Scientific Research Publishing

Mapping the Linguistic Landscape of the Cultural Heritage Sites and Tourist Spots in Bangladesh

Juan Dong[1], Min Peng[1], Md. Gias Uddin[2]

[1]School of Foreign Languages in Yunnan University, Kunming, China
[2]School of Software in Yunnan University, Kunming, China
Email: dongjuan@mail.ynu.edu.cn

Abstract

Language choices in colonized societies are shaped by a combination of local, national, and global forces as well as historical, political, religious and economic factors. This is particularly true in Dhaka and Cox's Bazar. Adopting an ethnography, this study attempts to investigate the intersection of language practices and ideologies by examining the language use and language choices displayed in cultural heritage sites and tourism scenic spots both in public and private multilingual signs. Data are collected through linguistic signs represented at the two places and individual interviews with local people. Findings indicate that multidimensionality marks the linguistic landscape in Bangladesh. The sociopolitical dimension signifies the officially laid-down monolingual Bangla-oriented policies, which accentuate compulsory use of the national language Bangla standing for Bangladeshi nationalism and identity. English as a post-colonial reproducer of linguistic hegemony is presented in various aspects in Bangladesh. The economic dimension is manifested in the prominent use of Chinese as a newly emerging foreign language and the employment of Arabic, which is a symbol of Bangladeshi main religion Islam. The study provides a new context for understanding Bangladesh's multilingual practices and its language planning and management in the context of globalization.

Keywords

Linguistic Landscape (LL), Bangladesh, Cultural Heritage Sites, Tourist Spots, Dhaka, Cox's Bazar

1. Introduction

Linguistic Landscape (LL) is an emerging and dynamic field of research in ap-

plied and sociolinguistics, which attempts to understand the motives, uses, ideologies, varieties and contestations of multiple forms of "languages" as they are displayed in public spaces (Chanda, Hossain, & Rahman, 2018). Simultaneously, with the increasing development of digital communications, LL is also becoming prevalent in virtual space (Ivkovic & Lotherington, 2009). The classic definition of LL was given by Landry and Bourhis (1997: p. 25) who defined it as "the language of public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs, and public signs on government buildings combine to form the linguistic landscapes of a given territory, region, or urban agglomeration" (Shang & Zhao, 2014a: p. 215). LL not only studies how different languages or varieties are used at a specific region but concentrates on the underlying meanings attached to the language signs (Shang & Zhao, 2014b: p. 84). In the context of China's Belt and Road Initiative, Bangladesh is one of the significant neighboring countries in South Asia to China. There should have been a bulk of studies regarding LL in various countries and places, while little is concerned with language use in Bangladesh with linguistic and cultural diversity.

Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh, is one of the most densely-populated cities in the world with a total population exceeding 15 million in an area of 360 km^2. It is the political, economic and cultural center of the country with many cultural heritage sites (Rahman, 2010). Hence, Dhaka is a typical place of multilingual practices. Meanwhile, Cox's Bazar, with the longest natural unbroken sea beach in the world, is one of the most famous tourism attractions of Bangladesh. Thus, this article examines the language choices observed and language ideologies embedded in Bangladesh's cultural heritage sites and tourist spots.

2. Literature Review

Recent years, a great deal of studies on LL have been conducted on how different languages have been displayed in various social domains (Papen, 2012; Ivkovic & Lotherington, 2009; Leeman & Modan, 2009; Backhaus, 2005; Blommaert, 2013; Huebner, 2006; Bruyèl-Olmedo & Juan-Garau, 2015; Trosterud, 2012). The most popular thematic topic in LL studies is multilingualism which emerges in different linguistic contexts. Specifically, following discourse-analytic approach, Zhao & Liu (2014) explore the multilingual use of language in the LL of Dalian and examine the way this indexing process operates in the era of globalization. Similarly, Ivkovic & Lotherington (2009) argue that the LL of virtual space, though grounded in the concept of multilingual interactions within a physically defined world, has distinct characteristics to the digital world that continue to evolve conterminous with the complex relationship of the real to the digital. In addition, numerous scholars choose distinct research sites, ranging from cyberspace, rural places, minority area, border cities to metropolis and more. Even though Yan (2019) examines the language choices in the linguistic landscape of Macao's heritage tourism and gaming tourism and Chanda et al. (2018) conducts the linguistic landscape at Pabna in Bangladesh, revealing the influence of colonial language in Pabna area, few researchers have focused on the language

