LANGUAGE OF DIGNIFIED HUMANITY

Indira Y. JUNGHARE

Institute of Linguistics, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN, USA

Abstract: *In today's world of information technologies, conflicts between intellectual traditions of educated urban elites and common people, inclusive of powerless minorities, have become intensified. Helpless humanity has been subjected to mistreatment by elites with power to make policies and laws, which do not necessarily serve the needs of the majority of people. Additionally, the language of modernity, marked by competitive consumerism and heightened capitalism, has widened the existing divides between multiplicity of dialogues related to categories of gender, race, ethnicity, religion, creed, age and origin of birth. All divides, both individual and collective, have made the universe unsafe, leading to increased violence in thought, word, and action. In a world of strangers, humans are deprived of their innate dignity. This paper will discuss social inequality related to the phenomenon of elitism and the problems it poses to democratic society. Since elitism is a byproduct of education, the paper will explain the role of education and its relationship to elitism. An attempt will be made to reconcile the nature of elitism and education with the philosophical concepts of human being and the humanity's language of dignity that transcends languages of all isms. Finally, the paper calls for quality educational programs, which focus on teaching ethics of diverse humanity through analytical thinking infused with valid reasoning supplemented by pragmatics of non-violent inter-cultural communication. In order to protect the innate dignity of all-inclusive humanity, a balanced and eclectic cosmopolitanism is recommended.*

Keywords*: language; human; dignity; elitism; cosmopolitanism*

1. INTRODUCTION

In the modern era of technology and inventions, people of all cultures suffer from increased personal, social, and environmental disturbances. Cultural biases are rooted in the ideological biases that individuals carry with them. These biases are reflected in the socio-linguistic constructs of identities that societies have formed to categorize and simplify the complexity of diversity for obtaining cohesion for social discourse (Okihiro, 2001; Xiong & Metzger, 2010). Some constructs include the East and West, Black and White, Male and Female, Civilized and Uncivilized, Educated and Uneducated, Elite Rulers and non-elite Commoners. These dichotomies of social constructs are rooted in the Aristotelian philosophical system in which human existence was distinguished from animals based on human's rationality. The axiom by Rene Descartes, "I think, therefore I am," is reflective of this ideology. This divisive-dualistic philosophy of rational vs. irrational has been promoted through educational methods and doctrines, which resulted in problems of maladjustment and social disturbances at all levels, personal, local, and global, creating polarization between a class of educated elites and the majority of humanity. The concepts of *elitism* and *tribalism* are socio-linguistic constructs created by educated elites based on an inherited ideology that gives rise to the problems of identity and social inequality. Scientifically speaking, people have more commonalities than differences. After the exploration of elitism and its relationship with education, drawing from an Indian philosophical view, the paper will discuss human nature, and the language of dignity for the health of humanity.

2. METHODOLOGY

In the twenty-first century, interactions between cultures have become more numerous, continuous, substantive and assimilating, creating conflicts at all levels. In this context, it has become clear that the language of power has come to dominate all languages and dialects. Ancient philosophical traditions, which valued the power of analytical thinking and reasoning, are no longer valued in a true sense. The truth is filtered through fierce competition, consumerism and selfish gains.

Until the 1960's, anthropological linguistics and historians used descriptive approaches to the

study of diverse cultural traditions. However, during 1980s and 1990s, scholars began to use broader approaches, adjusting traditional and borrowed knowledge and practice. Following William H. McNeill (1991), who took a broad approach to the study of interactions of cultural traditions with focus on infusion, scholars expanded a Eurocentric approach to world-systems of habitation. Given information technology, political and socio-cultural conflicts, and devaluation of humanity, interdisciplinary and synthetic approaches must form a basis for research. Exploration of the social construction of *elitism* and the concept of human dignity finds a common ground in the philosophy of language. This approach helps in understanding problems of suffering of both the civilized and uncivilized societies. This approach also helps in understanding conflicts and violence related to other socio-linguistic constructs: language, race, gender, ethnicity, religion, and worldview.

