'YOUTH LANGUAGE(S)': NATIVE LANGUAGE DISPLACEMENT VIS-À-VIS POPULAR LINGUISTIC PATTERNS IN CONTEMPORARY KOLKATA

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Abstract: *This paper discusses the concept of 'Youth Language' that emerged in the latter half of the 20th century to refer to the linguistic innovation and change experienced during youth. It also reflects young individuals' active 'agency' to innovate and attach new meanings to numerous aspects of their life, where language is also no exception. In Kolkata as it is among communities of globe, the native language has been in a displaced position. The impact of globalization, media explosion followed by the catalytic role of information and communication technologies have led young adults to embrace the 'prevalent, global' language (English) at the cost of displacing the 'Native' ones. This article also draws attention to the growing tendency among the youth to merge two different languages and thus use several 'Hybrid' ones, (e.g., Benglish, Hinglish etc.), which are common among them in both public and private spheres. Based on a semi-structured questionnaire survey, the article has looked at the changing patterns of language use and attitudes among the urban youth with reference to various newly emerged vocabularies in contemporary Kolkata (West Bengal).*

Key Words: *Youth language, native language, displacement, language shift, youth identities, globalization.*

Introduction:

Youth as a distinct stage of a human individual's life is usually defined and described as the period of constructing social identity on the path to adulthood. Youth is not

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merely a biological age, but a social institution (denoting the transition period between childhood and adulthood), which emerged and developed with modern society and economic development that made the youngsters free from the responsibilities of adulthood. Youth identities in general are no longer considered as static and prefigured. Focusing on identification in and through interaction, identity is generally better understood as a product of language use rather than as an analytic prime and that focus should be not on identity *per se* (which suggests a set of fixed categories), but rather on identification as an ongoing social and political process (Bucholtz and Hall, 2004: 376). This process-based notion of identification has caused linguists to question our preconceived ideas about the naturalness of the relationship between speech and speakers.[1]

Along with the concept of youth as a distinctive social category, comes the term youth culture, which revolves around the two dominant dimensions of youth: self-representation and group affiliation. It is in this stage that individuals innovate new fashions in their clothing and hairstyle, music and dance and nonetheless language. Thus for a section youth at least it is often 'change' is the name of the game. Sociolinguists worldwide have agreed that adolescence and youth are the life stages in which language change is most clearly visible (Kerswill, 1996). Young people (youth and adolescence both these terms are used interchangeably in this paper and also often in relevant literature) are the linguistic movers and shakers, at least in western industrialized societies, and, as such, a prime source of information about linguistic change and the function of language in social practice (Eckert, 1997a: 52).[2] Youth language refers to all patterns of language use in the social age of adolescence encompassing all ranges of linguistic descriptions.

Language is, at all times considered to play an important role in shaping the identities of the human individuals first, because language is the expression of a collective identity which in some way already comes predefined in individuals as a result of their socialization (generally associated with the territory) and which connects

them (or not) with certain "origins"; Second, language is also a living thing that precedes and is defined irrespective of its speakers, thus constituting an internally coherent system that must be protected from external influences; and finally, the "natural" expression of identity is to speak "one's own" language; speaking another or speaking it with "interference" from others is frequently a sign of aberration that requires explanations and excuses.[3]

However, since during youth individuals attach new meanings to various aspects and several external factors (including peer pressure, media exposure, popular global culture patterns and increasing impact of information and communication technologies etc.) also influence them, their lives undergo enormous transformation, effects of which can easily be discernible in their newly developed life-style patterns. Youth is that phase of an individual's life when they act as 'agents' rather than being simply the 'passive recipients' of the action and events of the social structure. They are the major players in constructing and deconstructing their numerous identities. In contemporary plural societies subject to the impact of migration and global circulation of information, commodities and visual images, the range of identities available to individuals has become more flexible and complex. Young people are now more likely to embrace and revise the new cultural flows, due to their distinctive generational experiences as well as youth culture's demands for innovation and originality. Youth identity practices, therefore provide important insights into the ways in which broader categories and categorizations become fluid and porous in an era of transnationalism and flexible citizenship (Ong, 1999), globalization and technologies of virtual mobility (Castells, 2000), migration and diasporas (Brettel, 2003; Papastergiadis, 2000), the "traveling" of theory and culture (Clifford, 1997; Said, 1983 & 2000), "Creole" cultures (Hannerz, 1996) and "liquid" lives and times (Bauman, 1992).[4] The new forces of social change like, westernization, modernization, industrialization, globalization, politicization of issues and media exposure have changed the norms and the values of the youth throughout the country. In the course of India's different phases

of social transformations, significant changes are seen in their societal norms and values, which have deep impact on the youth.[5]

Focusing on the point of language it can be delineated here that the semantic system of a language is linked to the culture of its speakers[6] and in recent times youth language in particular or youth culture in general is described under the broader spectrum of 'popular culture', which is defined as the *widely popular and mass commercial culture created by the people*. This approach to popular culture was adopted from the writings of Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937). Using a neo-Gramscian analysis, popular culture becomes the product of the ever-changing relationship between dominant and subordinate elements in society, a battleground for recognition between these groups. Youth subcultures are a good example of Gramsci's hegemony theory at work. Youth cultures start out as a protest against the establishment through music, clothing, and language.[7]

Youth language in contemporary times has attracted many researchers, especially sociolinguists and psycholinguists in both European and American societies (English speaking as well as others) but unfortunately sociologists in India have not interrogated this articulation as worth looking into, although language has always been a source of contestation in post-colonial India. Therefore the present paper is an attempt to focus on the issue of the language(s) of the youth as well as identify how the language use patterns and attitudes of the urban youth have changed in the 21st century with special reference to Kolkata. This article has made an attempt to examine the linguistic production of Indian youth under socio-economic and cultural mobility. With reference to migration and social change as integral components of globalization, the paper also aims to find out the relation between youth and language in the fast changing cultures of an urban metropolis of Kolkata.

