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**LANGUAGE AND CROSS BORDER FREE TRADE:  
AN INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACH**

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**Abstract:** Language is a bridge which works to interact between the states across the border. It is so because language is a mode which helps one to feel and express their views, thereby acts as a medium to integrate the two sovereign states. The provision of border haats at international border in the Indian state of Tripura between India and Bangladesh is a set example which justifies the above mentioned fact. These haats provides an opportunity to flourish local economics along border areas of the concerned state in view of the fact, that such interaction has been possible with the use of a common language as it leads to the exchange of ideas between two different states. Also, several new kinds of words, phrases, loan words, borrowings, hybrid and symbolic words are being used by communities during business. Further, the interaction at border haats often come across new sentences those ought to be legitimate expressions with a follow up of its linguistic parameter of phonology, morphology and syntactic structure. With this, lexicography can also be built up with this interaction. The development of any language is based upon its pace of interaction, its course of continuation during interaction among the speakers which tends to identify opportunity for its development. In this way such kind of professional development is very much relevant that's why the socio, economic and cultural development occurs across the border. This research paper is an interdisciplinary approach which tries to analyse how language acts as a tool for the development of socio, economic and cultural issues across the border. To prove this hypothesis, following module shall needs to investigate: (a) How two different accents of language could be used in a proper format? One can find these variations in the use of language being at the haat during business hours. (b) A survey of border haat during business hours shall be carried out to obtain data to prove this hypothesis.

**Keywords:** Border Haat, Corridor, Language, Socio, Economic, Culture

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*"The first point we must make about language, than, is that it is a social, rather than a biological aspect of human life. "Fransis.W. Nelson". "The Structure of American English".*

### **Introduction:**

The North Eastern region of India shares land border with Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, Myanmar and Nepal and has agreements of overland trade with these countries through Land Custom Stations notified under Section 7 of the Customs Act, 1962. While for trading through Land Custom Stations situated on Bangladesh and Bhutan border, there is a Free Trade Agreement (SAFTA). Whereas, Border Trade Agreement have been entered into with China and Myanmar. Border trade is different from trade through air, land or sea ports as trade through ports involves clearance through customs and has large volume. Border trade in contrast is "over-land trade" by way of "exchange of commodities" from a bi-laterally agreed list by people living along both sides of the international border. For permitting locally produced commodities, to be traded as per prevailing customary practices on both sides of the India-Myanmar border, an agreement on border trade between India and Myanmar was signed on 21st January, 1994 and operationalized on 12th April, 1995. The Agreement envisages that the border trade will take place through Custom Posts at Moreh in Manipur and Zowkhatthar in Mizoram, corresponding to Tamu and Rhi in

Myanmar. 40 items are permitted for the border trade between India and Myanmar, with 5% duty. Presently, most of the border trade takes place only through the Moreh Post. This paper has been focusing on border trade between India Bangladesh while discussing its relevance based on an interdisciplinary approach that border trade is an inclusion of different factors like culture, language and other issues while one discuss the nature of trade relations. Out of these factors, language plays important role in the development of border trade with a fact that, both Indian State of Tripura and Bangladesh have Bengali speaking majority of population. To look into it, there is a need to look into India-Bangladesh relations.

### **India-Bangladesh Relations:**

India and Bangladesh share a long history of enduring economic partnership and bi-lateral development. The relationship between the two countries has been one based on mutual trust and cooperation. Our multi-faceted economic relations encompass trade, credit arrangements, soft transit facilities and joint ventures in energy and connectivity. Both the countries have benefitted largely through the growing economic ties. It has exercised an overall stabilizing effect on our political relations too. Over

the last fifteen years, the annual development assistance to Bangladesh from India has ranged between 20 million to 700 million rupees and now a landmark 2 billion dollars recently extended during Prime Minister Modi's visit in June 2015. This is double the Line of credit (LoC) of \$1 Billion extended during PM Manmohan Singh's visit in September 2011. At that time, this was the single biggest LoC India had ever extended to any country in one announcement (and the single largest that Bangladesh had received from any single donor). For both countries, it reflected a new confidence in each other in advancing and expanding their bilateral relations after over four decades of latent mutual suspicion and ups and downs. Of the earlier tranche, \$200 million was converted into a grant (announced by President Pranab Mukherjee when he undertook his first trip abroad, and that too to Bangladesh, after he assumed the nation's highest office), which was used by Bangladesh to commence ground breaking on its ambitious Padma Bridge project, designed to exponentially facilitate east-to-west connectivity across Bangladesh. The remaining 80% was entirely used on rail/road connectivity up gradation and modernization. The relationship now appears to be acquiring a new momentum in the recent times to take it to greater heights in tune with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's neighbourhood outreach initiative.