The paper argues in defense of equality of all languages and dialects as variants of human *language*. Language is symbolic representation of culture created in response to needs in the context of biological and socio-cultural environments. The paper focuses on the importance of human power in the creation and use of language in adjusting to changing needs and values. Research Inquiry follows the following steps: (1) Language of social identity: Elitism; (2) Elitism and Education; (3) Indian Philosophical Perception of *Human*; (4) Language of Humanity: Dignity; (5) Symbolic and Functional Use of the Language of Dignity; (6) Implication and applications

3. COSMOPOLITANISM: AUTONOMY OF DWELLING

The idea 'cosmopolitan' was used in ancient philosophical traditions, which meant 'a member of the universe. The word 'politan' came from 'a polites,' which refers to a citizen belonging to and serving a city with loyalty (Appiah, 2006). Philosophers believe that one of the first philosophers of cosmopolitanism was Cynic Diogenes, who was inspired by Socrates and who identified himself as 'a citizen of the world' [kosmopolites] rather than someone who is a citizen of a particular place (Kleingeld & Brown, 2003). Societies have formed social categories (Okihiro, 2001), which are based on personal preferences and cultural biases existing at the time. Through voyages and interactions globally, the idea of cosmopolitanism spread internationally.

After the declaration of human rights in the eighteenth century during the American and French Revolutions, cosmopolitan became synonymous with who *feels* at home anywhere in the world. The freedom to occupy some space on earth has been restricted by identity with a nation-state, and this identification has led to immigrants, refugees, and foreigners being seen as 'other.' 'Global' and 'cosmopolitan' disregard place of origin. Elitism and tribalism then are two subcategories of world citizen or cosmopolitanism.

4. ELITISM

This section concerns itself with social inequality due to social class in developed societies, with particular emphasis on the United States. First to be discussed is the social phenomenon of *elitism*—what it is, why it exists, and the problems it poses to a democratic society. Following this will be a discussion of the role of education—its purpose, relationship to elitism, and an empirical examination of its inequality. Lastly, the discussion will make an attempt to reconcile the natures of elitism and education with the concept of human dignity.

4.1 Elitism: Two kinds. Elites inevitably exist (Bealey, 1996). The Italian social-theorist Pareto thought elitism occurred in every walk of life. Whatever the activity, some will always excel above others. In the broader context of society, however, the matter is not so simple, and elitism's definition is much different. Groups of people will have privileges not available to others—privileges such as wealth, power, and knowledge. In general, elitism can be divided into two main categories: political elitism and socio-cultural elitism (Metzer & Xiong, 2010).

Political elitism has its roots entrenched in society. Wherever there is a group to be governed, there is an elite to govern them. Elitism has been viewed as both necessary and positive. In his utopian "Republic," Plato idealized a stratified society governed by the elite (Rosen, 2005). The famous utilitarian John Stuart Mill also supported political elitism and viewed acquired knowledge and practiced intelligence of the few as beneficial to the needs of the many (Ryan, 1970). Mill thought that the masses would have insufficient mental qualifications to rule in their own interest. The masses would make short sighted, unwise decisions that would have negative impact on society. Mill's views upheld the notion that the elite would be selected by a kind of 'roster-device,' that is, a roster

ranking those individuals of desirable leadership qualities from greatest to least. The 'roster-device' could then be used to draw a line between the political elite (those with the greatest degree of those qualities), and the rest of society (Kendall & Carey, 1968; Metzer & Xiong, 2010).

In reality the problem with the 'roster-device' in reality, however, is a good indicator of the problem of political elitism in general. How is it that the 'roster-device' would accurately rank those individuals? What qualities would the rankings be based on, and how can a line be drawn to divide the worthy from the unworthy? It is difficult, if not impossible, to place those in political power who are the best fit to have that power. The greatest problem political elitism poses to society is autonomy. If political elites are a law unto themselves, then they can without any checks and balances rule in their own interest. Abuse of power at the expense of the masses becomes a huge risk.

The other category of elitism is that of social-cultural elitism (Metzer & Xiong, 2010). Unlike political elites who are defined by power, social-cultural elites are assumed to be superior for reasons of wealth or knowledge. This is the kind of elitist that is being referred to when the term is used pejoratively to mean a 'snob,' or someone who is pretentious. The term usually refers to academics or intellectuals—the very educated and/or the very wealthy. The defense of this type of elite usually considers that they are resources of intelligence. They provide expertise and can produce research/knowledge for the betterment of the masses (Bealey, 1996).