choices in cultural heritage sites and tourist spots. Different from the scholars listed above, this article tends to explore the LL of cultural heritage sites at Dhaka and the tourism scenic spots at Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh, aiming to investigate the intersection of language practices and ideologies in terms of socio-political, economic, and cultural facets.

3. Methodology

3.1. The Definition of Ethnography

May (1997) asserts that critical ethnography is a relatively recent development in social science research methodology. It shares with much ethnography a reliance on the qualitative interpretation of data examining particular social, cultural, or organizational settings from the perspectives of the participants involved. Simultaneously, ethnography is designed to explore cultural phenomena where the researcher observes society from the perspective of the subject of the study, a way to represent graphically and in writing the culture of a group (Snow, Morrill, & Anderson, 2003). Claude (1963) states that ethnography consists of the observation and analysis of human groups considered as individual entities, aiming at recording as accurately as possible the perspective modes of life of various groups. Moreover, as an approach of data collection, Dewan (2018) asserts that ethnography includes examining the behavior of the participants in a specific social situation and also understanding their interpretation of such behavior. In accordance with these studies, the current article also follows the same approach looking at language practices and revealing the bigger context of socioeconomic transformations of Bangladesh.

3.2. Data Collection and Description of Participants

Data were collected by taking photos of cultural heritage sites at Dhaka and tourism scenic spots at Cox's Bazar as well as individual interviews to understand local people's way of learning various languages. The photos of linguistic landscapes collected at Dhaka and Cox's Bazar are 260 in total, pictures of Dhaka are 134, 68 of public signs and 66 of private signs; pictures of Cox's Bazar are 126 totally, 62 of public signs and 64 of private signs, covering Dhaka and Cox's Bazar's typical places including universities, national museum, commercial area, tourism area, historic buildings and so forth.

As for the interview, there are 12 participants taking part in the study and the questions are concerning their attitudes towards the values of different languages observed at Dhaka and Cox's Bazar, their language learning experiences and how their language backgrounds facilitate their life and work. Our participants are local people living at Dhaka and Cox's Bazar and they are in different ages from 17 to 62 years old with various occupational backgrounds. Most of them are receiving higher education in Dhaka or Chinese Universities. They are all able to speak English and Bangla at different proficient levels. Based on one-week-ethnography, these participants' employment and educational trajec-

tories are also listed in the following table together with the above information (see Table 1).

3.3. Research Questions

In order to understand how various languages have been used and practiced at Dhaka and Cox's Bazar, we have asked two research questions in the study:

1) What are the language choices observed at Dhaka's cultural heritage sites and Cox's Bazar's tourism scenic spots?

2) What are the language ideologies embedded in these linguistic landscapes?

4. Findings

4.1. Language Choices Displayed in Dhaka Linguistic Landscape

Table 2 categorizes the distribution of language choices of cultural heritage sites at Dhaka.

Despite the fact that Dhaka is the capital city of Bangladesh with abundant cultural heritage sites, it is clear that monolingual and bilingual signs are mostly displayed (see Table 2). However, Arabic is the only language used in the religious place, the National Mosque. Meanwhile, in these heritage sites, Chinese

Table 1. 12 participants' profile.