Some of the related and important aspects of the outreach include grant of visas and the historic Land Boundary Agreement and Bangladesh's effort to provide India with a "Power Corridor". The protocol on reciprocal visa facilitation was revised after over 13 years in 2013 - again a reflection of increasing trust and confidence in each other. Concomitant with this has been India's permission to Bangladesh to open Consular offices in Mumbai and Guwahati while India will open 2 additional offices in Bangladesh.

The trading relationship between India and Bangladesh is currently of special interest in both countries for a number of reasons. Firstly, there are urgent and longstanding concerns in Bangladesh arising from the perennial, large bilateral trade deficit with India, and from the large volumes of informal imports from India across the land border which avoid Bangladesh import duties. These concerns have been particularly acute on the Bangladesh side in the context of discussions between the two governments of the possibility of a bilateral free trade agreement along the lines of the India-Sri Lanka FTA. Secondly, even though (because of the disparity in the size of the two economies) India's trading relationship with Bangladesh is much less significant for it than it is for Bangladesh, closer economic integration with Bangladesh is nevertheless seen as a very important way of reducing the economic and political isolation of the seven Indian

eastern and north eastern states from the rest of the country. Finally, both countries have long shared common objectives for closer economic integration within the South Asia region, and these have recently been reemphasised by signing on to SAFTA, which is to come into force in January 2006. Under SAFTA, the preferential tariffs agreed in the various rounds of SAPTA-- so far largely ineffective in generating much intra-regional trade-- will continue, but a number of ambitious new objectives have been enunciated. These include the eventual elimination of tariffs and non-tariff barriers on trade between the members, the harmonisation of Customs procedures and documentation, the facilitation of banking relationships, and cooperation and improvements in the infrastructure for regional trade and cross-border investments. India's Development Assistance to Bangladesh between 2006-07 & 2015-16 out of total of INR 13 billion were distributed over a number of key sectors as indicated. As a matter of fact bulk of the development assistance to the tune of 74% went into multi-sectoral projects and the crucial transport sector. Need/event based emergency assistance came third in terms of quantum at about 12% of the total package. The main projects undertaken from the USD 200 million grant included Small Development Projects (SDP's), Community Development Projects (COP's) and connectivity related

projects such as construction of Akhaura - Agartala Rail link, setting up an inland port at Ashuganj and setting up a manufacturing unit for railway coaches.

#### **Trade Relations:**

While developmental and infrastructure projects are important, it is universally recognized the bilateral trade plays an extremely important role in promoting and strengthening economic relations between countries. In this area, India and Bangladesh bilateral trade presents an extremely complex and disappointing scenario. As immediate neighbour, India with long land boundary, size, population, growing market and a huge consumer market, presents an ideal opportunity for Bangladesh to sell its products. But the key question is whether Bangladesh produces the goods that can sell easily and competitively in the Indian market. Since 1982 and particularly after Bangladesh moved on the path of economic liberalization, bilateral trade has been improving steadily. In 2011-2012, India's total export to Bangladesh reached 5.84 billion US dollars. This does not obviously take into account the substantial volume of 'illegal or informal' exports that takes place continuously and is estimated at a substantive figure. A high percentage of BD's import from India is in the nature of inputs (cotton) meant for the production of its main export item (readymade garments); an area in which the country has championed itself. India's annual earnings from

trade with Bangladesh is somewhere near 14 to 15 billion dollars. On the other hand, in contrast, Bangladesh's exports to India have been significantly less. In 2011-2012, Bangladesh's exports to India reached only 584.64 million US dollars. In 2014-15, BD export figure further dropped down to USD 396 million. In the current scenario the total bilateral trade volume of USD 6.5 billion looks impressive but the sheen is lost when one looks at the country's exports to India that account for a mere USD 500 million leaving a high trade deficit.

#### **Informal and illegal trade between two counties:**

Ever since Bangladesh's independence there has been a substantial informal unrecorded trade across the India-Bangladesh land borders. Much of this trade is quasi legal and is best characterized as "informal" rather than illegal, because there is wide participation by local people in the border areas, and the trade generally bypasses Customs posts. At the other extreme there is trade which goes in larger quantities-mostly by truck-through the formal legal Customs and other channels, but which involves explicitly illegal practices such as under invoicing, misclassification and bribery of Customs and other officials, and which in Bangladesh is sometimes called "technical" smuggling. All the literature on the India-Bangladesh informal trade confirms that this trade is essentially one-way, from India to Bangladesh. Leaving aside gold, silver and

