speech community. It becomes a bonding factor, you know, a common thread, which binds the members of the speech community. And you know this allegiance, linguistic allegiance allows us to have shared narratives, our collective memories, our common social history. So it is a binding factor. And very sensitive and emotional index.

You take the case of Bangla in Bangladesh for that matter, even the religion could not keep them together. It was such a strong bond that even the religion could not take them together, keep them together and East Pakistan and West Pakistan both had the Islam followers in majority, still they could not stay together because of linguistic movement that started in 1952 and culminated into separation in 1971. So language does not simply remain a social object but rather it is one of the most significant determiners of our associations and social functions. We derive meaning through it and construct a multi-layered identity that situates us, in a given socio-political space. So that is the function of language. That is the role of language that is the significance of language. And this linguistic identity and assertion, it is so significant.

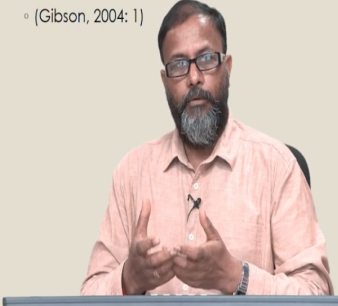
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Linguistic Identity

◦ "Language is intrinsic to the expression of culture. Language is a fundamental aspect of cultural identity. It is the means by which we convey our innermost self from generation to generation. It is through language that we transmit and express our culture and its values. Language—both code and content—is a complicated dance between internal and external interpretations of our identity."


◦ (Gibson, 2004: 1)



Gibson, 2004, opines. I quote from him. *“Language is intrinsic to the expression of culture. Language is a fundamental aspect of cultural identity. It is the means by which we convey our innermost self from generations to generations. It is through language that we transmit and express our culture and its values. Language, both code and content is a complicated dance between internal and external interpretations of our identity. So wonderfully portrayed here. I unquote wonderfully portrayed here, by Gibson, that language is so critical and crucial in construction of our identity”*.

Language becomes both the means and the end in terms of encoding the culture. And if you want to understand the culture you need to understand the language. So we get into the cultural terrain through language. Language becomes instrumental in constructing and asserting our identity. And it has cultural, social, political manifestations. So it is not simply a means of communication that we need to understand. The role of language and linguistic identity became more prominent after we see the second half of the 20th century when we see a series of countries getting out of the shackles of colonial powers. And then we see the emergence of a new field, language policy and planning, why was this policy and planning required? And then you suddenly see the demand for agitations and protests in favor or against a particular language. So that is very important to understand.


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Multilingual Manifestation and Linguistic Tension

- Report of Indian Statutory Commission 1930
- Report of the Linguistic Provinces Commission 1948
- Report of the Indian States Reorganization Commission 1955

◦ Language policy in India: the basic framework is contained in Articles 343-351 of the Indian Constitution.



Now if you look at multilingual manifestation and linguistic tension in India, you need to understand there are three core resources which will give you a fundamental understanding of these issues. So you need to understand and study the report of Indian statutory commission 1930, then report of the linguistic provinces commission 1948, and report of the Indian states reorganization commission 1955. I will not go into details of these commissions and reports. That is not the thrust of this class today, but you can separately look at all these reports, there the excerpts of these reports and recommendations are available online resources. You can search for them. And you can study them on your own. But these resources give a very brief and clear picture of linguistic situations and diverse linguistic situations and undercurrents of the aspirations of speakers of languages in pre and post-independent India. And we see that in 1940, 1950, 1963 and 1965 and then 1968 then 1986 these are the years which are very relevant for understanding linguistic policy planning and situation. In 1950, 26 January, we adopted our constitution. Then, Hindi was voted as the official language at the federal central level. And a period of 15 years was given to Hindi to emerge and replace English as the official language. English was adopted as associate official language.