Sociolinguistic Research Works on Youth Language:

Distinctive speech patterns in adolescence and youth received scholarly attention only

in the last decades of the 20th century, although they have been noted in the past as well (cf. Henne, 1986; Eble, 1998). Since the 1980s an increasing number of studies on an international scale have addressed a topic which is known as *langue des jeunes* or *parler jeune* in French, *lingua dei giovani* in Italian, *Jugendsprache* in German, *ungdomsspråk* in Swedish, *teenage talk* or *teenage speech* in English, etc. These terms are used not only in academic discourse, but also in popular dictionaries and media reports, where they tend to be biased towards teen vocabulary and a criticism of 'bad language'. Moreover, they often refer not to the speech of the whole age group, but rather to ways of speaking which are judged 'deviant' and 'exotic' (Albrecht, 1993).[8] Many studies of youth language share an interest in linguistic innovation and change as well as in vernacular speech and in-group interaction. Besides, a great deal of research has also concentrated on linguistic items or variants, which are considered to be specific to (or typical for) the youth groups under investigation. This holds true for both variant making and vocabulary studies. In some parts of continental European literature, youth language is often conceptualized as a language variety, especially as a *sociolect*, and is empirically contrasted to an abstract standard language rather than to other local vernaculars (cf. Kotsinas 1994; Androutsopoulos 1998a). By contrast, interactional approaches direct the attention to speech styles of specific peer groups, and attempt at a richer contextualization of particular linguistic features (Schlobinski 1995). However, most empirical studies restrict their scope on one range of description, be it phonology, vocabulary or conversational conduct, while complex co-occurrences of linguistic features are seldom demonstrated in practice (cf. Schwitalla, 1994).[9]

Variant making research on youth language includes both studies that explore sociolinguistic stratification within adolescence (e.g. Eckert, 2000; Laks, 1983; Lee, 1995; Stenström et al, 2002), and studies that compare adolescents with other age groups (e. g. Dubois, 1992; Kerswill, 1996; Rickford et al, 1991). Virtually all studies on youth language demonstrate adolescence as a phase of heavy vernacular use,

whereby the term 'vernacular' refers to phenomena on all ranges of linguistic description. According to Labov (1972), adolescent speech represents the most stable vernacular system. In subsequent research, adolescents are repeatedly found to use a higher proportion of vernacular variants in phonology and/or grammar than adult speakers from the same socio-economic background (see Art. 152 and reviews in Romaine, 1984; Chambers, 1995). Some researchers emphasize adolescents' preference for local varieties and variants (Eckert, 1995 & 2000; Kerswill, 1996). Radtke (1990) suggests that in regions with vital dialects, adolescents might turn to dialectal speech in contrast to parents' standard-oriented (or leveled) varieties (cf. also Schwitalla, 1994). Also, a high frequency of colloquial phonological processes such as vowel reductions, assimilations etc. is sometimes regarded as typical for adolescent speech (cf. Stenström, 1996; Androutsopoulos, 1998b). On the lexical level, "young people's fondness for slang" has already been noted by Leonard Bloomfield (1984: 49) and repeatedly stated ever since. Lodge (1992) found that younger speakers report the use of non-standard vocabulary in a conversation with a stranger from the same age group more frequently than older speakers. Several researchers endorse the view that the heavy use of taboo words (vulgarisms, expletives) is a characteristic of adolescence (Androutsopoulos, 1998a: 416–7; Cheshire, 1982; de Klerk, 1997; Radtke, 1990; Stenström et al, 2002). Some studies suggest that innovations of various kinds in young people's speech primarily serve expressive and interactive purposes. Kotsinas (1997: 125) suggests that innovative variants "primarily have been used to express some kind of an emotion or attitude, for instance irony, distance, etc., i. e. to attract the attention of the hearer".[10]

Youth (or Adolescent) speech varies according to a range of social variables, in ways that partly confirm and partly transcend sociolinguistic tenets. Relevant evidence comes both from variationist research and from questionnaire studies on vocabulary. As for age differences, the dominant assumption is an increase in vernacular variants from (late) childhood to early adolescence, followed by a decrease

towards late adolescence and early adulthood. This trend is evidenced by e.g. Scholten (1988) and Armstrong (1998). Within adolescence, Romaine (1984: 106) posits that 'the younger the speaker, the greater the use of the more stigmatised feature'. With respect to class (or school type), classic sociolinguistic patterns are confirmed by a number of studies. As for gender, several studies reproduce the classic pattern, in which boys use vernacular variants more than girls (e. g. Armstrong, 1998; Lee, 1995; Pooley, 2000; Stenström et al, 2002). Last but not the least, recent research on language contact in adolescence and youth is concerned with cases of migration-induced contact. Studies are concerned with the impact of immigrant languages on the speech of native youth (cf. Seux, 1997 with regard to Arabic loan-words in France), and with multilingual practices in multi-ethnic peer groups.[11]