currency which is smuggled into India in part to pay for Indian goods, smuggled "bootleg" merchandise exports from Bangladesh exports to India have been estimated at only about 3% of smuggled bootleg Indian exports to Bangladesh. Thus, it is very much significant for both the countries to find out ways so that this kind of illegal trade could be lessened out. One such policy option is to enhance border along trade. A few factors seem in case of India-Bangladesh so far as border trade is concern. In other words a new approach in the form of identification of a few factors responsible for the enhancement of border trade is "issue of common language i.e. Bengali Language across Indian State of Tripura and Bangladesh". Language is a bridge which works to interact between the states across the border. It is so because language is a mode which helps one to feel and express their views, thereby acts as a medium to integrate the two sovereign states. The provision of border haats at international border in the Indian state of Tripura between India and Bangladesh is a set example which justifies the above mentioned fact. These haats provides an opportunity to flourish local economics along border areas of the concerned state in view of the fact, that such interaction has been possible with the use of a common language as it leads to the exchange of ideas between two different states. Also, several new kinds of words, phrases, loan words, borrowings, hybrid and symbolic

words are being used by communities during business. Further, the interaction at border haats often come across new sentences those ought to be legitimate expressions with a follow up of its linguistic parameter of phonology, morphology and syntactic structure. With this, lexicography can also be built up with this interaction. The development of any language is based upon its pace of interaction, its course of continuation during interaction among the speakers which tends to identify opportunity for its development. In this way such kind of professional development is very much relevant that's why the socio, economic and cultural development occurs across the border.

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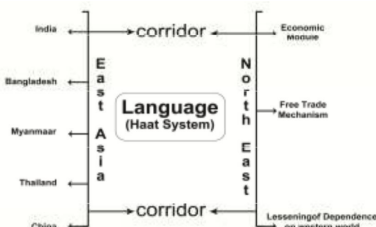
business hours shall be carried out to obtain data to prove this hypothesis.

### **Border Haat:**

A hitherto defunct Mughal era border haat (weekly border market) was reopened by Commerce Ministers of India and Bangladesh in Meghalaya in 2011, marking a new high in the on-going bonhomie and trade links between the two neighbouring countries. Border haat means makeshift bazaar/ market at a certain point on zero lines of the India-Bangladesh borders allowing villagers of both the countries to market and shop each other's products once a week. Border haats are in high demand by people on both sides, living in remote enclaves and hilly areas, as they find it difficult to buy and sell products needed in day-to-day life. The two nations started border trade in April 1972 - only months after Bangladesh became independent. However, it was cancelled a year later because of rampant smuggling along the 4,096 kilometres of border that the two countries share.

### **General Characteristics of Border Haat:**

1. The border haat is a common marketplace for both countries to boost local business and trade between the two neighbours. The commodities sold here are free of duty while traders can use Bangladeshi Taka (BDT) and Indian Rupees (INR) and/or barter system for the transaction. The traders can exchange their currencies in banks operating along the two border districts.



2. Border haat at first was originally scheduled to be launched on April 14 of 2011, coinciding with Pauela Baishakh, the first day of Bengali New Year. However, India and Bangladesh opened their first border haat on July 23, 2011 located at Tura in Meghalaya, India. The second border haat started operation at Dolura in Sunamganj district in Bangladesh on May 01, 2012. Set on the zero line along the North-Eastern State of Meghalaya in India, it occupies an area of 70-square meters and serves the villagers living inside five kilometre radius on both sides of the border. The haat starts working on every Tuesday from 10:30 am to 5:00 pm while it sits from 9:30 am to 4:00 pm from November to March during the winter. Close to 1,800 individuals, visit the haat for the purpose of purchases. The enthusiasm and participation is more pronounced among Bangladeshis than it is with Indians. Well beyond the 25 registered pass holding vendors of each nation are seen selling goods within the haat premises. That is because the original pass-holder sublets his space and adjacent aisle to non-pass-holders.

3. Haats are equipped with market sheds to facilitate trade by 25 vendors from each side, who have been identified and trained by both countries to sell their produce, medical and security booths, and fencing of the border haat areas. However, the facilities are inadequate to cater the larger number of consumers residing in the border areas.

4. A border haat, by definition, is managed by a five-member Haat Management Committee, constituted by the two nations. It maintains a list of the authorized vendors and buyers as per the Memoranda of Understanding (MoU). The haat is held on a fixed day of the week, and for transaction the currencies of the two nations are used. The designated border haat areas are exempted from regulations of passport and visa.