And then, we have already talked about how the agitation against Hindi, anti-Hindi protests started in Madras erstwhile Madras presidency. And which gradually spread over in non-Hindi states. A sense of insecurity generated and they claimed in court hegemonic expansion of Hindi. All such things happened and then we see before the 15-year window period was about to end these protests and in redressal of these protests, the government of India and then Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was our prime minister called the joint session of the

parliament and the Official Language Act was amended. And we see the declaration in 1963 and in 1965 as well and then we see English to be continued as an associate official language (())(15:41). So this is a one major movement in post-independent India, anti-Hindi movement, specifically in the south and particularly in the erstwhile Madras presidency.

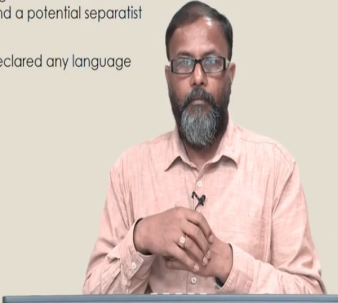
Then you know, there are three important documents, in fact, the first document appeared in 1968, National Policy on Education. But before that something else happened, a commission was constituted in 1964, Kothari commission, that studied the situation and gave its recommendation in 1966. Daulat Sing Kothari was the chairperson. So it is known as Kothari commission. And they suggested a trilingual formula. And we have already discussed the trilingual formula. If you want to go into details of it you can watch the video on trilingual formula. And then this trilingual formula was adopted in our national you know, NPE National Policy on Education 1968. And in 1986 the second National Political Education came. This repeated the same verbatim. And no change in the linguistic policy, language policy. And then we have in NEP 2020 again, you know, more or less the same thing has been reasserted. But barring this protest, and in the protest in the south, we have witnessed demands and underlined aspirations of speakers of different languages and how beautifully the constitution of India created an avenue to place these demands. We will shortly talk about it. I am referring to the Eighth Schedule for that matter. You can always watch the video that we did on the Eighth Schedule of the Indian constitution, you will get to know more about it.

But moving on, by the way, the language policy in India, the basic framework comes from the provisions as contained in articles 343 to article 351 of the constitution of India, which talks about linguistic policy, language policy, and official languages. You can always refer to it. However, we have done a separate video on scheduled and non-scheduled languages and language policy and education in India. You can go and watch and you know, you can get to know more about it.

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- Multilingualism is an unmarked phenomenon throughout the world, however, its practices and characters are different.
- In some cases it manifests a harmonic coexistence of the different languages, in others it turns into violent conflicts.
- Multilingualism in South East Asia and Africa has not resulted in separatist tendencies, however, in countries like Canada, Spain, and Belgium, multilingualism and assertion of linguistic identities have resulted into intense linguistic tension and a potential separatist tendency.
- USA prefers to ignore the societal multilingualism and has not declared any language as its official language.




Moving on, as we have already established in our earlier lectures, India is a multilingual country and a diverse, a multi-lingual country with diverse languages, cultures and practices. And rarely do we find such in a parallel in the world. And multilingualism, multicultural phenomena in Indian society is not new. We have been staying with, you know, implacable harmony and perfect harmony and you know coexistence, for centuries.

So this is not a new phenomenon to us. European and American scholars, as you know, are shocked to see and are surprised to see this harmony, but this is a way of life for us. So multilingualism is an unmarked phenomenon as far as India is concerned. But it is an unmarked phenomenon throughout the world, however the practices and characters are different. In India we have a peaceful coexistence, whereas in some parts of the world we find tension, linguistic tension and lots of protests and assertions. So in some cases, it manifests a harmonic coexistence of different languages and in others, it turns into violent conflicts. We have already talked about some violent agitations and you know movements, linguistic movements around the world.

But here we will focus on India. Because of its history and certain developments multilingualism in Southeast Asia and Africa has not resulted in separatist tendencies. However, in countries like Canada, Spain, Belgium and many others, multilingualism has an assertion of linguistic identities, which has resulted into intense linguistic tension, and a potential separatist tendency. And interestingly, the USA, the United States of America, prefers not to announce a particular language, let us say English, as its official language. So America, the United States of America has no language given official status. However in de

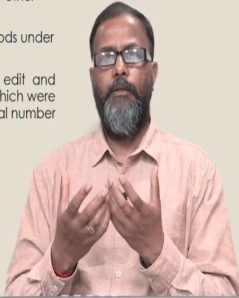
facto it is English but it is constitutionally they have not announced like many other countries like India for that matter, we have Hindi and English, but USA does not prefer to make it official about it.