Language use in young adulthood is also often discussed in terms of the structure of adolescent/young peer-groups and the communicative demands of peer-group interaction. Adolescence is an age of communicative nearness, in which dense social networks press for linguistic conformism (Chambers, 1995). Most interactions take place among friends and acquaintances. Practices such as verbal dueling in adolescent interactions are a means of demonstrating skills and claiming status in the peer-group. Vulgar terms of address and taboo vocabulary can be considered as markers of positive politeness, i.e. they convey friendliness and solidarity. At the same time, adolescent networks are wider than those of children, and therefore more open to external influences. Adolescents' or youths' well-known engagement with pop and media culture means that the resources they draw on in their linguistic identity construction are not only local, but also global, especially on a vocabulary level. Finally, an expressive and playful use of language has been claimed as a hallmark of adolescence, with regard to some lexical innovations (e.g. proliferation of synonyms, deformations) and bricolage practices.[12] On the lexical level, "young people's fondness for slang" has already been noted by Leonard Bloomfield (1984: 49) and repeatedly stated ever since. Lodge (1992) found that younger speakers report the use of non-

standard vocabulary in a conversation with a stranger from the same age group more frequently than older speakers. With regard to borrowing, Androutsopoulos (1998a) suggests that young people borrow a great deal of vernacular English words and expressions. Several researchers endorse the view that the heavy use of taboo words (vulgarisms, expletives) is a characteristic of adolescence (Androutsopoulos 1998a: 416–7; Cheshire, 1982; de Klerk, 1997; Radtke, 1990; Stenström et al, 2002). Adolescence and youth is generally seen as a social locus for various types of linguistic innovation and change from below. Kotsinas (1997) divides linguistic innovations in adolescence in four types: new phonological variants, slang, grammaticalization processes, and emergence of new language varieties in contexts of language contact. Some studies have also suggested that innovations of various kinds in young people's speech primarily serve expressive and interactive purposes. Kotsinas (1997: 125) suggests that innovative variants "primarily have been used to express some kind of an emotion or attitude, for instance irony, distance, etc., i.e. to attract the attention of the hearer". She also proposes a six-step model that describes the diffusion of linguistic innovations from their original peer-group contexts up to an eventual introduction in adult speech and standard language.[13]

Methodological Parameters and Research Findings:

A semi structured questionnaire-based survey was conducted among 50 Non-Bengali speakers (38 female and 12 male) in Kolkata, belonging to the age group of 20-27 years and all of who were Postgraduate students in the University of Calcutta. Purposive and Snowball Sampling techniques were used for selecting samples and the criteria for sample selection was predetermined, where the respondents had to be a resident of Kolkata for more than 5 years, whose native language was not Bengali and who had at least some proficiency in the native language as well as in the prevalent local languages. The primary aim in conducting this survey was to explore the relation between youth and language use in the rapidly changing socio-cultural settings of the modern urban, multilingual metropolis-- Kolkata. Special thrust has been given on

related issues like migration since either almost all of the respondents or their forefathers were immigrants to Kolkata at some points of time. In most of the cases there was inter-state migration and most of the respondents were born and brought up in Kolkata and their parents or grandparents migrated to Kolkata primarily in search of better employment opportunities. Here, migrants were mainly from states like Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, who chose West Bengal primarily since either it was the nearest neighbouring state or it offered opportunities of education, employment as well as better life chances for the inhabitants as well as the migrants.

The questions in the language use questionnaire were framed and categorized as questions regarding language use in a) private or home domain, b) with friends and peer groups, c) in public domain (formal and informal), d) while reading and/ or writing and finally e) in the domain of culture. The findings of this survey focus not only on the changes in language use patterns in present times but also give us indication regarding the recent status of various languages in our society and especially among the young generation.

Language use patterns in private/home domain:

Within the home domain native language still holds a prevalent position for communicating with others. However, it has also been evident that using native language is decreasing steadily with generation, i.e., unlike their parents or older family members, the respondents were quite comfortable in conversing in English or Hindi- languages other than their native ones, with their siblings, while using the mother tongue (or native language) with parents or others. Among the 50 respondents, more than 80% used the native language while conversing with grandparents and around 65-70% used the same for communicating with parents. On the other hand, they were quite at ease in conversing in Hindi or sometimes in English with siblings and even parents.

Table 1. Language Use in Home Domain

Persons	Mother Tongue	English	Hindi	Bengali	Others
Grandfather	80%	3.85%	7.69%	3.85%	3.85%
Grandmother	86.2%	-	6.9%	3.45%	3.45%
Father	66.67%	8.33%	22.92%	2.08%	-
Mother	71.43%	4.08%	22.45%	2.04%	-
Brother	65%	7.5%	25%	2.5%	-
Sister	67.65%	5.88%	26.47%	-	-
Relatives	66%	-	32%	-	-
Servants	8.92%	-	40.54%	40.54%	-

In this case reference can be made to the monograph entitled 'Stabilizing Indigenous Languages' edited by Gina Cantoni, where eminent sociolinguistic researcher Joshua Fishman has tried to point out the barriers in using the native language. According to Fishman the main reasons are: lack of opportunity to practice native languages at home; the parents' lack of proficiency in the native language particularly in a multilingual situation owing to their inability to understand the significance and the differences between native language/mother tongue acquisition, use and transmission to the next generation; teachers' criticism of those who speak the home language in school and often compelling the children and the young individuals to switch over to some other languages, especially the dominant local one along with English etc.. Besides this, the conception that English is a better vehicle for economic success and the misconception that one has to give up the own native language in order to master another one[14] has also led to the displacement of the native languages in the hands of the non-native ones, often foreign.

