

Sociology of Language of Telugu Minorities in Tamil Nadu

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ABSTRACT

This paper tries to unearth the sociology of language of five linguistic minorities whose mother tongue is Telugu and who live in southern region of Tamil Nadu. Their linguistic behavior is dominated by regional language Tamil which ultimately dominates in all respects. This leads to linguistic convergence, linguistic shift and eventually linguistic loss. The diminution of language use in peripheral and core domains of language use has been identified. Since this is a minority language many of the language oriented provisions are missing to minorities which are compensated by regional language. This stance has been proved with empirical evidences through this paper.

KEYWORDS: *Sociology of language, domains of language, Convergence, shift and loss, core and peripheral domains*

1. INTRODUCTION

The Constitution of India clearly states the law by which all the recognized Indian regional (national) languages could be developed along with the official languages of India. viz. Hindi. The constitution also provides the law by which the minority languages could also be safeguarded and developed. Each linguistic state has its own language as the administrative or official language of the state. Each state adopts certain language policies (Bilingual or multilingual) in the formal domains such as education, mass-media etc. In each linguistic state one can find a number of minority groups, which use different mother tongues. The present state of affairs shows that in reality the minority language (languages spoken by the minority social groups of the area) does not occupying even the minimum status or position or is not part playing the minimum role in formal use. No facilities are provided by the Government for the use of these languages except in a few of the urban centers and border areas of the linguistic states where one can find some schools which offer instruction as well as language learning facilities, in some of the minority languages. For example, the Government of Tamil Nadu provides facilities in some of the border areas and urban centers for making use of some of the

minority languages like Malayalam (in the Tamil Nadu - Kerala border area) Kannada and Telugu (in the Tamil Nadu - Karnataka and Tamil Nadu - Andhra Pradesh border areas) etc. as media of instruction and in language instruction.

So, one can find diversity both in the Linguistic set-up as well as in the social set-up. We try to bridge the gap viz. the diversity found among the various linguistic and ethnic groups through language planning, and social development measures. We also try to bring down the language fanaticism and animosity by giving equal or near equal status to some of the languages in the formal use (especially when the bilingual or multilingual policies are adopted) we also try to make changes in the existing policies respecting the realistic attitudes of the people on language use etc. in such a way that the nation can develop fast in spite of the various conflicts that arise from time to time on various linguistic issues.

2. Linguistic Minority

Louris Writh (1945) has noted minority as a group of people who because of their physical or cultural characteristics are singled out from others in the society in which they live with differential and

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unequal treatment and who therefore regard themselves as an object of collective discrimination. The United Nations sub-commission on minorities (1950) has explained that minorities are those non-dominant groups in the population which seeks to preserve stable ethnic, religious and linguistic traditions as characteristics marked by different from those of the rest of the population.

It is a known fact that India has been multilingual country since time immemorial. The linguistic families which have been coexisting for long have been emotionally interacting with one another. The migration of one mother tongue group to other area leads to the emergence of linguistic minority. Indian linguistic minorities had certain unique features. Simpson's (1981) viewpoints about minority may suit well to the Indian linguistic minorities.

3. Multilingual situation in Tamil Nadu

There are different social groups living in Tamil Nadu. Majority of people living in Tamil Nadu, speak Tamil as their mother tongue. Besides Tamil, there are other languages spoken as mother tongue by various language speakers. Those languages are Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam, Saurashtra, Hindi, Gujarati, Konkani, and other native tribal languages. The Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam, Saurashtra, Hindi, Gujarati, and Konkani speakers have come over to Tamil Nadu due to social-political reasons. Kannada and Telugu speakers have migrated to Tamil Nadu from Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh respectively, due to the invasion of Muslim rulers. Marat speakers came over to Tamil Nadu as soldiers for their head of the polity and other speakers such as Saurashtra, Hindi, Gujarati, Konkani came to Tamil Nadu for the sake of business and employment. Their languages are called as minority languages. Besides the above linguistic groups, there are other primitive settlers in the hill region of this state speaking various languages of their own such as Badaga, Toda, Kota, Kurumba, Pulaya, Muduva, Irula, etc. There languages are called as minor languages.

4. Telugu speakers in Tamil Nadu

Telugu is spoken mainly in the present state of Andhra Pradesh. Telugu is second largest linguistic group in India. It is spoken by 9% of the total population of India and 82% of the Telugu speaking people live in Andhra Pradesh (Census of India 1981) majority of the remaining Telugu speaking people are scattered primarily in the neighboring states where they constitute 9% in Tamil Nadu, 9% in Karnataka 2% in Maharashtra and 2% in Orissa of the total population of these states.

