



## **Linguistics for Teachers and Researchers**

A discussion forum initiated by

### **Mumbai Linguistic Circle**

(A platform of The Department of Linguistics, University of Mumbai)

Linguistics has served as an avant-garde discipline in humanities and social sciences right from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The linguistic method has served as a template for studying the human mind and human behaviour. Disciplines such as anthropology, cognitive sciences, communication studies, cultural studies, cybernetics (AI), education studies, literary studies, mathematics, biological sciences, philosophy, psychology, social geography, sociology, speech-language pathology (SLP) etc. share with linguistics an interest in structures and systems underlying human behaviour. Overall, the study of language structure, function and use is of relevance (often crucial) for various teaching and research programmes across disciplines.

Industry-driven research too involves engagement with language and linguistics. In recent times, language studies have become an integral part of cutting-edge research in the field of information and technology. Large Language Models (LLMs) form the basis of new forays in the field of artificial intelligence. Language is not only at the heart of human cognition and communication, but it is also a force through which we forge social relationships. It is also a site of dissent and consent, of confrontations, argumentations, negotiations, and building a common ground. As a result, linguistic communication has served as an important soft skill, especially in the 21<sup>st</sup> century where we observe an ever-increasing focus on the service industries.

The role of linguistic diversity in the development of a nation with a vibrant democracy based on principles of equality and social justice is being recognized worldwide. The United Nations celebrated 2019 as a year of Indigenous Languages. Now, the UN has declared the decade 2022-2032 as the International Decade of Indigenous Languages. Unsurprisingly, multilingualism has become a buzzword amongst policy-makers and planners. NEP 2020 is a recent example of such an emphasis on multilingualism. All these efforts require a sustained engagement with the discipline of linguistics.

In light of the above-mentioned background and developments, the Department of Linguistics, University of Mumbai in collaboration with students and teachers of a few other departments of the University has planned an activity for teachers and researchers working in various educational institutions across the State of Maharashtra, especially Mumbai. The activity is titled "Linguistics for Teachers and Researchers". Under this activity, we propose to engage in a sustained discussion on topics related to linguistic structure, function and use. Some of the issues we would like to bring to the discussion are:

- A. What is the role of language in human cognition?
- B. How do we read, write and speak? What is the connection between writing and speaking?
- C. How do we assess the language proficiency of a person?
- D. What are language disorders? Is Dyslexia a language disorder?
- E. How do we communicate and miscommunicate through language?
- F. What are the philosophical underpinnings of language?
- G. Why and how are human languages so crucial in machine-human interaction?
- H. What is worth teaching in language teaching practices? How and why do people learn new languages?
- I. What is the role of language teaching and learning in education at large, especially in multilingual societies?
- J. What are the issues in the semiotic interpretation of language and culture?
- K. How are linguistic structures and strategies employed in constructing narrative structures?
- L. What do we mean by linguistic ecosystems? How do languages inhabit their spaces? How can we understand the complexities of multilingual societies?
- M. What role does translation serve in a multilingual society, in building bridges across languages and in constructing ideologies?
- N. What can we do to document lesser-studied languages and cultures?
- O. What are the complex equations between language, nation and nationalism(s)?
- P. How does language create and is created by ideology?
- Q. What do language movements tell us about the role of languages in the socio-political-economic lives of societies?
- R. Can language produce social inequality? Can it be used to eradicate inequality and build a just society?
- S. Do women speak differently than men? How do gender, caste, class and power relate to language?

The aim of the activity is to provide an academic space which would enable the participants to mutually increase awareness of, disseminate and further develop linguistic knowledge and extend their horizons of research and teaching. In order to achieve these aims, we propose to organize discussions, lectures and symposia on various topics of interest in the domain of language structure, function and use. We envisage 6-8 such meetings in an academic year. Some of these programs would be open to all while others would be limited to the registered members. These programs will be organized alternatively in physical mode, online mode, and dual mode. While generally, the language in which these programmes would operate would be English, we would also often deliberate in Marathi and Hindi, as needed.

### **First Meeting:**

The first meeting will be held on the 14<sup>th</sup> of July, 2023. The aim of this meeting is to orient all registered members regarding the nature of the proposed activity as well as understand their areas of interest. This meeting will set the agenda for other activities in the near future.

### **Registration:**

To register please fill out the google form available at the following link:

<https://forms.gle/kxyG3hRoohPSVsz38>

For any queries, please write to [mumbailinguistics@gmail.com](mailto:mumbailinguistics@gmail.com)

## ***About Mumbai Linguistic Circle***

Mumbai Linguistic Circle (MLC) is an outreach forum launched and run by the Department of Linguistics, University of Mumbai, to serve as a platform to forge meaningful interactions and exchange of ideas between the academics in the University and the large academia. It is a forum for people who are curious about languages – all kinds of languages. MLC promotes writing about languages, which are present in our surroundings, from various perspectives, be it the structure of languages, functions of language, the processes of meaning creation etc. Writing about languages involves healthy debates around languages. MLC is a forum for such debates and discussions. MLC also organizes programmes which promote a positive attitude towards our immense linguistic diversity.

### **Nature of activities:**

- Discussion on pieces written by members of MLC.
- Discussion on various issues concerning languages in India.
- Public lectures by eminent academicians on issues concerning languages.
- Various activities to celebrate the immense linguistic diversity of our planet.

The activities of MLC are held in three languages: English, Hindi & Marathi.

## ***About the Department of Linguistics***

Established in 1964, the Department of Linguistics, University of Mumbai is one of the oldest Departments in India to offer a Post-Graduate programme in Linguistics. It is also the only active Department from a full-fledged state university in Maharashtra to offer PG programmes in Linguistics. The Department is celebrating its Diamond Jubilee Year in 2023-24.

The Department is known for the intensive training offered to the students and its research orientation. The pedagogy followed in the Department is constructionist, highly interactive, and discursive. It focuses on imparting transferable analytic and reasoning capabilities to the students and researchers. The Department has analyzed structures of over 30 linguistic varieties in India, most of which are lesser-known and understudied languages. Several of these languages are spoken by tribal and marginalized communities.

The faculty members of the Department engage in several outreach programmes and work in close association with school teachers, educators and education activists.

Programmes offered by the Department of Linguistics are:

- MA in Linguistics (regular, full-time, 2 year i.e. 4-semester programme)
- PhD in Linguistics (regular, full-time programme with mandatory 1-year coursework)
- Online Certificate Course in Phonetics and Phonology: A very popular part-time course, introducing the students to the world of speech sounds, offering ear training in perceiving the speech sounds and honing the skills of transcribing them using the IPA.

For more information about the Department of Linguistics, University of Mumbai, visit our website: [www.mumbailinguisticcircle.com](http://www.mumbailinguisticcircle.com)