Table 2. Comparison of Language Use Patterns across Generation (according to Age)

| Persons	Mother Tongue	English	Hindi	Bengali
Children (among Peers)	46%	14%	38%	2%
Young (among Peers)	50%	16%	32%	2%
Older Persons (among Peers)	86%	8%	2%	4%

Table 2 shows that within one's own age group, i.e., with peer group, mother tongue or native language still dominates the interaction process. But here also due to intergenerational differences, choice of native language is often undermined by the choice of other prevalent language patterns of the time in question. Thus, while 86% older family members of the respondents converse in their native or mother tongue, in case of children and/or young generation the number is almost the half of it (i.e.46% and 50%). Besides, there is also increase in the use of English and Hindi within these two age groups, especially when the native language is not any one of these two. Thus, over time native language is often in a displaced position vis-à-vis the popular local form or forms. Another striking fact here is that compared to the male respondents, the female respondents were more interested to shift to English while conversing with their peer group. While only 8.33% peers of the respondents as well as the children in their families used English with the people of same age group, in case of the female respondents the numbers were 15.78% and 18.42% respectively. In Sociolinguistics this situation is best described as 'Language Shift', whereby there is the gradual displacement of one language by another in the lives of community members (Huebner, 1987).[15] However this language shift can be either partial or complete. Complete societal language shift occurs when an additional language becomes the mother tongue of community members. On the other hand, partial language shift may

be manifested in the displacement of one language by another for specific functions. Partial language shift sometimes is accompanied by language skill attrition, the loss of proficiency in one or more of the language skills: writing, reading, speaking or understanding. Language shift can occur rapidly, sometimes within a generation.[16]

## Language Use Patterns in Public Domains:

It has also been observed that the young generation does not prefer to get their elementary education in their respective native languages. The data in Diagram 1 (given below) represent the fact that choice of native language or mother tongue as the first language in school decreases with generation. And undoubtedly here the shift is towards selecting English as the first language. Among youngsters and children of present times mother tongue is displaced by the increasing demand of the global language English as the first language in school. Youth in the study placed a utilitarian value on English, describing it as universal, a "business language," and a "language of survival." English also was viewed as a marker of social class and prestige. Thus native language loses its importance once again even in the first ever public domain of an individual's life, i.e., in schools.

Diagram 1. Age wise Comparison of First Language in School
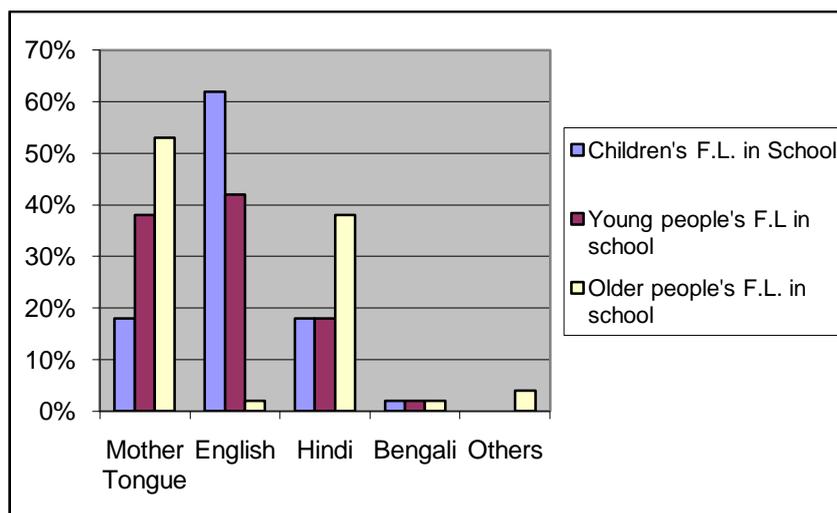
Besides, in formal domains like schools or colleges young respondents are more likely to use Hindi and English with teachers, classmates as well as for any official interaction. However, as explanation of this statement it can be said that since the respondents were non-Bengali speakers and many of them had native language other than Hindi and English, so they could not communicate in the formal public domain in their respective native languages and thus had to shift to other languages. Thus here, while with teachers and classmates young people are more likely to converse in English and Hindi, in any official interaction they switch to Bengali, as it is the dominant local language of Kolkata.