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Multilingual Character of India

- The 1961 Census returned 1652 mother tongues and classified them under 193 languages.
- In the 1961 Census, 91% of the population spoke one of the fifteen scheduled languages and this number rose to 95.58% in the 1981 Census.
- In the 1991 Census, the raw returns of the mother tongues came to 10,400. These 10,400 raw returns were subjected to thorough scrutiny. This resulted in 1576 rationalized mother tongues, and 1796 names, which were treated as unclassified and relegated to the other mother tongues category.
- The 1576 rationalized mother tongues were regrouped following the linguistic methods under 114 languages
- Census 2011 saw 19569 raw returns, subjected to thorough linguistic scrutiny, edit and rationalization. This resulted in 1369 rationalized mother tongues and 1474 names which were treated as 'unclassified' and relegated to 'other' mother tongue category. The total number of languages arrived at is 121.



If you look at the multilingual character of India, we have to see the census data, because that is the authenticated source. And again in order to understand the multilingual character, the unverified numbers, the changing numbers, varying numbers, in all senses, subsequent senses, studies and reports, give us an understanding of how complex the idea is to count the number of languages. Because in each census report, we find different numbers, different figures, which is very interesting. And just to quote a few, let me quote it from the census of India subsequent reports. The 1961 census returned 1652. 1652 mother tongues. And classified them under 193 languages. Let me tell you, the census report includes only those languages, which have more than ten thousand speakers. Again those languages which have less than ten thousand speakers are not even listed. So these figures are for those languages, which have more than ten thousand speakers. So the 1961 census gives us data of 1652 rationalized mother tongue. Why am I saying rationalized? Because if you look at the returns, returns are far more big number, but they are rationalized designated and they undergo linguistic scrutiny and we arrive at a rationalized mother tongue. So 1961 gives us 1652, 1652 mother tongues and which is further classified and categorized as 193 languages. Remember this number.


Moving on, the 1991 census has the raw returns of mother tongues that comes up to 10400. And then they were subjected to thorough scrutiny and processing and resulted in 1576 rationalized mother tongue. Now look at 1652 in 61 and here we have 1576 rationalized mother tongues. And you know, 114 languages categorized, established languages. So from 193 languages in 61 now we have 114 languages.

Census 2011 has 19569 raw returns. What is this raw return? So when these enumerators and the census people come to us, we give our name in our mother tongue. There is a question number 10 in the census form and you fill in your mother tongue. So all these speakers without any categorization and suggestion then give the label, the name, the designation, and it is entered. That is a raw return without any scrutiny. It is subjected to scrutiny and processing only after these data are collected.


So if you look at the raw data, the number returned is 19569. Can you believe it? 1991. It was 10400. 2011, we have 19569. They were and then we have 1369. 1369 rationalized mother tongues, and 121 languages categorized as distinct languages. So 193 in 61, 114 in 91, 121 in 2011. So we can see these varying numbers and we cannot conclude realistically. That is the question. And that gives us the picture of linguistic diversity and aspirations of the speakers for asserting their identity, linguistic identity and the urge to be counted as a speech community. That is the implication for linguistic identity, if you look at this data.

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Family-wise Grouping of the 121 Scheduled and Non-scheduled Languages – Census of India 2011




Language families	Number of Languages	Persons who returned the languages as their mother tongue	Percentage to total population
1	2	3	4
1. Indo-European			
(a) Indo-Aryan	21	94,50,52,555	78.05
(b) Iranian	1	21,677	0.00
(c) Germanic	1	2,59,678	0.02
2. Dravidian	17	23,78,40,116	19.64
3. Austro-Asiatic	14	1,34,93,080	1.11
4. Tibeto-Burmese	66	1,22,57,382	1.01
5. Semito-Hamitic	1	54,947	0.00
Total	121	1,20,89,79,435	99.85




Now broadly, we all understand that India has many language families in Indo-European, Dravidian, Austro-Asiatic, Tibeto-Burmese, Semito-Hamitic, we have already talked about linguistic diversity of India. You can always refer to the text there.