A large scale of migration from Telugu speaking areas to Tamil speaking area of down south is

undeniably clear by the sheer number. The migration from Telugu Country to interior Tamil Nadu area is said to have begun after the period of the Ikshwakus and during the rule of Pallavas. Migrations were mostly from Brahmin communities. The places of migration can be traced by their family names. However, it is inferred that Telugu speaking communities are found to exist in almost all the parts of Tamil Nadu. The total number of Telugu minorities living in all districts of Tamil Nadu (1991 census) is 3,975, 561.

5. Language use

Almost all Telugu speakers are bilinguals in this region. They speak Telugu in home situation or with their relatives and occasionally with other community people whose mother tongue is Telugu. However, outside home, they use Tamil for their communication with other language speaking groups. Thus, most of the Telugu speakers, it is inferred, maintain their mother tongue in the core domains of language use like home, social, ritual, and in peripherals domains they use Tamil. The present paper tries to unearth the sociology of language of linguistic minorities living in the southern parts of Tamil Nadu.

5.1. Language in childhood

Children belonging to Telugu Community communicate in Telugu during their early days and later they learn Tamil through play mates and others outside the home. But the trend had changed now. The children of Telugu community tend to learn both the languages (Tamil and Telugu) simultaneously. This may be due to the type of acculturation taking place among the minority people. The acculturation takes place both in linguistics as well as social levels. As a result, the Telugu monolingual children become bilingual even in their childhood.

5.2. Use of Telugu in Education

There are no provisions in Tamil Nadu for the Telugu speaking Community to learn Telugu through formal and structured means. In schools and in other educational institutions Telugu is not taught (Except Chennai and university higher leaning) Since the written Telugu is not accessible to those Telugu speakers, they are illiterates in Telugu. They avail Telugu only for oral communication that too within the intimate domains.

Since they are all illiterates in Telugu, they could not enrich their vocabulary load and in a way day by day they tend to lose their linguistic elements by the impact of regional language Tamil and wherever, they find gap in communicating through their mother tongue, there Tamil elements are substituted to fill the gap and to serve the purpose of communication.

5.3. Varieties of Telugu

As stated above Telugu is spoken by different communities in Tamil Nadu. One can easily find differences among those Telugu varieties. Similarly the interference or influence of Tamil elements also varying terms of quantum and levels. Since all the Telugu speakers of Tamil Nadu know Tamil well and since the Tamil elements are freely availed in Telugu speech the mutual intelligibility is high which does not make any communication barrier among those Telugu speaking Communities. When inter group communication takes place, each interlocutor is able to identify the idiosyncratic feature of their own variety or for that matter, the variety they encounter. Those elements which are absent or present do not pose any bottle necks in the act of inter or intra group communication.

5.4. Oracy vs Literacy

Although Telugu is written and well developed language, the minorities inhabiting in Southern region of Tamil Nadu make use of Telugu language only for oral communication, that too in restricted domains. Most of the informants reported their Telugu totally different the spoken Andhra Pradesh. And, they find there dichotomy between their variety and of Andhra Pradesh. Even when one makes use standard Andhra Pradesh Telugu will be communicable the Telugu speakers (irrespective caste) found in Southern region of Tamil Nadu. Thus, the literacy Telugu known these consequently, the Telugu literacy is not use any of the social activities these Telugu speakers.

5.5. Use of Telugu in prayer

Since the prayer is one of the significant cultural activities which express ones identity most of time they use Telugu language for the purpose of worshipping. Because, their tradition is expressed through some other rituals. But all other kinds of linguistic behavior are performed through Tamil language.

5.6. Use Telugu Social institutions

As stated above, the Telugu maintained function these speaker only in core domains, they do not use their Telugu in many of the social function they celebrate. Instead, they use Tamil, for example, no community prints its invitation in Telugu, rather is printed Tamil.

The above review reveals some facts that in India, linguistic minority maintain their languages, some groups of people could not maintain their languages and drastic changes have occurred in the minority languages as well. The above review also says that no serious study has been made on the Telugu minorities living in Tamil Nadu with an aim to study their sociology of Telugu, Sociolinguistic variations among different communities, language loyalty, attitude,

language shift, maintenance and loss. So, the present study will unearth certain innovative findings with empirical evidences and to frame policy for linguistic minorities.