4.2 Social Inequality in Elitism. Experience shows that the existence of elites entails the existence of social inequality; some having wealth, power, and/or knowledge. Given that society upholds ideals of democracy and egalitarianism, is elitism ethical? What makes elitism ethical? Social inequality due to elitism is ethical because of the ability of individuals to have social-movements. A given individual, coming from any social class, is thought to be upwardly mobile to move to any other social class—all that is needed is effort and ability—the resources for upward mobility are available (Simpson, 2009). If this is true, then the main resource for social-movement must be defined as education. There are some instances of social movement without higher education such as the case of Bill Gates. However, in general, education is the most accessible means, a notable case is that of President Barack Obama (Simpson, 2009). Given the ideal of upward mobility, can we say that everybody has both the ability and opportunity to obtain health, wealth, and happiness—the basic wants and needs of humanity? Status in social hierarchy depends on many factors, some of which include innate ability, effort, will, personal preferences, educational opportunities, cultural factors, environment, parent's wealth and social class, race, gender, ethnicity, religion, other family and cultural traditions (Barry & Valentini, 2009). If we take an egalitarian approach, internal factors—innate ability, effort, preferences, and perhaps cultural reasons most influence eventual status. The external factors that create inequality can be minimized through educational opportunities. With these factors minimized, one accesses greater freedom and equality over social place. However, this does not guarantee that people will not use their power to control and mistreat people whom they see subservient. Hence there is a need of 'proper' education.

5. TWO FUNCTIONS OF EDUCATION

Education's functions can be divided into two main categories: an economic function, and a function of 'well-being' (White, 2002). With respect to economics, it is easy to point out education's function, which is to prepare individuals for entry into the economic world, to give them the knowledge and expertise to be able to join the working force and provide for themselves monetarily. Since our economic structure is one of capitalism, education is inherently socially unequal due to capitalism's inherent unequal class structure. Class distinction is not an abstract or arbitrary concept, but a real feature of human economic processes. There is the 'worker class' and the 'ruling class' and various social levels within these. Education in this view is seen as an instrument to provide and set a pupil's future 'utility value' in the economic system. Education prepares students for competition and the acceptance of inequality in rewards. With this evaluation of education's purpose, inequality in education is just a necessary component of a capitalist market. Unlike the abolition of racism or sexism, the abolition of class inequalities in education or the market denotes the abolition of something greater—capitalism. So, its abolition is not a viable prospect (Hill, Greaves & Maisuria, 2009).

The other function of education is the promotion of personal 'well-being.' This function is a more transcendental-philosophical one and is based on the belief that education aims to help those being educated lead flourishing lives (White, 2002). What is meant by a 'flourishing life' and 'well-being?'

There are two ways two look at what constitutes these definitions—objectively and subjectively. The objective view poses that that there is a reliably objective list of components of well-being. The list would include such things as: knowledge and understanding, being self-directed/autonomous in conducting life, accomplishing things that make life meaningful, formation of deep personal relationships, moral goodness, etc. Education, then, should steer students towards these objectives (White, 2002). The subjective view holds that 'well-being' consists in the satisfaction of personal subjective desires. There are no objective personal goods that everyone must have for their own good. Rather, personal goods are to be chosen according to one's own preferences. A way to reconcile these two views is this: the meaning of 'wellness' is subjective—but preferences should be well informed to maximally benefit the individual. In other words, information is a prerequisite for maximizing personal satisfaction. Education, then, can be seen as a means to equip individuals for such choices (White, 2002). Everyone has his or her level and version of well-being, and education can provide an informed means for actualizing well-being.

5.1 Inequality in education. Since education was determined to be a universal right in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, primary and secondary education have become almost universal in developed countries (Tomasevski, 2003). The inequality, then, lies in post-secondary/tertiary education. Research has shown that inequality in education persists until the advantaged class reaches a point of saturation. Only four countries —Sweden, Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan have seen marked decrease in education inequality (Grusky & England, 2007). Returning to our egalitarian approach to minimize certain factors in one's eventual place in the social hierarchy, how can educational inequality best be minimized? The saturation point is difficult to control, so an attempt to lower inequality by reaching saturation point is not viable. The answer is in educational reforms.

5.2 Human dignity in reference to elitism and education. Human dignity is tied to one's place in society. One's societal class, then, is strongly connected with this notion. Elitism places greater importance on society's elite—they are respected for their wealth, power, and knowledge. How is this greater distribution of dignity to be reconciled, when those who are considered 'less dignified' are made such by societal constraints?

Opportunities are unevenly distributed in society, but does it then follow that dignity, as well, should be unevenly distributed? I would like to reconcile elitism and education's inequality with human dignity by positing a philosophical view based on education's second function: personal well-being. Every individual has a subjective level/quality of well-being. Although inequality exists, each quality of well-being that is attained, from high-school drop-out to college professor, has its own respective kind of dignity. Therefore, human dignity, at all levels, is reserved.