Diagram 2. Language Use in formal Public Domain
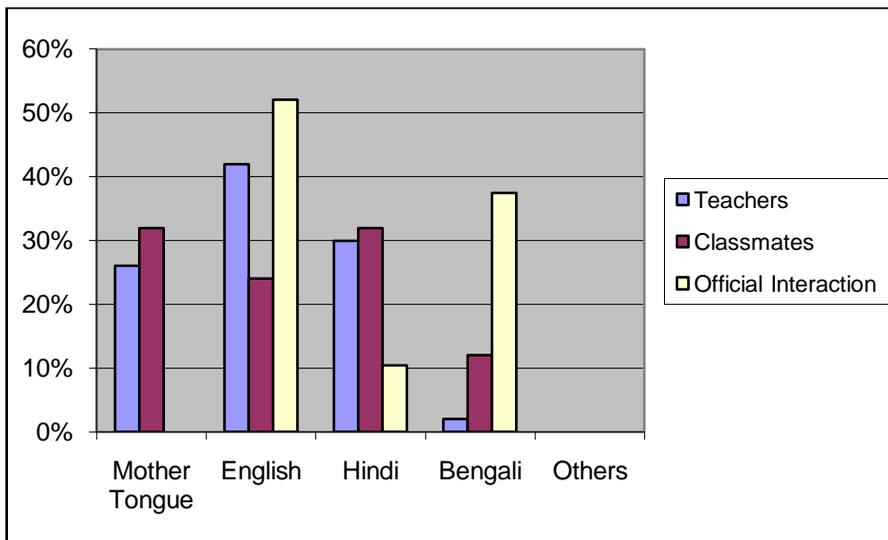
The growing importance of English in India as a primary language of communication has definitely supported its status of a 'global language'. As David Crystal has put it, a language achieves a genuinely global status only when it develops a special role that is recognized in every country. And to achieve such a status a large number of mother-tongue speakers of that particular language will not be enough, rather the language has to be taken up by other countries of the world and English can be considered a global language for its worldwide spread as the most comprehensible and comfortable

language of communication.[17] On the other hand, the increasing use and value of English has drastically transformed the communication patterns among all ages and especially among the young generation of the recent times. It has not only gained a prestige status all over the world (including India) but also has also undermined and displaced the native languages from the public domains to a large extent as well as from the private domain.

Apart from their interaction in public domains like school, college or office, among the young adults choice of language has also undergone major shifts in various other spheres. Native language has been displaced to a great extent by English, Hindi and in some cases Bengali (since the respondents were non-native speakers of Bengali) also in several public places e.g., markets, banks, restaurants, shopping malls, hospitals and many more. Research findings have shown that in these places while interacting with their familiar persons as well as strangers, the young individuals are more likely to shift to other languages than that of their native one. Here linguistic shame and guilt lead some youth to deny or "hide" their Native language abilities and identities. Native youth speakers are often judged by other people that speak English more clear than they do as inferiors and they also often humiliate them if they belong to a native language that is considered less prestigious by the English speaking youth. In this research speakers especially belonging to Bhojpuri or Magahi linguistic communities often shared this kind of feeling simply because of their lesser proficiency of speaking in English. The following table represents the preferred languages of the youth for communicating in various other public domains.

As per the data table below, mother tongue or native language is hardly used by the young generation in the public realms. In restaurants and shopping malls there is a growing tendency to use English with others. Shopping mall culture, one of the greatest impacts of globalization and modernization, is hardly ten years old in Kolkata, but it has enormous influence in the lives of the so-called 'modern youth'. The spread of Western lifestyles and ways-of-thought are felt throughout the country, especially today with technology shrinking the global distance and making once remote villages

more open, and arguably, more vulnerable to the wider world. In this context we can refer to Crawford (1995, p. 5), who believes that the penetration of Western capitalistic and individualistic ideology powerfully threatens native communities and their languages that encode conflicting values of interdependence and sharing.[18]

Table 3. Language Use in other Public Domains

Places	Mother Tongue	English	Hindi	Bengali
Banks	6.25%	25%	16.67%	52.08%
Restaurants	10.20%	38.78%	32.65%	18.37%
Local Shops	20%	-	44%	36%
Fish/Veg Market	22.22%	-	28.83%	48.89%
Shopping Malls	16.33%	44.90%	30.61%	8.16%
Parties	30%	30%	30%	10%
Hospitals	10%	18%	30%	42%
Govt. Offices	4.5%	18%	20.45%	56.80%

When asked about the reasons behind the gradual displacement of native language by the popular prevalent ones, the respondents mainly referred to two views viz.

a)   Since language is an important marker of ethnic identity, attachment to one's own language is as strong as people's regard of themselves as a social group, which is influenced largely by how the larger society regards them. In that case, a negative ethnic identity often contributes to the low prestige of that group's language, which, in turn, makes it more susceptible to shifting to a high prestige language, such as English.

b)   Moreover, the intense desire among parents to educate their children in English, along with Hindi and/or any foreign language as the second language in place of the mother tongue undoubtedly gives birth to a feeling of disrespect among the young generation for their native language. And thus the ability of the young individuals to speak, read and write in their native language has decreased day by day.

Besides, since English is the most important language of wider communication as well as the primary language of science and technology in the world, it has spread and advanced in many countries where the language was not spoken previously. Being a major part of popular culture and globalization, English has often been considered a threat for linguistic diversity also. In India or more specifically in Kolkata, it has been observed that 'teaching and learning' in one's native language is no more encouraged in recent times. Though primary education in mother tongue is essential and somewhat compulsory, higher education in English is always a choice of preference. According to the respondents in a multilingual country like India and even in such a modern, urban and multilingual metropolis like Kolkata, English is the medium of instruction in almost all higher education institutions and also all the competitive examinations are conducted in that particular language. So in order to get quality education as well as to find a job English is required everywhere. It has also been noticed that despite being highly qualified an individual often loses chance to get a job only because of his/her inability to speak in English fluently. That is why in this fast-paced, globalizing world individuals are often reluctant to use their native language in public as well as private domains. Even in case of reading and writing also today the youngsters prefer English as the

primary communicating language.