Participants	Nationality	Hometown	Age	Gender	Language capacity	Occupation
B1	Bangladesh	Dhaka	17	male	Bangla, English, a little bit Chinese	Yunnan University International Student
B2	Bangladesh	Dhaka	22	female	Bangla, English	Dhaka University Student
B3	Bangladesh	Dhaka	25	male	Bangla, English and Arabic	Religious Teacher
B4	Bangladesh	Dhaka	30	female	Bangla	Housewife
B5	Bangladesh	Dhaka	23	male	Bangla, English	Businessman
B6	Bangladesh	Dhaka	24	male	Bangla, English, Arabic	Arabic Language Teacher
B7	Bangladesh	Cox's Bazar	33	male	Bangla, English	Hotel Manager
B8	Bangladesh	Cox's Bazar	20	female	Bangla, English, Cox's Bazar dialect	Cox's Bazar International University Student
B9	Bangladesh	Cox's Bazar	23	male	Bangla, English	Businessman
B10	Bangladesh	Cox's Bazar	21	female	Bangla, English, Chinese	Yunnan University International Student
B11	Bangladesh	Cox's Bazar	28	male	Bangla, a little bit English	Restaurant Owner
B12	Bangladesh	Cox's Bazar	62	male	Bangla, Arabic	RetiredArabic Language Teacher

Table 2. Distribution of different languages observed of cultural heritage sites at Dhaka.

Language Ideologies	Language Choice	Cultural Heritage Sites at Dhaka
Monolingualism	Bangla	National Martyrs Memorial; National Museum; Military District
	English	Faculty of Arts at University of Dhaka; Pali & Buddhist Studies Students Association; National Martyrs Memorial; National Museum; Military District
	Arabic	National mosque
Bilingualism	Bangla & English	Department of Music at University of Dhaka; Department of Pali & Buddhist Studies; National Martyrs Memorial; National Museum; Military District
	Chinese & English	Confucius Institute at University of Dhaka; Bangladesh-China Culture and Arts Exchange Center; Introduction of Chinese minority groups like, Yi, Hui…;
Multilingualism	Bangla, English, Chinese	Confucius Institute at University of Dhaka,

language is also exclusively used in the Confucius Institute at the University of Dhaka due to Bangladeshi friendship and cultural communication with China under the background of China's B & R initiative. In addition, Bangla and English are pervasive, demonstrating the Bangladesh's independence and national identity as well as western colonial influence on Bangladesh. The following figures are the photos taken from several cultural heritage sites (See Figures 1-3).

4.1.1. Language Choice at National Martyrs Memorial
Besides monolingual signs, bilingual signs are used both in Bangla and English, which indicate that different languages might convey different meanings in different contexts. Historically, Bangladesh was the colony of Britain. English embodies the political influence of western countries. English used at the National Martyrs Memorial makes the history readable not only for local people but also foreigners. Also, after gaining its independence in 1971, Bangladesh has employed Bangla as its national language. Thus, Bangla is a symbol of victory and national identity.

4.1.2. Language Choice at National Museum
Apart from the National Martyrs Memorial, monolingual and bilingual signs are represented at Bangladeshi National Museum. In Figure 4, it is the main gate of the national museum which uses Bangla and English. Figure 5 is one of the pictures of the international film festival's advertisements. In addition, in the big hall of the museum, the statue is a Bangladesh's hero, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. He was called the "Father of the Nation" (see Figure 6) (Wikipedia, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, 2020). This demonstrates the pride of Bangladesh. Given that

Figure 1. Monolingual (English) sign.

Figure 2. Bilingual (English & Bangla) signs.

Figure 3. Monolingual (Bangla) sign.

Figure 4. Bilingual (Bangla & English) signs of the gate of the national museum.

Figure 5. Monolingual (English) sign of the international film festival.

Figure 6. Monolingual (Bangla) sign of the father of Bangladesh.

English is the lingua franca, the English language used in the national museum also enables the world to enjoy its splendid culture and profound history.