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Statutory Acknowledgement



The Eighth Schedule of the Constitution of India reflects the statutory acknowledgement of Indian Linguistic diversity and plurality. The growing demands for inclusion of more and more languages in the Schedule represent the aspirations of other languages that require institutional support and constitutional protection. This tendency is encouraging and required to keep the multilingual fabric of India intact.

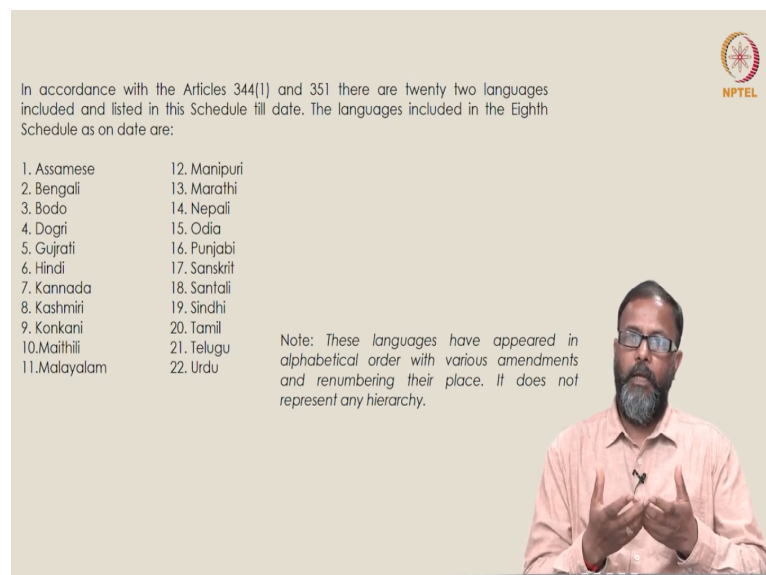


Now when we look at this multilingual character, thankfully, the constitution of India recognizes the linguistic diversity and diversity of culture. And from article 343 to article 351, we have a well laid down provision to give you recognition to this multilingual fabric of Indian society. And the most instrumental of all, these provisions is Schedule 8. The Eighth Schedule as we call it, of the Indian constitution. You want to know more about a schedule,

you can always go back to the lecture we did on 8th Schedule and you can see more, you can understand more but as a referential note here, the Eighth Schedule of the constitution of India reflects the statutory acknowledgement of Indian linguistic diversity and plurality. The growing demands for inclusion of more and more languages in schedule, represent the absorption of other languages that require institutional support and constitutional protection.

Just to tell you in a nutshell, this is a provision in the Indian constitution that recognizes official languages and they are called scheduled languages. So in 1950, we had 14 and as I am speaking in 2021, the number is 22. So 8 languages have been added to the list. And the process is on, in future we may add some more languages because the demands are high to be included in this schedule.

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In accordance with the Articles 344(1) and 351 there are twenty two languages included and listed in this Schedule till date. The languages included in the Eighth Schedule as on date are:

1. Assamese	12. Manipuri
2. Bengali	13. Marathi
3. Bodo	14. Nepali
4. Dogri	15. Odia
5. Gujarati	16. Punjabi
6. Hindi	17. Sanskrit
7. Kannada	18. Santali
8. Kashmiri	19. Sindhi
9. Konkani	20. Tamil
10. Maithili	21. Telugu
11. Malayalam	22. Urdu

Note: These languages have appeared in alphabetical order with various amendments and renumbering their place. It does not represent any hierarchy.


