LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPING IN INDIA: WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO SOUTH MUMBAI

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Abstract:

Multilingualism is a common phenomenon, which can be studied from different perspectives including the use of languages in the sociolinguistic context. One of the possibility is in analyzing the languages by focusing on the written information that is available on language signs in a specific area. Mumbai is a focus for this study in a view of a new attempt to investigate the multilingual environment of India. Hindi-English bilingual signs are usually the focus of study in India, but the increasing multilingual signs are also attracting researcher's attention. This research first puts forward the possible approaches to studying different signs in Mumbai. The attempts to analyze the multilingual signs found in the Mumbai indicates how the multilingual linguistic landscape is constructed under the current language policy of India. The Linguistic Landscape (LL) contributes to the construction of the sociolinguistic context because people process the visual information that comes to them first, and the language in which the signs are written can certainly influence their perception of the status of the different languages and even affect their own linguistic behavior. The linguistic landscape or parts of the linguistic landscape can have an influence on language use. The study of the linguistic landscape is particularly interesting in bilingual and multilingual contexts. The linguistic landscape (LL) can provide information about the sociolinguistic context and the use of the different languages in language signs can be compared to the official policy of the region and to the use of the language as reported in surveys. The study also focuses on trends of LL in public space which includes advertising, billboards, posters, official (top-down signs) and non-official (bottom-up signs) road signs etc.

Introduction:

Linguistic Landscape (LL), in a specific sociolinguistic context, is the position of relative strength of linguistic objects in the public space. Linguistic Landscape studies the bilingual and multilingual contexts including the use of languages in the sociolinguistic context. In the sociolinguistic survey, LL gives information

about the use of different languages and it also helps in comparing the use of language and the public policy. LL refers to all linguistic objects which mark the public sphere: road signs, the name of sites, streets, buildings, places, and institutions as well as advertising, billboards, commercials and even personal visit cards. It has been observed that some of these items are imposed by state agencies, others by local communities and still others by firms, associations, and individual. Likewise in residential areas, we may find street signs, text on mailboxes or nameplates. In commercial streets there is an abundance of signs, many of those signs are put there with economic considerations in mind (Cenoz & Gorter: 2006). Landry and Bourhis (1997) view Linguistic Landscape as:

> "the language of public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs, and public signs on government buildings combined to form the linguistic landscape of a given territory, region or urban agglomeration".

<div align="right">Landry and Bourhis (1997:25)</div>

As a research domain, LL is the study of display of writing signs in the public sphere. LL research typically focuses on urban environments. Harris (1986) and Coulmas (2003) claims that LL is as old as writing. Writing is communicative rather than private form since its inception and some of its earliest functions were bound to public display. Sometimes LL refers to the system of just one language; in another case, it indicates the spread and boundaries of dialects (Labov et al. 1997; Cenoz &Gorter: 2006).

LL, as the study of public multilingual signage, is developing into a subfield of sociolinguistics and semiotics. One of the main topics of interest is the choice of language in public sings in bilingual or multilingual urban space, which is why 'cityscape' is preferable to 'Landscape' (Cenoz & Gorter: 2006). The LL of a country, region or an urban setting provides a distinctive marker of a territory inhabited by language communities. Thus, it delineates linguistic boundaries indicating that languages can be used or not used within a certain area to communicate and obtain public and private services (Coulmas: 2009).

Category of Signs:

Top-down

Public-institutes

      Public Signs

          Public-Announcements

            Sign of Street names

          Shop-signs (Clothing, Food, Jewelry)

        Private Business Signs, Offices, Factories, Agencies   **Bottom-up**

      Private announcements 'wanted', Ads, Sale or Rentals of Flats or Cars

                     (Raf, Sohamy, Amara and Rrumper-Hecht, 2006).