4.1.3. Language Choice at the University of Dhaka

Surprisingly, many bilingual and trilingual signs can be seen in the Confucius Institute at University of Dhaka. From Figures 7-9, we can see the signs of a brief introduction to Confucius Institute and the Bangladesh-China and Arts Exchange Center, among which the Yunnan University of China is the representative university because it establishes the friendship and cooperation with Dhaka University. More strikingly, many bilingual signs of the introduction of Chinese minority groups, such as Yi, Hui, Miao, Dong minority groups, are represented at Confucius Institute both in Chinese and English (see Figure 10). Hence, it can be concluded that Chinese language used in Confucius institute symbolizes the friendship and cooperation between Bangladesh and China.

Figure 7. Bilingual (Chinese & English) sign of Confucius institute.

Figure 8. Bilingual (Chinese & English) sign of Bangladesh-China and arts exchange center.

Figure 9. Trilingual (Chinese, English & Bangla) sign of the guidepost of Confucius institute.

Figure 10. Bilingual (Chinese & English) signs of Chinese minority groups.

4.1.4. Language Choice at Military District

Furthermore, in military district, bilingual signs and monolingual signs are displayed. In Figure 11 and Figure 12, the good qualities of a soldier, such as honor and pride, honesty and integrity, loyalty, patriotism and so forth, are written in Bangla and English. At the same time, the signs of living building of soldiers and some personal restaurants use Bangla. From the interview with local people, one soldier's wife tells us that her whole family can live in the military district because her husband is a soldier. The governments provide soldiers with residence and security.

4.1.5. Language Choice at National Mosque

Besides, the other special heritage site is the religious place, Baitual Mukarram National Mosque with Islamic architecture style. At the main gate of the holly mosque, Arabic is used. In Figure 13, the Arabic language means "Allah is the greatest". This symbol highlights the main religion and belief (Islam) of Bangladeshi people. The Arabic language is one of the forms of the religion of Islam.

Figure 11. Bilingual (Bangla and English) sign of army's qualities.

Figure 12. Monolingual (Bangla) sign of soldiers' living building.

Figure 13. Monolingual (Arabic) sign.

In a word, the linguistic landscapes (monolingualism, bilingualism and trilingualism) demonstrate diversified cultural heritage sites at Dhaka. Monolingual language of Bangla is the symbol of Bangladesh's independence and national identity. Additionally, monolingual language of Arabic symbolizes the main religion of Bangladeshi people, it is the symbol of their special and unique culture. Monolingualism (English) and bilingualism (Bangla & English) indicate the western colonial influence and political impact on Bangladesh and its internationalization. Moreover, trilingual languages (Chinese, Bangla and English) represent the cooperation and development between China and Bangladesh recent years.

4.2. Language Choices Displayed in Cox's Bazar Linguistic Landscape

In addition to the capital city Dhaka of Bangladesh, Cox's Bazar is one of the most visited tourist destinations of Bangladesh with the longest natural unbroken sea beach in the world (Wikipedia, Cox's Bazar, 2020). With the fantastic and unique scenery, Cox's Bazar attracts a huge number of tourists at home and abroad. As a result, the tourists can promote the local economy. Thus, language like English is very popular in this place. Table 3 shows the linguistic landscape of monolingualism and bilingualism at cox's Bazar. Specifically, the following figures are the photos taken from several various places at Cox's Bazar (see Table 3).

4.2.1. Language Choice at St. Martin—A Famous Separated Island of Cox's Bazar

St. Martin Island is a small island in the northeastern part of the Bay of Bengal, about 9 km south of the tip of the Cox's Bazar-Teknaf peninsula, about 8 km west of the northwest coast of Myanmar. There is a small adjoining island that is separated at high tide (Wikipedia, St. Martin's Island, 2020). Owing to its unique geography, the only way to reach St. Martin is by water transportation such as ships or boats. Figure 14 and Figure 15 are the bilingual signs displayed at the wharf. They are the advertisements of the local hotels and restaurants and some guidance for tourists.

4.2.2. Language Choice at Hotels and Restaurants

Since Cox's Bazar is a tourist spot, the construction of hotels and restaurants is very essential. Hotels and restaurants mostly use English and Bangla for local

Table 3. Distribution of different languages observed of tourism scenic spots at Cox's bazaar.

