

National Conference on
Language and Identity
in Northeast India:
Emerging Trends and
Narratives

17-18 November, 2022

Nagaland University, Kohima Campus

To be organised by



Centre for North East Studies and Policy Research
Jamia Millia Islamia
&
Department of Linguistics
Nagaland University

Northeast India is one of the most ethnically and linguistically diverse region in Asia, each state having its own distinct culture and tradition along with its own historical past. It is home for hundreds of communities speaking various native languages. Like many other countries who had undergone severe atrocities and conflicts in their own respective region, Northeast India has equally seen and experienced multiple layers of conflicts under the aegis of British Colonizers in the past, and Independent India at present. Moreover, the rest of India knew the Northeast only for ethnic conflicts associated with secessionism or autonomy movements. The region, in essence, has almost become synonymous with ethnic politics and its violent manifestations. One has to go beyond this interpretation and identify the deeper causes that constitute the region as we understand it today. Therefore, the conference would explore areas focusing on discourses from different fields of study and discuss issues and concerns that *make* Northeast India.

The introduction of technology and its influence on the current generation is one interesting way to study about the changing narratives. It is viewed as something linked with social change and can alter cultural and societal settings. The use of technology has altered livelihood means and has left deep imprints on the collective and individual's lifeworlds. At the same time, it has provided a crucial platform for building human-to-human relationships through visual and audio interface. Keeping this in mind, it becomes imperative to ask, has technology and its expansive use changed the way we define ourselves as a community? How does technology play a role in altering individual and group identities in the current age and time? Taking cues from the notion of oneself as an individual in Lacan's 'mirror phase' theory to Althusser's discussion about the ideological state apparatuses, the manipulation and projection of individuality has kept changing and evolving. Thus identity as understood in the era of technology is one of the discourses the conference anticipates to explore.

Migration is another major concern of discussion. Human migration has been taking place over the years and although the migrants attempt to retain their cultural tradition and values wherever they are, it is quite conspicuous that adapting to contemporary lifestyles is becoming normal and acceptable. When people migrate for various reasons, they bring with them certain things from the outside and introduce them to their host communities. With the passage of time, such new cultural elements are often incorporated same into the local system. This is majorly seen not just in the way one behaves, but also in daily conversations, music, fashion, religious beliefs and even in the case of food – imported food items and foreign cuisines. Often, the culture becomes so adulterated that it is becoming nearly impossible to distinguish between a migrant and a local through facial, bodily acts, language or even food habits alone for that matter. The fluid nature of identities is easily detectable beginning from cultural practices, changing patterns of nationalism or religious belief systems.

Having said that, we need language to communicate in a given community. Language is closely linked with identity expression and can be used to portray differences and similarities. We build relationships through languages and dialects and use them to articulate our feelings, thoughts, needs and values. Language thus becomes the crux to sustain the fabric of a society. Now, national histories are connected to language and through languages the historicity of particular national consciousness are being asserted. In any case, the English language today has unquestionably become a 'global language', that is, a language spoken by almost all the religions, nations, races, and other linguistic communities. It has captured the spaces of media, literary and cinematic works too. This has uplifted the status of English and are identified with idioms like 'powerful' and 'immortal' while on the other hand, the perspective of possible 'death' or 'extinction' of many other languages in the world is in question. Naturally, English has also made its way to the idiolects of the Northeast people. The prevalent use of English among the northeastern communities has also provided them the essential tool to revisit and reinterpret their history and indignity and reproduce them from their own cultural lens and perspectives. It has, in many ways, given them the power of narrativizing their origin stories and migration past.

In the light of the above discussion, this conference is a deliberate academic attempt to draw attention to the changes that have been brought into the contemporary lifestyles of the Northeast. Overall, the participants are expected to address whether the alterations caused by change have positive or negative impact on the society at large. The conference invites working research papers from critical analysts, thinkers, and scholars from various academic backgrounds to examine and analyse the present-day situation of Northeast India based on the given topic. Interested participants are invited to kindly submit their original abstract dealing with, but not limited to, the following topics:

- 1) Issues and problems on language
- 2) Gender and identity
- 3) Orality and folklore
- 4) Vernacular literature
- 5) Linguistic rights and movements
- 6) Culture and lifestyle in contemporary Northeast
- 7) Philosophical understanding on language

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

1. The manuscript submitted must contain title, all author names, affiliations and the contact information of the corresponding author only.
2. All the submissions should be *Original*.
3. Only the shortlisted proposals/abstracts will be contacted to submit the final paper.
4. The submission and presentation shall be in English only.
5. The manuscript should be submitted in Microsoft Word format only.
6. Kindly indicate under which sub-theme you wish to present.
7. The final manuscript should normally be between 6000-8,000 words including references, notes and tables.
8. Please strictly follow *Economic and Political Weekly* referencing style.
9. All the incoming manuscripts will be evaluated based on their content, quality, and appropriateness to the sub-theme. It will be evaluated by a committee and will be subjected to similarity check. We follow a double-blind reviewing procedure of the incoming manuscript.

Note: With regard to joint/co-author paper/s, only one of the authors will be accommodated due to limited fund. However, co-authors willing to participate on their own expense are welcome.

Travel grant

A limited number of travel grants may be available to selected participants.

Publication

Selected papers will be considered for publication in the form of an edited volume.



Important Deadline Dates:

Deadline for the submission of proposals/abstracts: **20 September, 2022**

Notification of shortlisted proposals: **25 September, 2022**

Deadline for the submission of final paper (6,000-8,000 words): **31 October, 2022**

Submit your abstract in **MS Word format** to:

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Please note: *In view of the present COVID-19 pandemic, the need to reschedule the conference dates and place might happen.*