Background Information on the Study Area:

The present study of LL is done taking a sample of the metro city of India, namely Mumbai. Metropolitan cities in India are regarded as vital economic, cultural and political centers. In addition, regional and international organizations over the world consider a city as an important center for communication. Mumbai is the most popular metropolitan city in India. It is the capital city of Indian state of Maharashtra. It was named as an alpha world city. Marathi is the official language of the state. It is the commercial and financial capital city of India. People from different castes, cultures, and religions live in the city. The city is multi-religious, multi-cultural and multi-lingual. According to 2011 Census of India, Mumbai City has a population of 3,085,411; of which male and female were 1,684,608 and 1,400,803 respectively.

Research Questions

1. Which are the languages displayed in the LL of south Mumbai?
2. How are signs in the public space carried out by local communities, state agencies, associations, and individuals?
3. What are the official and non-official signs and road signs like?
4. Does the LL in the public reflect that English is the dominant language?

Methodology:

The observation is made through quantitative data collection and the method of analysis is statistical. Graphical representations are used as actual samples. With the help of a digital camera, the primary data were collected. Around 400 pictures of language signs were taken from different locations within the south Mumbai (Church gate, Nariman-point, Byculla, Mumbai Central, Masjid, Kolaba, Parel, Lower-

Parel, Dadar, Mahalaxmi, Grant-road) which helped in determining the number of languages used in public space.

Analysis and results:

The purpose of the study is to examine the LL of south Mumbai. Among the languages displayed in the public space, Hindi and English has the maximum number of signs with 28%, followed by Marathi and English combination with 6%, Hindi, and Marathi combination with 13% and English (13%), Hindi (14%), and Hindi, English and Marathi (10%) ,the others with (0%)as given in table 1. Linguistic signs in the public space are used mostly with the help of Hindi and English by local communities, state agencies, associations and individuals (as seen in pictures 1, 2 and 3).

It is tremendously clear that the majority of signs are in English with simplified English and with different fonts. Signs in English serve performative indexing of utilitarian value and not necessarily linked to the issues of loyalty whereas the signs in Marathi serve local performative indexing of subjective value as Marathi is linked to group identification.

Monolingual, Bilingual and MultilingualSign:

Picture 1: An English sign of a Mumbai City Museum

Picture: 2A Marathi and English Bilingual sign

Picture: 3A Hindi, Marathi and English Multilingual (official sign)

Table 1: **Languages present in public space**

Language used	Number of data	Percentage (%)
Marathi	88	16%
English	79	14%
Hindi	70	13%
Hindi and English	153	28%
Marathi and English	31	6%
Hindi and Marathi	74	13%
Hindi English Marathi	55	10%
Other	3	0%
Total	553	100%

Pie Chart 1: Languages presentin public space
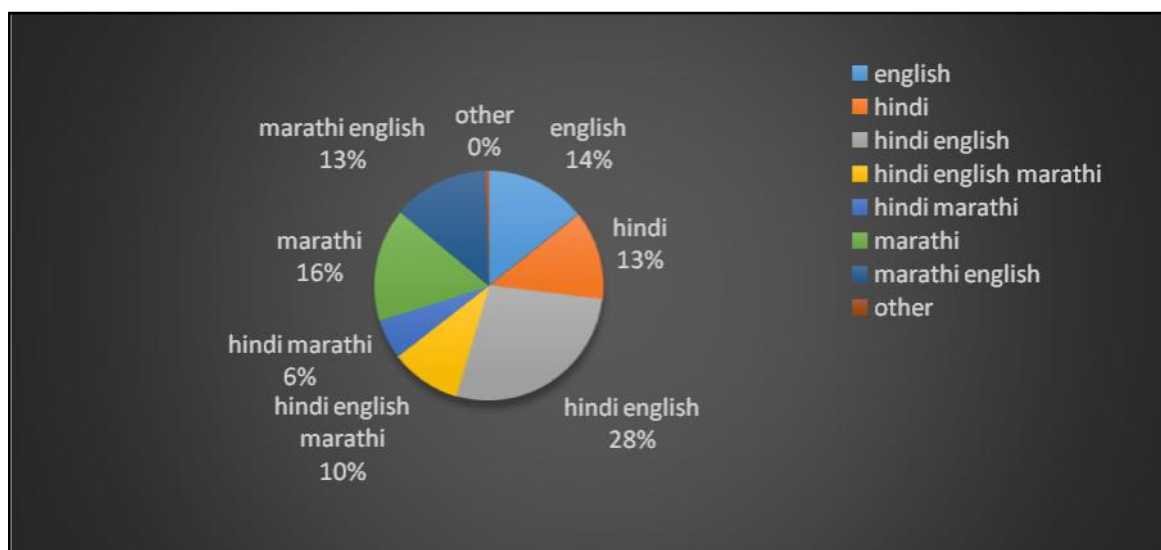
Monolingual (English) signs are often used in public space as well as in the private space. Moreover, the Monolingual sign is present in English as seen in Table 1 and pie diagram 1. English dominates the LL of South Mumbai. It also reflects that the people are not adverse to such geo semiotics of public space. In fact, people have a positive attitude towards English and it is the more important component.