5. The haat markets generally have two entry and exit points, one from Bangladesh territory for Bangladeshis and another from the Indian Territory for Indians. Only the residents of the border districts are allowed to sell their products in the haats and the number of vendors is typically limited to 25 from each country. However, on an average 1,000 people from each side are allowed to visit the haat with passes.

6. Locally produced vegetables, food items, fruits, betel leaf, betel nuts, spices, fish, chicken, bamboo, and bamboo-made materials, grass, gamchha, lungi, dao, plough, axe, spade, chisel, locally produced garments, melamine products, processed food items, fruit juice, handicraft items are the general items being sold in the haats. A detailed table covering aspects of type and volume is included as a part of the appendix. Newer offerings are elaborated in the recommendations.

7. As per rules of business at its inception, a given buyer is able to

shop here worth up to USD 50.00 or equivalent to BDT 4,200.00, on each market day in a week. However, in June 2013, the buying limit at the border haat was raised. Bangladeshis living in the border areas with India are now able to buy goods worth up to USD 100.00 in local currency at border haats (weekly markets) on any given day. The Foreign Exchange Policy Department of Bangladesh Bank has accordingly coordinated with their Authorized Foreign Exchange Dealers (ADs) to accommodate the revised purchase limit.

#### **Linguistic relevance of Border Haat:**

To understand the role of language in the management of cross border trade with reference to border haat a case study of Kamalasagar border haat situated at Sipahijaladistrict of Indian State of Tripura has been taken up. A border haat has been setup between Sipahijala District under India and Brahmanbaria district, Chittagong Central Division under Bangladesh at Kamalasagar international border. It is important to note that people living with in the 5 kilometre radius of the international border speaks dialect of Bengali language. Though multilingual speech is an identified feature provided, entire interaction has been based upon understanding of common Bengali expressions. Following is the nature of multilingual exchange between the communities of India and Bangladesh:

India	Bangladesh
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. The South Tripura area of Tripura State uses Noyakhali language (It's a dialect of Bengali).</li><li>2. Kokborok is another tribal language being used at Tripura (It's a language of Tibet Burmese origin).</li><li>3. The security agencies especially personnel of Border Security Force (BSF) uses Hindi (India's national language) for conversation. Although due to diversity of identity among the personnel other languages of different regions of India may also be in use.</li></ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. The Bengali is being used as dialect as well as standard language at Bangladesh.</li><li>2. The Brahmanbaria district has certain expressions of Noyakhali language (It's a dialect of Bengali).</li><li>3. At some adjoining areas of the international border people may use Shelletti version of Bengali language. (Shellette is a district of Bangladesh).</li><li>4. Some way the Noyakhali language is mixed up with Shelletti words.</li><li>5. The officials of Bangladesh Border Guard (BBG) converse in Bengali and English language.</li></ol>

#### **Effective expressions:**

Border haats are cultural boost up centres for both communities living along the borders. The common growth of cultural assimilations, societal contacts and multilingual conjunctions occurred. The border haats are a way by which linguistic expressions plays a very important role in the development of confidence building measures between two countries. The traders and consumers often use dialects during business in the form of loan words, borrowing, hybrid and symbolic words those are an exclusive feature of border haat conversations. As a matter of fact, this entire exercise is conceived of Bengali language as mother language. However certain exclusive identified remarks of socio linguistic expression during business hours are as follows:

1. Borrowed word, loan words are adopted by speakers from each other during interaction. A loan word can also be called as borrowing. It is a consequence of cultural contact between two language communities. For e.g. some words of Noyakhali



language were adopted by the Shelletti version of Bengali speakers.

2. Phonal borrowing (Phonetic borrowing) may also be adopted by people across the border.

3. Since the area of border haat has been dominated by Noyakhali pattern of dialect therefore, sentence patterns are mixed up with other dialects of the adjoining areas which are called as Code-Mixing. The pattern of code mixing comprise of two or more dialects at same time.

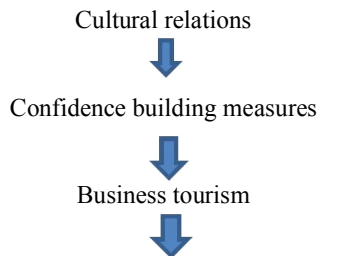
4. The border haat area one perceives as feeling motive (there are two types of motives: feeling motive and prestige motive). This is so because traders have adopted various words from local dialects thereby to make themselves expressive for business purpose.

5. A lexical gap, a hole in the pattern (sentence) is a word or other

form that does not exist in the same language but shall be permitted on the basis of grammatical rules of the concerned language. This lexical gap is an identified feature of the border haat conversations.

#### **Concluding remarks:**

Language has been used as catalyst to boost up:



It leads to socio-economic development of border region through cross border trade.

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