

Linguistic Landscaping of ‘Ghoti’ and ‘Bangal’ in West Bengal: A Case of Bilingualism

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ABSTRACT

The present paper attempts to investigate the linguistic landscape of West Bengal and the level of bilingualism prevalent among the Bangladeshi community in West Bengal, famous as ‘Bangal’, and the existent, original Bengali population of West Bengal, famous as ‘Ghoti’ in order to analyze the linguistic alterations in the Bengali language due to language contact and local manipulations. Ghotis are a social community who are native population of West Bengal, India. Ghoti language, dialects and folk traditions are contrastive to the East Bengalis or the native residents of erstwhile East Bengal (presently Bangladesh). Both the expressions ‘Bangal’ and ‘Ghoti’ came into prominence after a chunk of Bangladeshi population migrated to West Bengal during and after the Partition of Bengal in 1947. Therefore, the focus would be simultaneously on the linguistic landscape of Bengal and the language contact between the two varieties of Bangla in present times. Bilingualism among Ghotis and Bangals is tending towards ‘language shift’ in the existent colloquial Bengali language (only in spoken form), as the speakers of both the varieties are mutually exchanging their languages or dialects, also, because there is a substantial correlation between code-switching and code-mixing expressions of speech through morpho-phonemic importation.

Keywords: Linguistic landscape, Ghoti and Bangal, bilingualism, language contact, language shift