Bi-lingual and Multilingual Signs

In this subdivision, we would have a closer look at the comparison of bilingual and multilingual signs. Some example of bilingual and multilingual signs are seen in picture 4, 5 and 6. The result of bilingual and multilingual signs present is given in table 2 and the distribution of bilingual and multilingual signs is given in graphical representation (Pie-diagram 2).

Picture: 4   Picture: 5

Picture: 6

Table 2: Bilingual and Multilingual Sign (percentage)

Language used	Number of Data	Percentage (%)
Hindi and English	153	49%
Hindi and Marathi	31	10%
Marathi and English	74	23%
Hindi, English, and	55	17%
Others	3	1%
Total	316	100%

Official and Non-Official Signs

In LL, a basic qualitative distinction between official and non-official signs makes a great contribution to the LL. In the south Mumbai, all signs set up by the government organizations have been considered official signs (picture 7), besides these, all other signs are considered as non-official signs. There is more no. of non-official signs as compared to that of official signs. The quantitative outcomes of the data collection of both the official and non-official signs are given in table 3 and 4 along with their graphical representation2-3. Languages used for official signs are English, Hindi, and Marathi. English is found more frequently in official as well as in non-official signs. English has been used frequently as it attracts the majority of people.Most of the official signs are in Multilingual Signs (49%), followed by English, Hindi, and Marathi multilingual signs. (See table 3).
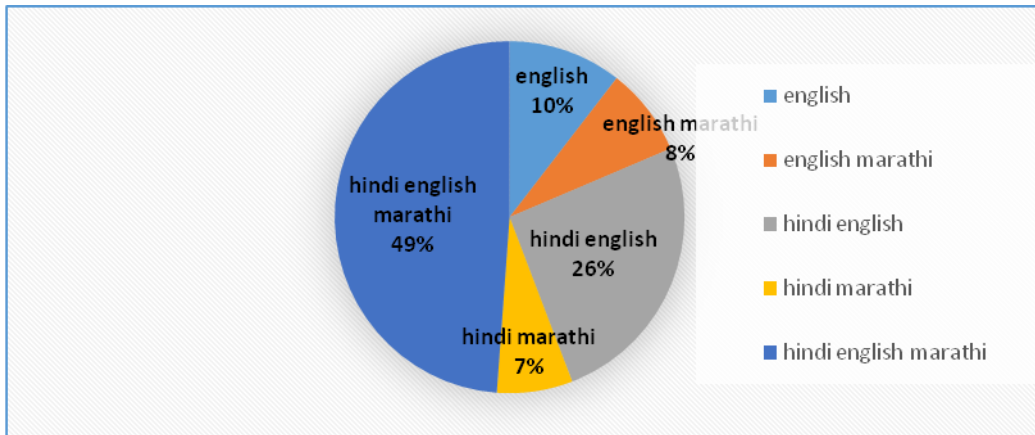
Picture: 7

Table 3: Official (top-down) Signs

Language Used	Number of Data	Percentage (%)
English	9	10%
English and Hindi	22	26%
Marathi and English	7	8%
Hindi and Marathi	6	7%
Hindi, English, and Marathi	42	49%
Total	86	100%