Diagram 3. Preferred Language for Reading/Writing
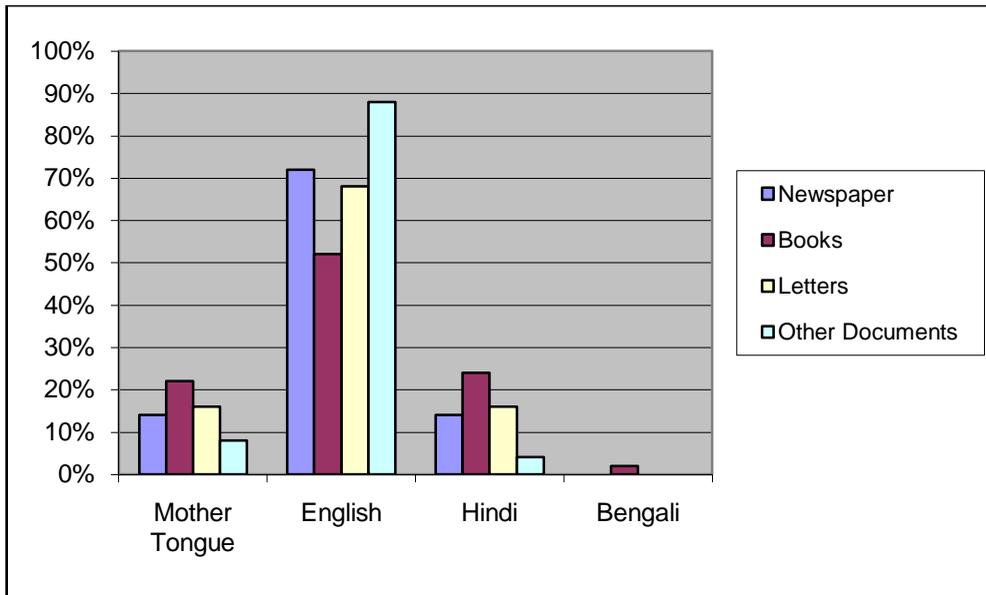
As diagram 3 shows, English is again the dominant language for both reading and writing as compared to the respective native languages or mother tongues. Starting from reading newspapers and books to writing letters and other documents English prevails everywhere. And here also we can relate the findings with the gender of the respondents, like for reading newspapers 76.31% women prefer English, but only 58.33% male respondents are found to have a preference for that. Then considering the issue of reading books it has been recorded that among the 12 male respondents 33.33% prioritized English whereas 57.89% of the 38 female respondents have been familiar with English in this regard. These are enough indications that English as a Global Language is gaining recognition as a special phenomenon. The world has seen quite a few international languages in the past, but not anything like English. According to Mangesh V. Nadkarni, 'the uniqueness of English as an international language is not merely a matter of scale. Global English is a distinct and new

phenomenon with dynamism and logic of its own. What we need today is an adequate theory of Global English'. Kachru (1985) comes nearest to recognizing this position in a number of his papers. For example, in one of his papers he declares: '*my position is that the diffusion of English, its acculturation, its international functional range, and the diverse forms of literary activity it is accommodating are historically unprecedented. I do not think that linguists, pedagogues, language planners – and, if I might include the purists here – have ever faced this type of linguistic challenge before. I do not believe that the traditional notions of codification, standardization, models, and methods apply to English any more. The dichotomy of its native and non-native users seems to have become irrelevant.*'[19]

Table 4 .Preferred Languages in Domains of Culture and Religion

Domains of Culture, Religion	Mother Tongue	English	Hindi	Bengali	Others
Cinema	2%	10%	88%	-	-
TV Programmes	-	10.42%	89.58%	-	-
Songs	6%	10%	84%	-	-
Cultural Events	8.16%	4%	82%	4%	-
Religious Programmes	62.07%	-	31.03%	-	6.89%

Now, finally in the domain of culture and religion also major shifts have taken place, resulting in a downward trend in the use of mother tongue or native language. In these segments respondents have showed stronger liking again for Hindi and English. According to the results as presented in Table 4 except religious sphere, mother tongue is hardly used even in various cultural realms. For present day youth the use and importance of mother tongue/native language in watching films, TV programmes or listening to songs has decreased to a large extent. Since youth spend most of their leisure time by watching

television or movies etc., they also often try to be updated about the events of the country as well as the world. And here updates refer not merely to the significant events in economy, politics or sports, rather their willingness to be attuned with the popular cultural and media practices have often driven them to select programmes that are most popular among the mainstream population. This is one of the reasons why they switch to various cultural programmes and movies that are in the prevalent and dominant languages of the time. Thus Hindi and English have come in displacing the native ones, which are confined to the home domain only and especially while interacting with the members of the older generation.

Recent Trends in language use patterns among the youth;

Increasing importance of English and other popular languages has not only displaced native languages but also has placed young individuals in a situation of twin crisis, where they are constantly struggling to maintain a balance between their public and private life. According to the respondents, the inability to speak in English and Hindi fluently often label them as 'uneducated' with a low social status and thus marginalize and exclude them from the mainstream young population; while on the other hand excessive usage of these two languages create a huge distance and gap from others within their own native language community. Many of the young respondents also voiced concern about the endangered status of their native, which for them are heritage languages. They admitted that maintaining the Native language is important because the language is dying out. And since, they are losing it, so it's very important for them to learn about it and to speak it. However, to avoid the conflict between the status of the native and the prevalent languages, they said, mixing or combining languages often help them to manage the whole scenario. And thus there emerges a new version of youth language where they constantly mix more than one language at a time and thus give birth to language forms like 'Hinglish' i.e., the combination of Hindi and English,

'Benglish' i.e., the mixture of Bengali and English etc.