Language Ideologies	Language Choice	Tourism scenic spots
Monolingualism	Bangla	Trade fair, shop advertisements
Bilingualism	Bangla & English	Ticket service center; restaurants; hotel and restaurant advertisements;

Figure 14. Bilingual (English & Bangla) sign.

Figure 15. Bilingual (English & Bangla) sign.

and foreign tourists (see **Figure 16** and **Figure 17**). Also, the tourism industry boosts the local economy and creates more job opportunities for local people in various services, such as accommodation, transport, food and entertainment.

4.2.3. Language Choice at Ticket Service Center

Meanwhile, the language choices at the ticket service center are employed in English and Bangla (see **Figure 18** and **Figure 19**). This is convenient for different kinds of tourists for travelling. Therefore, it is of great significance for using multilingual signs in some important public places, like airport, bus stations.

4.2.4. Language Choice at Trade Fair

Similarly, at the trade fair of Cox's Bazar, there are also monolingual of Bangla or bilingual of Bangla and English represented (see **Figure 20** and **Figure 21**). Tourists would like to take some traditional and precious gifts when they go back. At the same time, language is a kind of economic and cultural capital in

Figure 16. Bilingual (English & Bangla) sign.

Figure 17. Bilingual (English & Bangla) sign.

Figure 18. Bilingual (English and Bangla) sign.

Figure 19. Bilingual (English and Bangla) sign.

Figure 20. Monolingual (Bangla) sign.

business. For instance, a precious and unique gift with a specific language (like Bangla or English) tends to be relatively high-valued and expensive. Thus, it is a wise choice to use different languages for all kinds of products in the trade fair.

In sum, the monolingual language of Bangla and bilingual languages of Bangla and English are used in various places in tourist spots. English is pervasive because it is regarded as a sort of economic capital.

Figure 21. Bilingual (Bangla & English) sign.

5. Conclusion and Implication

The fact that multilingual practices spotted both in public and private spaces of Dhaka and Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh is the manifestation of cultural and linguistic diversity. Bangla is the most widely used language everywhere in Bangladesh. It is of great significance for Bangladeshi national identity and individual development in academic and career success. English, as a lingua franca, is observed at Bangladesh in some public and private places such as national museum, military district and personal hotels and restaurants. Its wide use manifests the degree of internationalization, indicating the western colonial influence on Bangladesh as well as the promotion of economy rendered by the tourism prosperity. Chinese, as a newly emerged language capital, carries the value of cultural resources and its use at the University of Dhaka is influenced by China's rise and B & R initiative these years. Meanwhile, Arabic, as a religious language, is only used in national mosque, symbolizing its culture as well. These linguistic landscapes demonstrate that the multidimensionality is embedded in the complex socio-political, economic, and cultural facets.

In the globalized world, language talents in English and Chinese are needed in various levels of political, economic, cultural and educational communications in Bangladesh, allowing their life trajectories to be different from and brighter than those who only speak Bangla. Furthermore, as a multilingual and multiethnic country, language talents in both Bangla and minority languages are indispensable for connecting the government and minority people. Besides, the language talents are also needed to speak Arabic in promoting the national religion.

The study has shed some light on the language practices and social reality of two cities in Bangladesh and it can provide some practical guidance on language policy for the Bangladeshi government. Due to the fact that the study is only based on two cities of Dhaka and Cox's Bazar and that the number of the figures and participants is also limited to what the author can have access, it is therefore suggested that future work should be conducted on a more comprehensive and even a longitudinal basis of different places, like minority areas, in order to understand the dynamic change of language use and the social practices in Bangladesh.

Supported

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

References

Backhaus, P. (2005). *Signs of Multilingualism in Tokyo: A Linguistic Landscape Approach*. PhD Thesis, Duisburg and Essen: University of Duisburg-Essen.

Blommaert, J. (2013). *Ethnography, Superdiversity and Linguistic Landscapes: Chronicles of Complexity*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters. https://doi.org/10.21832/9781783090419

Bruyèl-Olmedo, A., & Juan-Garau, M. (2015). Minority Languages in the Linguistic Landscape of Tourism: The Case of Catalan in Mallorca. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development, 36,* 598-619.