Pie Chart 2: Official Signs

We can see here English and Hindi dominate the non-official signs with 30%, Marathi and English 15%, English 16%, Hindi 14% and Marathi 13% and others 0%.
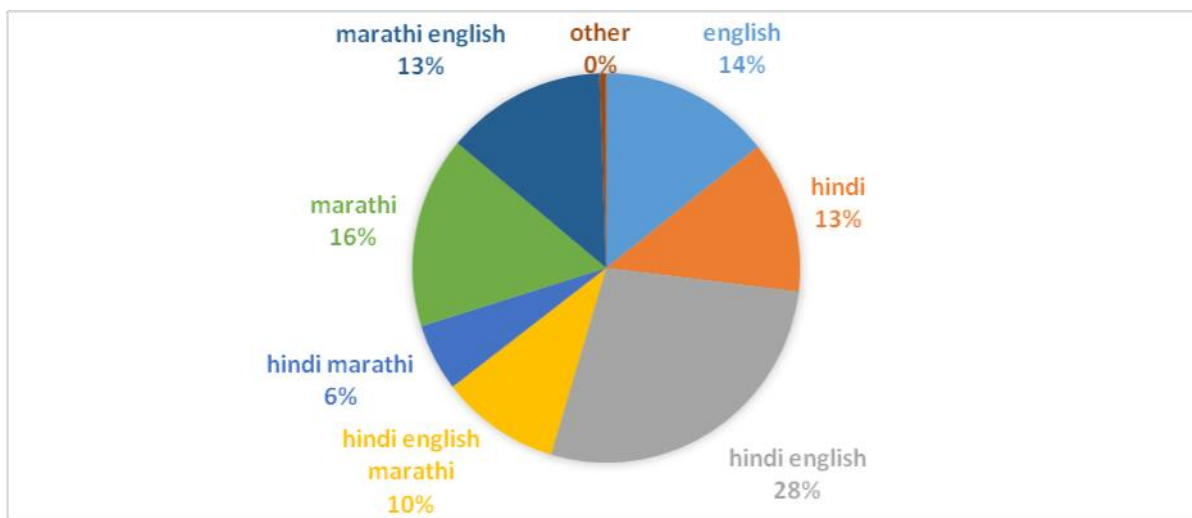

Picture 8:

Picture: 9

Table 4: Non-Official (bottom-up) Signs

Language Used	Number of Data	Percentage (%)
English	71	16%
Hindi	61	14%
Marathi	56	13%
Hindi and English	130	30%
Hindi and Marathi	25	6%
Marathi and English	66	15%
Marathi, Hindi, and English	25	6%
Others	3	0%
	437	100%

Pie Chart 3: Non-Official Signs

Road Signs

Road signs are also important characteristics included in this study. Almost many signs are written in English, Hindi, and English, however, Hindi, English, Marathi and English, Marathi signs are also available and all these signs come with non-official signs. Road signs are written in English, Marathi, and Hindi (as seen in picture10, 11, 12, 13and 14).

Picture: 10 Picture: 11

Picture: 12 Picture: 13

Picture: 14

Conclusion

The use of language in public space suggests that English, English-Marathi, English- Hindi, Hindi-Marathi, and Hindi-English-Marathi combination are frequently displayed. We see that Hindi, Marathi and English combination is used because the institutions under the Central Government usually use English and Hindi in South Mumbai. In Particular, there appears to be a clear distinction between official, non-official and monolingual or bilingual signs. Overall this paper suggests that the English is most prominent language and are becoming the major part of the LL in the region. Thus we can conclude that English, Marathi, and Hindi are included for representation in public space. Moreover, the significance of this research lies in establishing the 'linguistic landscaping' as an insightful indicator for

studying linguistic and social patterns of multicultural and multilingual societies in the metro cities. This study will help in demonstrating the validity and usefulness of LL in analyzing and comparing trends of multilingualism in the metro cities. An additional significance of this research lies in its aspiration of enriching our knowledge of the social dynamics of multilingualism and multiculturalism in the metro. In particular, the study on the linguistic landscape of metros will confirm the multilingual reality of dominant vs nondominant languages in public sphere.

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