6. HUMANITY AND THE LANGUAGE OF DIGNITY

6.1 Diverse disciplinary perceptions. The concept of humanity is embedded in birth, growth, i.e. evolution in time and space, and human nature. A human, as an embodied being, has been analyzed differently in different disciplines. The triumph in recent years of molecular biology, and consequent achievements in genetics, evolution, medicine, cell physiology and many other fields, has become common knowledge. Despite the deep insight attained by "molecular" biology, the necessity of "organismic" biology has become apparent (Bertalanffy, 2009:6). In psychology, human behavior was to be explained by the mechanistic stimulus-response, conditioning, and according to the pattern of animal experiment. Similarly, widespread confusion and contradictions in contemporary sociological theories led scholars to analyze social phenomena as "systems" because of the unsettled and changing nature of cultural entities (Bertalanffy, 2009:7). In socio-linguistics, we read person's geographical and social origins, level of education, ethnicity, age, gender and sexuality- the whole range of categorical identities into which we routinely group people (Joseph, 2004:24).

In neurolinguistics, Korzybski (2010:2) has observed that neural disturbances in different individuals vary only in degree, and that they resemble the responses of animals. Korzybski concluded that we humans have not, as of yet, emerged from a very primitive semantic stage of development. The common person's experience supports Korzybski's observation that "the more technically developed a nation or race is, the more cruel, ruthless, predatory, and commercialized its systems tend to become. These tendencies, in turn, color and vitiate international, national, capital-labor, and even family relations" (2010:2). Korzybski claims to have found psychophysical mechanisms in all human beings inclusive of

normal, abnormal, educated elites as well as uneducated tribal people. He claims neural disturbances in different individuals vary only in degree. According to Korzybski (2010:3), humans do not use the nervous system properly and that humans have not, as yet, emerged from a primitive stage of development. People have technologically progressed but remained behind in human relations. To abolish the discrepancy between the advancement of science and the power of adjustment of humans, Korzybski (2010:3), suggests the need for the establishment of a science of man, embracing all facets of life.

6.2 Concept of humanity in Indian worldview. Indian philosophical tradition has extensively developed theories about diverse facets of humanity. Capra (2000) explored the parallels between the concepts of modern physics and the central ideas in India's philosophies and has shown that the basic elements of the Indian world-view are also those of the world view emerging from modern physics. India's philosophical tradition mirrors the geographical, racial, linguistic and cultural complexities of India's vast subcontinent. Although various philosophical schools differ in many details, they all emphasize interrelation of all phenomena, their symbiotic relationship, and the basic unity of the universe (Junghare, 2009 & 2011). In order to understand the world and the universe, we need to start from the basic unit of humanity, i.e. "human" labeled as "self" in philosophy. The perception of the "self" in Indian philosophy differs from that of the West. Below is the comparative analysis:

7. BODILY-SELF: INDIA AND THE WEST

Table 1. Source: Radhakrishnan & Moore, *A Sourcebook in Indian Philosophy* (1957)

Indian View	Socio-cultural implications	Western View
Every life, inclusive of humans, is composed of substance (matter), energy strings, which constantly change according to the laws of nature. Life is marked by probabilities. Theories about origins are assumptions or hypotheses. Absolute reality is indefinable, indescribable and incomprehensible. Both man and nature are organic living entities.	This concept of humanity explains social categories of age, gender, and the place of origin. The categories, 'young' and 'old', and 'male' and 'female' are identity labels created through language by cultures. Human is a bi-product of Body + Mind + Spirit (Inner-consciousness)	This view is based on Aristotelian philosophy. Being analytical in nature, it divides human into body-mind categories. It considers 'rational' minds of educated elites superior. It is divisive: I vs. You. There is no pronoun in English that is inclusive of I &You. It separates 'intellect' from 'emotion'.
Different life systems—of humans, plants, microbes, and elemental systems – mountains, rivers, and oceans have different properties, attributes, and qualities –but constantly in motion. Language is a representation of thought, ideas and concepts	All systems follow the law of nature – birth, growth, and dissolution. Differences in people and systems should not be viewed as deficiencies, for example, elephant is *not* inferior to human, nor is the ant.	Humans are composed of permanent substance with properties of finite number. This puts restrictions on human power.
All life systems are inter-connected and interdependent. All life-systems together constitute one universe. Adheres to the philosophy of Unity in diversity. All lives are different but similar in some respects (Junghare 2009, & 2011).	Harming of one person means harming of the whole webbonic social structure. Being of synthetic nature, it respects diversity of people, cultures, languages, thoughts, and beliefs.	Person is divided according to his or her activities, talents, feelings, and beliefs, which are engaged in endless conflicts generating continuous metaphysical confusion and frustration (Capra 2000).