David Crystal, the famous British linguist at the University of Wales, projected in 2004 that at about 350 million, the world's Hinglish speakers might soon outnumber native English speakers. Part English and part Hindi- Hinglish has now become the lingua franca of India's young urban middle class.[20] Words and phrases used in advertisements representing young generation also reflects the huge inclination of the youth towards using these two newly emerged forms, e.g., '*Yeh Dil Maange More* [The Heart demands more] (Pepsi)', '*Yehi Hai Right Choice Baby'* [This is the right choice- baby], '*Yeh Hai Youngistan* [It is the place of youngsters]', '*Hungry Kya* [are you hungry] (in ad of Domino's Pizza) etc. and many more. Respondents argued that while interacting with classmates or friends who are not the same native language speaker, using such mixed language is always the first choice. Phrases like '*Cool yaar'* or '*Chill yaar'* or even '*Bindaas*', are very much common these days among them, where *'yaar'* refers to 'friend'. Mixed language is always helpful because it bridges the gap between the two different language speakers and thus makes communication easier. Besides, the rise of new vocabularies worldwide, both in spoken and written language has dramatically transformed the communication patterns of young individuals. Frequent use of internet, accessing emails and accounts at other social networking sites (e.g., Orkut, Facebook, Twitter etc.) and even sending SMS have created lots of new terms (particularly in English) that are used mostly by the young generation e.g., 'OMG' for Oh My God, 'LoL' instead of laugh out loud, 'Cool', Sry for conveying Sorry, TC instead of Take Care etc. and many more. SMS language has become so popular today especially among the youth that it is now playing a predominant role even in writing emails, where the growing tendency to write new forms like 'OKIES' (ok), 'B'COZ' (because), '2' (to), 'U' (you), 'FYN' (fine), 'TYM' (time), 'GR8' (great), and 'GD NT/GD N8' (good night), 'Galz' (girls), 'Babes'' (baby), 'Dude' (fellow men or friends) can be found very easily. SMS language and vocabularies used in emails and social networking sites are so common these days that

these youngsters often admit that while writing letters or even in examination answer sheets they often write such abbreviations simply out of their regular habit. They no longer say that they are typing and sending an SMS, for them it is just "Texting". Respondents well versed in English also expressed that the drastic change in their language use patterns is to a large extent the result of huge media exposure, which present the trends among youth worldwide. Youth culture, thus, which actually originated in the era of globalization in the advanced capitalist countries of Europe and North America, has also embraced the entire world and the English educated new rich and new middle class young adults in almost all parts of the world today are representing an innovative as well as universal way of living their life, speaking their language and so on. Calling their siblings as "BRO" (brother) or "SIS" (sister) is also the latest trend today and use of such abbreviated forms and many more like "FRNDZ" (friends), "PPL" (people), "SENTI" (sentimental), "4got" (forgot), "WID" (with) etc. once again portray youth's active capabilities of initiating change through language in their socio-cultural surroundings. The young respondents of the study explained that they use such forms mainly with their friends and siblings and they are very comfortable with such practices in conveying and understanding what they are trying to say. Therefore, as long as these new forms help them communicate with others properly and they are at ease using these because ultimately these reflect their 'innovation' and 'agency'.

It is obvious that youth language in recent times has got a new dimension. Contemporary youth lives in a present marred by extreme uncertainty, facing a future that is murky and unpredictable. Today media culture, computers, genetic engineering, and other emerging technologies are dramatically transforming all aspects of their life and also these impacts have radically changed the norms and values of the youth in modern times. And these changes are visible in both their private and public life, in their culture and nonetheless in their language use patterns. Thus the findings of the research reflect that-

1. 'Native Language Displacement' characterizes youth language in present times, whereby major shifts are being noticed in their linguistic usage in both private and public domains.

2. English and Hindi have taken the place of most popular languages among youth all over the country.

3. Using mixed language (Hinglish, Benglish etc.) is also one of the important innovations of youth, especially in a multilingual metropolis.

4. Rise of numerous new vocabularies also characterize youth language in the recent times, especially in a modern urban metropolis like Kolkata.

5. This no doubt makes both 'Hinglish' and 'Benglish' hybrid languages, i.e. a linguistic phenomenon that emerges when one fuses or merges two different languages.[25] The discourse(s) on the development of hybrid identity is beyond the purview of this paper but it can be stated that hybridity is now an integral dimension of globalized existence and the cardinal question is whether or not hybrid identity is seen as a new entity that challenges and subverts hegemonic identities, or if it is just another subject position that will in time be shored up by the hegemonic ways of 'being' and living out our identities.[26]

Conclusion:

Jean Aitchison wrote in *Language Change: Progress or Decay* that 'everything in this universe is perpetually in a state of change, a fact commented on by philosophers and poets through the ages. Language, like everything else, joins in this general flux. There can never be a moment of true standstill in language, just as little as in the ceaseless flaming thought of men. By nature it is a continuous process of development.'[21] As a continuation of this thought we can thus state that youth language also reflects its dynamic nature through the changes and continuities in language usage, attitudes etc. Accordingly it becomes equally necessary to examine these dynamics through the lens of interactional and sociolinguistic analysis, for language, as a primary interactional

resource for the construction of flexible and shifting identities, mediates both local and trans-local social experience. Moreover because of young people's access to multiple linguistic and cultural resources via global media, marketing processes, migration and transnationalism, and trans-cultural contact in modern urban settings, they have exposure on one hand to identities that are both global, with respect to transnational, non-territorial youth culture; and on the other local, by virtue of the particular meanings which the insertion of such forms takes on in local youth-centered linguistic and cultural practices. Through language, young people lay claim to multiple identity resources and thereby construct dynamic identities that challenge established notions of collectivities based on skin color, parental background, year or place of birth, and other traditionally-static markers of identification. As recent sociolinguistic research on youth identity has shown, young people as actors and subjects construct selves and others via multidimensional and interpenetrating discourses of ethnicity, language, gender, sexuality, nation, race, and culture (e.g., Alim, 2004a & 2006; Androutsopoulos & Georgakopoulou, 2003; Bucholtz, 1999; Cutler, 1999; Doran 2003; Giampapa, 2001; Heller, 1999; Lo, 1999; Mendoza-Denton, 2008; Pujolar, 2001; Rampton, 1995, 2006; Reyes, 2007; Roth-Gordon, 2007; Rumbaut, 2002; Shenk, 2007; Skapoulli, 2004; Tetreault, 2002; Warriner, 2007).[22]

However, considering our own society, we cannot deny that the country's linguistic and cultural diversity is endangered by the forces of globalization, which work to homogenize and standardize even as they segregate and marginalize.[23] It has been noticed that more than half of the world's population is bilingual and many people are multilingual. They acquire a number of languages because they need them for different purposes in their everyday interactions.[24] In fact, so we often find our youth to shifting to languages other than their own native one, which in some way or other threatens the existence and maintenance of the 'native languages'. Eventually there is a need for conditions in which young people's decisions about language are made and which can alternately empower them to take the risks necessary to sustain a

threatened heritage language or constrain their choices and imagined futures. Besides this, it is being reported often that youth in our society are informed, thoughtful, and vested stakeholders in indigenous language reclamation. But youth cannot single-handedly confront the myriad pressures on their language choices; they need support from families, communities, and other social institutions, particularly schools and above-all economic institutions. To conclude, it can be underscored that the multiplexity of intersectional youth identities living both in the temporal "now" of modernity and the "then" of tradition and history (Bucholtz& Skapoulli, 2009) indubitably will create in the linguistic domain of 'outsider within or 'insider without'. This will call for reflexive analytical approach for future works in these very important areas of Sociolinguistics and Sociology of Youth.

End Notes:

1. Alim, H. Samy (2009). Translocal Style Communities: Hip Hop Youth as Cultural Theorists of Style, Language and Globalization, *Pragmatics* 19:1; 104.

2.http://jannisandroutsopoulos.files.wordpress.com/2010/01/hsk-sociolinguistics-research-on-youth-language.pdf- visited on 30.10.2011.

3. http://www6.gencat.cat/llengcat/noves/hm08hivern/docs/a_pujolar.pdf - visited on 23.02.2012.

4. Bucholtz, Mary and Elena Skapoulli (2009). Youth Language at the Intersection: From Migration to Globalization, *Pragmatics* 19:1; 2.

5. Paliwal, Deepak and Rajesh Chandra Paliwal (2011). Youth, Modernization and Social Transformation- A Study of Rural and Hill Society in Uttarakhand, India, *Language in India*; 11; 59.

6. Hudson, R. A. (1996). Sociolinguistics. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 79.

7. http://www.ucalgary.ca/applied_history/tutor/popculture/Phome1.html - visited on 14.11.2011.

8.http://jannisandroutsopoulos.files.wordpress.com/2010/01/hsk-sociolinguistics-research-on-youth-language.pdf- visited on 30.10.2011.

9. ibid.

10. ibid.

11. ibid.

12. ibid.

13. ibid.

14. Cantoni, Gina ed. (2007). Stabilizing Indigenous Languages. Flagstaff: Northern Arizona University, p. vi.

15. http://www.prel.org/products/products/language-change.pdf- visited on 27.10.2011.

16. ibid.

17. Crystal, David (2003). English as a Global Language. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 3.

18. http://www.prel.org/products/products/language-change.pdf- visited on 27.10.2011.

19. http://www.hmpenglishonline.com/nadkarni2.pdf - visited on 25.01.2012.

20. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hinglish- visited on 09.11.2011.

21. Aitchison, Jean (2001). Language change: progress or decay? Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 3.

22. Pragmatics 19:1; op. cit. p. 4.

23. McCarty, Teresa L. (2003). Revitalizing Indigenous Languages in Homogenising Times, *Comparative Education* 39:2; 147.

24. Holmes, Janet (2001). Introduction to Sociolinguistics. England: Pearson Education Limited, p. 73.

25. Although the term is highly contested and controversial, hybridity can be defined as the process that involves a mixture or a combination of two different elements, which results in a *third* element that claims a *difference* from either of the two terms. For example, Singlish is the language spoken in Singapore. It consists of English inflected by particular accents, words, and expressions coming from various dialects of Chinese and from Malay. While Singlish is a mixture of different languages, it is quite different from either the English language or from the particular Chinese and Malay dialects. In these respects, it is an illustration of hybridity.

http://www.globalautonomy.ca/global1/glossary_pop.jsp?id=CO.0071,visitedon 25.09.2012

26.http://newnarratives.wordpress.com/issue-1-hybrid-identity/some-thoughts-on-hybrid-identity/visited on 25.09.2012

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