All the Telugu bilinguals in Southern region of Tamil Nadu have choice between Telugu and Tamil. But as the Telugu speakers live for a long period (about 400 years) for good in Southern region of Tamil Nadu where Tamil is dominant and majority language, the Telugu speakers restrict the use of Telugu language in selective domains only. Even in the selective domains the language selection/choice will be decided by different sets of social, psychological and linguistics factors. Their language choice will always presuppose that more than one language is available to the speaker and that the speaker will have a good command over the language concerned for a choice. Moreover, the selection of language is also based on the competence of the receiver to whom the speaker intended to communicate.

In Southern region of Tamil Nadu all educated Telugu Bilingual are aware of Tamil, Telugu and English. But an uneducated Telugu speaker has only Telugu and Tamil. (Spoken alone). Thus, educated Telugu speaker, language choice is different from the uneducated Telugu speaker (both in respect of language and mode).

The proficiency of Telugu varies from person to person (irrespective of community). Thus, the language choice depends mostly on who speaks, what language to whom and when. Generally to study language choice, scholars work by selecting various domains viz., Family, Friendship. Neighborhood, education, Government, employment, etc. These are some of the domains most often selected. For the present study as Telugu functions as home language, family, friendship and workplace have alone been selected.

Selection of the language by the Telugu bilinguals can be explained in terms of implication scales. Gal (1979) has designed the scale to study the language behavior of observant speakers. She had intensified an orderly pattern of language choice, when the individual's selection pattern was placed on an implicational scale table with speakers represented by rows and interlocutors by columns. This scale is slightly modified to suit the variable selected for this study. The participants or interlocutors in this study are 1. Grandparents, 2. Parents, 3. Spouses, 4. Children, 5. Relatives, 6. Friends, 7. Officials. 8. Self (a. prayer and b. planning). The general language choice pattern of Southern region of Tamil Nadu Telugu speakers is given below.

Almost all belonging to elder generation use Telugu at home and in other close interaction networks. But it is very hard to find a systematic pattern of language selection with younger generation. Except Brahmin, among the younger generation belonging to chettiar, Naidu, s, Arundadiar, and Asari, one could observe the alternative use of Tamil and Telugu. This may be due to less proficiency in Telugu. The statistical analysis will throw more light about the language selection among the younger generation. The language choice with grant parents and parents is always Telugu in Brahmin community and Naidu community. But in other community (except Chettiar) with the grant parents and parents they use either Telugu or Tamil. There is no systematic pattern found among them. A point should be mentioned that in the chettiar community, Telugu is always used with grandparents, but with parents either through Telugu or Tamil.

However an interesting point has to be mentioned that in all communities the selection of language for official purposes is always Tamil. This because of reason that the workplace, it is very rare to find person who knows Telugu, Moreover, to discuss the official matters, the Telugu language proficiency the Telugu speaker possesses is enough.

There is a general feeling among the members of younger generation that their language many not be good to converse with the Telugu people elsewhere. This is observed at the time of interview with the informants. The elder generation converse freely in Telugu when they come to know the other person knows Telugu. But the youngsters did not speak Telugu even when the researcher interviewed them in Telugu. There are multitudes of places or locations where conversation may take place. Many of them will not have any particular learning on bilingual speakers' language choice. But there are certain areas where a particular language is more likely to be used than the others. For example, in official domain, even though Telugu is recognized as co-official language only Tamil is being used. The Telugu speakers living in Southern region of Tamil Nadu have the proficiency only to speak in Telugu. They do not know to read or write the language. In work place also, the use of Telugu is very much limited.

In case of language use in the domain of friendship, almost 75% of the informants expressed that they would like to speak in Telugu with their friends if they know Telugu But actually, even if their friends know Telugu, only a few informants use Telugu with them. It might be interesting to explore the reasons for this trend. It is learnt from some of the informants that the language used at the time of first meeting will

become the lingua-franca between friends. Even if two speakers know Telugu when they meet each other they use only Tamil. Later if they come to know that the other person knows Telugu it is observed that they will not switch over to Telugu.

6. Conclusion

The following conclusions regarding the pattern of language use as for as the interaction in close network is concerned.. The use of Telugu is higher among Brahmins, Naidu and Chettiar communities in the close interaction networks. The social variable like age, sex and education are very much significant in all communities regarding the use of Telugu. Elder people irrespective of community tend to use Telugu language quite often when making close interaction network. Boyer, Arundadiar and Asari community people irrespective of age and education level shift to Tamil language even when making interaction in close net-work.

It is in total observed that the language use of Telugu minorities of southern region of Tamil Nadu, is getting mitigated because of the reason that the opportunity of using mother tongue among the Telugu minorities in the social situations at which they are living is less in peripheral domains of language use. But in the core domains, these linguistic minorities have been using their mother tongue. However, there has been some variations among the range of language use across the Telugu linguistic minorities of different castes.

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