8. LANGUAGE OF HUMANITY: DIGNITY

8.1 Human body language. The scientific concept of a 'human' as a 'psychophysical mechanism' has been translated as the 'mind-body' composite in analytical philosophies of the West.

Religious philosophers have added the dimension of spirituality, making humans the 'mind-body-spirit entities. In Indian philosophy, a human is comprised of diverse body components, including diverse capacities and powers. Since different human beings possess different capacities, it is truly difficult to define a human being. A human is

analyzed as a composite of twenty three parts: five sense organs, five motor organs, five gross elements, five subtle elements, mind, ego-consciousness, and intellect (Puligandla, 1975:118-119). All of these body parts have to work in cooperation in order for body to function properly. Ultimately, it is the body, specifically of ego-consciousness, mind and intellect, that has to take the lead in keeping the body healthy. All body parts are systems onto themselves with abstract linguistic structure. One of the capacities of humans is to create languages, dialects and idiolects. Humans create social constructs or categories for identification. The language of elitism is socially-created language. In reality, the language of the brain and the language of mind, ego and sensations are different dialects of the same human body. None is superior to the other. The language of elitism relates to the brain's processing of knowledge, and the language of emotion is mind's processing of feelings. As a human being, it is hard to create unity in the languages of his/her organs. It is especially difficult to converse with different bodies of different languages and ethnicities because the conceptual deep structures of languages in meaning and function differ just like the languages of elites and commoners differ. A human constantly evolves in response to the socio-cultural and biological environment and so do cultures and languages.

8.2 Language, humanity and the concept of dignity. The concept of 'dignity' has different meanings and usages for different people. For me, as an Indian woman, 'dignity' means to be worthy of recognition and respect; whereas, for my American friends, the word renders the meaning 'pride in oneself.' The first meaning represents the language of my inner feelings that requests the hearer to treat me fairly. The second meaning of self-respect is somewhat egocentric. The role of language in human life is not only to describe the world but also to serve diverse semantic functions: to transmit information, to persuade and control behavior, to create and express social cohesion (S. I. Hayakawa & Alan Hayakawa, 1990). Language utterances have various dimensions: happiness, unhappiness, an illocutionary force, truth value, falsehood, and locutionary meaning (Austin, 1975:149).

With semantic analysis of English and Indian languages, it becomes clear that the language of dignity is a humble/human request to the hearer and to the world for fair and just treatment. On the other hand, the English concept of dignity is expressive of the value of the self. European languages are subject-oriented, and Indian languages are topic-oriented. In the constant assertion of self or the subject, there is no interaction between the speaker and hearer. The hearer is secondary in value as can be seen in the following example: English: I see you (Subject – verb – object); Marathi: tu mala distes ('You –to me – appear'). The foregoing discussion of diverse perceptions of humanity and the corresponding diverse languages and their deep structures provide us some insight for the understanding of socio-cultural conflicts.

9. CONCLUSION

Being influenced by Cartesian division of body and mind, westerners equate identity with mind, instead of with the whole organism. An individual is seen as an isolated ego residing in his/her body. Further, everyone is split up into various components: talents, feelings, beliefs, and socio-political ideologies. These different components are engaged in endless conflicts and forceful acts. The study of the two dialects of humanity: talent and feelings, elitism and non-elitism, language of power and the language of humanity required the author to look for resolutions in Indian philosophical thought, which is marked by the synthetic approach. Indian philosophy does respect the analytical philosophy of the West that has helped humanity's advancement in sciences and technology. However, it has been seen detrimental to human welfare as an analytical approach mainly focuses on the "bottom line". The Indian philosophical view helps to fill the gap between the language of the machine and the language of humanity. According to the Indian view, a division of the human, nor of humanity, nor of the universe is fundamental. The Indian view of the world is organic. All things and events perceived by the senses are interrelated and are different manifestations of the same ultimate reality. Humanity is a part of the cosmos, one inseparable reality—constantly in motion, alive, organic, spiritual, and material at the same time. The language of humanity is also one language with different dialects and idiolects, which change depending on the needs of adjustment for survival. However, the language of human dignity of recognition and respect stands at the center of humanity as the major language, equivalent to the language of food for human life's survival. The language of dignity also serves as a means for peaceful inter-cultural communication and finding

peaceful solutions for the common problems facing humanity.

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