

Impact of Script [Controversy] on Language and Linguistic Identities: The Case of Kashmiri Language

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ABSTRACT

Writing has a long tradition in South Asia, although not many languages of the sub-continent have developed written traditions. On the one side, there are languages which have not developed writing systems and solely sustain on their strong oral traditions. On the other hand, there are languages which have developed their writing systems adopting more than one script. This concept of multiple scripts has led to many linguistic conflicts between various speech communities. The more complex example is Hindi-Urdu conflict, where the Devanagari or Persian script generally follows the Hindi and Urdu standards and the speaker's religious affiliation. The two scripts always had political and cultural implications, which left their mark on the language(s).

The present paper mainly focuses on some of the prolonged controversies concerning the script agony of Kashmiri Language in the Kashmir region of India. The paper is part of a larger effort, which was aimed at studying the linguistic assertions of community identities in the multilingual context of the Kashmir region of India. The paper explains how the two different religious communities (Hindus and Muslims) engage themselves by asserting two different linguistic identities via a common code – the Kashmiri language – by employing two different scripts (Persian and Devanagari) for it. Kashmiri language Although, most of the Kashmiris suffer from what Wolfram calls “linguistic inferiority complex” still they will fight for the symbolic reification of Kashmiri linguistic identity – which will hold like