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Language Mixing in Indian Linguistic Landscape

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ABSTRACT

This paper studies and also tries to investigate the use of the written form of human language in public spaces for a widespread communication. The multilingual structure of the Indian society makes this specific use of language linguistically more creative. Some languages appear more visible on the written display than the others; generally, a major language looks dominating, but a minor language often makes its effort for its presence in the public sphere. Such studies are capable to present the results of various sociolinguistic as well as psycholinguistic processes. The findings also show that the sociolinguistic phenomena of a multilingual society like, language switching, sifting and mixing are visible clearly on the landscape too in different forms. Some of the interesting landscapes have been collected mainly from the North Indian belt to illustrate the sociolinguistic as well as psycholinguistic outcomes.

Keywords: linguistic landscape, linguistic repertoire, written language and Indian multilingualism.

INTRODUCTION

Linguistic landscape can be defined as the language displayed in various public spaces like, shop-signs / banners, traffic-signs, advertisements, public notice boards etc. Indian multilingualism is visible on Indian linguistic landscape very explicitly. The studies on linguistic landscape examine the magnificent use of written language for common people in the public spaces, especially in a multilingual environment. India is an ideal example of such multilingual settings. It includes the issues related to the selection of a language for such kind of communication, the position of a dominant and minority language, multilingualism, literacy, language policy of the rule makers, and the linguistic diversity. It has naturally the moral, social, political and legal scopes. The application of such study is also used as a research instrument and also a data resource to focus on a number of linguistic issues related to the various allied areas of study. It boosts our understanding about the target language users, their psychology, and also

their linguistic repertoire. It also enriches our knowledge pertaining to several aspects of multilingualism, linguistic strategy, and the diverse use of the written form of human language.

The scholarly work on this applied field of study has added a pioneering as well as fascinating approach in the structuring of language diversity and multilingualism in many ways. It is a study where linguistic diversity is not only displayed publically but also contested on a written display. Some languages have strong access in public sphere on written display in compare to others; majority languages dominate, but minority languages often struggle for their visibility. It also shows the outcome of different sociolinguistic and psycholinguistic processes. The signage is generally an exhibit of identities or belief systems of a particular language community. It also reflects the comparative supremacy and the position of the different language groups in a specific context. Such features of this study make it very interesting and encouraging. It is the study of language displayed in public areas like, shop-signs, traffic-signs, advertisements, public notice boards, posters etc.



Signage 1: A hoarding during the Bihar Assembly Election-2020 (Bihar)



Signage 2: Save Girl Child - Awareness Mission



Signage 3: Save Water for Future (Awareness Mission of the Government of India)



Signage 4: Shop-Sign / Banner (A shop of household commodity)



Signage 5: HIV Awareness Programme

The signage 1 is a hoarding used in the 'Bihar Assembly Election-2020' in Patna, Bihar (a state in North India) by a political party to vote in its favor. There are two languages (a language and a dialect) used in this signage which are well planned to catch the psychology of the voters. The first

sentence (the upper line) is purely in Hindi language (the First Official Language of the Government of Bihar, India) whereas the second sentence (the lower line) involves code mixing. It (second sentence) is a mixture of Hindi and a local dialect. It is even non-honorific, the same way how a common person talks about a political leader or a political party in private or in public domain. It is a slogan which has been used to attract the voters / audiences. Such political sloganeering is very common during elections. The audiences are affected and they get positive energy to vote for such person / political parties. There can be a similar attractive slogan in other languages elsewhere. Language use in such sloganeering depends upon the linguistic profile of the audiences. The hoarding also contains the map of the state in its background. The languages used in the hoarding, the colour choice, the size of the hoarding are all well planned according to the local sociolinguistic settings. Thus, it has a high socio-psycholinguistic significance.

Overall, the signage and images collected from the different parts of India, illustrate the similarities and differences of the linguistic landscape. In most of cases (signage 1, 2, 3 and 4), language mixing is investigated on the signage, conveying a wide variety of messages in public spaces for a widespread communication. These signs demonstrate the variety and complexity of multilingual spaces, and by studying these signs, we are able to discover and understand the linguistic, cultural and psychological diversity of the Indian society.

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