Chanda, S. S., Hossain, M. A., & Rahman, A. (2018). A Case Study of Linguistic Landscaping in Bangladesh: Pabna Context. *Journal of ELT and Education, 1,* 11-22.

Claude, L.-S. (1963). *Structural Anthropology*. New York: Basic Books, Inc.

Dewan, M. (2018). Understanding Ethnography: An "Exotic" Ethnographer's Perspective. In P. Mura, & C. Khoo-Lattimore (Eds.), *Asian Qualitative Research in Tourism. Perspectives on Asian Tourism* (pp. 185-203). Singapore: Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-7491-2_10

Huebner, T. (2006). Bangkok's Linguistic Landscapes: Environmental Print, Codemixing and Language Change. In D. Gorter (Ed.), *Linguistic Landscape: A New Approach to Multilingualism* (pp. 31-52). Clevendon: Multilingual Matters. https://doi.org/10.21832/9781853599170-003

Ivkovic, D., & Lotherington, H. (2009). Multilingualism in Cyberspace: Conceptualising the Virtual Linguistic Landscape. *International Journal of Multilingualism, 6,* 17-36. https://doi.org/10.1080/14790710802582436

Landry, R., & Bourhis, R. Y. (1997). Linguistic Landscape and Ethno-Linguistic Vitality: An Empirical Study. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology, 16,* 23-49. https://doi.org/10.1177/0261927X970161002

Leeman, J., & Modan, G. (2009). Commodified Language in Chinatown: A Contextualized Approach to Linguistic Landscape. *Journal of Sociolinguistics, 13,* 332-362.

https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9841.2009.00409.x

May, S. (1997). Critical Ethnography. In N. Hornberger (Ed.), *Research Methods and Education. The Encyclopedia of Language and Education* (1st ed., Vol. 8, pp. 197-206). Dordrecht: Kluwer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-011-4535-0_19

Papen, U. (2012). Commercial Discourses, Gentrification and Citizens' Protest: The Linguistic Landscape of Prenzlauer Berg, Berlin. *Journal of Sociolinguistics, 16,* 56-80. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9841.2011.00518.x

Rahman, T. (2010). A Multilingual Language-in-Education Policy for Indigenous Minorities in Bangladesh: Challenges and Possibilities. *Current Issues in Language Planning, 11,* 341-359. https://doi.org/10.1080/14664208.2010.537816

Shang, G., & Zhao, S. (2014a). The Perspective, Theory and Method for Studying Linguistic Landscapes. *Foreign Language Teaching and Research, 46,* 214-223.

Shang, G., & Zhao, S. (2014b). The Analysis of Domansion and Theoretical Construction for Linguistic Landscapes. *Foreign Languages, 37,* 81-89.

Snow, D. A., Morrill, C., & Anderson, L. (2003). Elaborating Analytic Ethnography: Linking Fieldwork and Theory. *Ethnography, 4,* 181-200. https://doi.org/10.1177/14661381030042002

Trosterud, T. (2012). A Restricted Freedom of Choice: Linguistic Diversity in the Digital Landscape. *Nordlyd, 39,* 89-104.

Wikipedia, Cox's Bazar (2020). https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Cox%27s_Bazar&oldid=945174495

Wikipedia, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman (2020). https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Sheikh_Mujibur_Rahman&oldid=950719983

Wikipedia, St. Martin's Island (2020). https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=St._Martin%27s_Island&oldid=939599431

Yan, X. (2019). A Study of Language Choices in the Linguistic Landscape of Macao's Heritage and Gaming Tourism. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development, 40,* 198-217. https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2018.1498853

Zhao, F. Z., & Liu, W. Y. (2014). Absence as Indexing Tool: Milingualism and Modernity in the Linguistic Landscape of Dalian. *Journal of Arts & Humanities, 3,* 9-18.