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**Navigating Tensions and Conflicts in Search of Harmony:
Teacher Ideologies between Colonial Legacies and Indigenous Futures in Tribal India**

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Goal: The study focuses on teachers in rural and tribal contexts in central India. Broadly, it explores how teachers' language ideologies shape their perceptions of the role of tribal languages within the lives, communities, and classrooms of tribal people in central India. The specific goal is to study how teachers' ideologies reflect broader socio-political dynamics, especially at the intersection of coloniality and indigeneity.

Background: Tribal communities in India, long subjected to both external and internal colonization, have faced systemic marginalization, eroding their linguistic and cultural autonomy. This is also reflected in hegemonic and discriminatory language practices that eclipse tribal epistemologies in Indian classrooms. While dominant languages like Hindi and English are often promoted as tools for socio-economic mobility, tribal languages are associated with 'backwardness' despite their significance to cultural identity. This study investigates how teachers navigate these tensions, balancing the pressures of modernity with the need for cultural preservation.

Methodology: This research is grounded in a constructionist-interpretive framework, focusing on how teachers interpret their experiences and construct their understanding of language in the classroom. Employing a generic qualitative approach, the study uses constructivist grounded theory to guide data collection and analysis, allowing for an iterative exploration of emerging themes.

Participants: The study involves elementary school teachers from schools serving tribal populations in Bhimpur block, Betul District, Madhya Pradesh, where two tribes, the Gond and Korku, reside. Participants include tribal and non-tribal teachers, whose varied positionalities vis-à-vis the tribal communities and languages provide insights into how they navigate the intersection of dominant and Indigenous languages in the classroom.

Data Collection: The study began in the summer of 2024. To date, 17 teachers have been interviewed using semi-structured interviews. Data collection is ongoing and iterative, with multiple phases planned to deepen insights into the ideological tensions teachers face. Initial interviews in phase one were collected in person, and follow-up interviews will be conducted online. The next phase includes follow-up interviews and recruiting new participants until theoretical saturation is achieved. In addition to semi-structured interviews, participants will be requested to fill out a questionnaire inquiring about their personal histories.

Impact: The findings are expected to inform language policies and teacher training, particularly in regions where linguistic diversity is both a resource and a challenge. In classrooms riddled with colonial legacies, teachers often find themselves torn between advancing socio-economic mobility and preserving cultural identity. These conflicts make it hard for multiple languages to coexist without one overpowering the other. By examining how teachers manage these tensions, this study hopes to promote harmonious bilingualism, transforming classrooms from spaces of conflict to ones where languages can thrive together.

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