Very quickly if you want to know, which are the 22 languages? Here is a list, however the numbering and the placing of the languages in an order has no order. And it is purely alphabetical. So the sequencing and appearance in the sequence, has nothing to do with the hierarchy, importance and superiority. It is simply an alphabetical arrangement. So we have languages like Assamese, Bengali, Bodo, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Kashmiri, Konkani, Maithili, Malayalam, Manipuri, Marathi, Nepali, Odiya, Punjabi, Sanskrit, Santali, Sindhi, Tamil, Telugu and Urdu. These are 22 languages so far.

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Language Movements

Linguistic identities and assertions have fuelled demands for inclusion of more languages to the Eighth Schedule and 'at present, there are demands for inclusion of 38 more languages in the Eighth Schedule to the Constitution'. These languages include:

(1) Angika,	(11) Garhwali (Pahari),	(21) Kumaoni	(31) Pahari (Himachali),
(2) Banjara,	(12) Gondi,	(Pahari),	(32) Pali,
(3) Bazika,	(13) Gujjar/Gujjari,	(22) Kurak,	(33) Rajasthani,
(4) Bhojpuri,	(14) Ho,	(23) Kurmali,	(34) Sambalpur/Kosali,
(5) Bhoti,	(15) Kachachhi,	(24) Lepcha,	(35) Shaurseni (Prakrit),
(6) Bhotia,	(16) Kamtapuri,	(25) Limbu,	(36) Saraiki,
(7) Bundelkhandi	(17) Karbi,	(26) Mizo (Lushai),	(37) Tenyidi, and
(8) Chhattisgarhi,	(18) Khasi,	(27) Magahi,	(38) Tulu.
(9) Dhatki,	(19) Kodava (Coorg),	(28) Mundari,	
(10) English,	(20) Kok Barak,	(29) Nagpuri,	
		(30) Nicobarese,	



But you need to understand that there are demands and the undercurrents specifically in the planes where they are demanding inclusion of more languages in Schedule 8 to get institutional protection and institutional support, to grow and to be registered, right to protect their language and culture.

You know, situation in north eastern part of India, is with the little tension, linguistic tension, specifically in northeast of India, where we have variety of languages and the urge for assertion of linguistic identity, it has led to a lot of tension in the northeastern part of India, where languages are competing with each other to be counted and to be registered. But overall we have list of 38 demands, in fact they are not, we do not call them movements, so to say, but of course a very strong intense demand from these speech communities and speakers of these languages to be included in the 8th Schedule and we have undercurrents where these languages are competing and trying to occupy the public space.

These are languages are Angika, Banjara, Bazika, Bhojpuri, Bhoti, Bhotia, Bundelkhandi, chhattisgarhi, Dhatki, English, Garhwali you also call it Pahari, Gondi, Gujjar or Gujjari, Ho, Kachachhi, Kamtapuri, Karbi, Khasi, Kodava or Coorg what you call, Kok Barak, Kumaoni, Kurak, Kurmali, Lepcha, Limbu, Mizo, Magahi, Mundari, Nagpuri, Nicobarese, Pahari Himachali what you call, Pali, Rajasthani, Sambalpurior Kosali, Shauraseniior Prakrit, Saraiki, Tenyidi and Tulu. So these are the languages which are struggling and competing to be included in the Eighth Schedule of the constitution. So this is it for now. We need to remember that language is not simply a mark you know, an instrument

for communication, a means for communication, but it is like an organism that grows inside us. It is a vigorous marker of our identity. It encodes our culture. It encodes our social structure. It carries our collective memories, our experiences, and common social history. It is an abstract phenomenon and it has got social indexes like you know, like gender, class, region, religion.

Language is a very sensitive social index. And that helps us constitute a linguistic identity. And this linguistic identity is not restricted to language only, it extends to our cultural social identity. And it encodes and gives us meaning, who we are. So language is a vigorous marker of identity. In India in a pluri-cultural, pluri-linguistic, multilingual system and setup, we have been staying together with perfect harmony for centuries. But there are undercurrents and demands. And a milder form of movement to be included, registered and recognized as a particular linguistic community. Because these languages are competing, schedule 8 gives that opportunity for institutional support and promotion and they are competing with each other to get into that list. So this is it for now. We will meet with some other new topics in other classes. For now, thank you very much.