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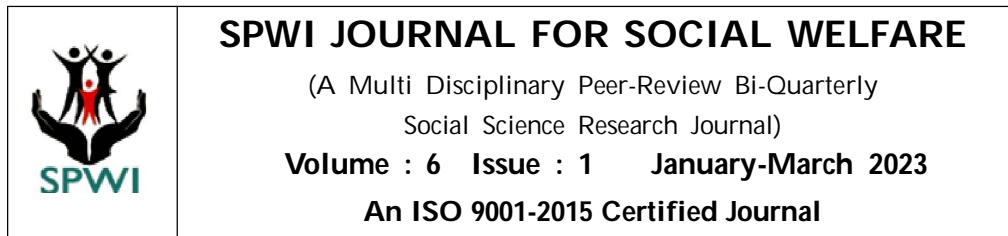
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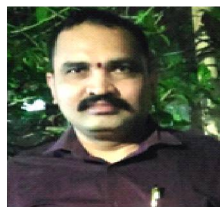
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**TELUGU LINGUISTIC MINORITIES IN TAMIL
SPEAKING STATE – A STUDY****Dr. Narsingh Naik Lavudya**

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Abstract: *This paper tries to unearth the sociology of the language of five linguistic minorities whose mother tongue is Telugu and who live in the southern region of Tamil Nadu (TN). Their linguistic behaviour is dominated by the 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 coredomains 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 evidence through this paper. The present paper tries to unearth the sociology of language of linguistic minorities living in the southern parts of TN.*

Keywords: *Language, domains of language, Convergence, shift and loss, core, and peripheral domains*

Introduction

The Constitution of India 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 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 several minority groups, which use different mother tongues. The present situation shows that the minority language (languages spoken by the minority social groups of the area) does not occupy even the

minimum status or position or is not part of 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 centres 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 TN provides facilities in some of the border areas and urban centers for making use of some of the minority languages like Malayalam (in the TN - Kerala border area) Kannada and Telugu (in the TN - Karnataka and TN -Andhra Pradesh (AP) border areas) etc. as media of instruction and in language instruction.

So, one can find diversity both in the Linguistic setup 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 formal use (especially when 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 despite the various conflicts that arise from time to time on various linguistic issues.

Linguistic Minority

Wright (1945) has noted a 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 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 that 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 a multilingual country since time immemorial. The linguistic families which have been coexisting for a long have been emotionally interacting with one another. The migration of one mother tongue group to another leads to the emergence of linguistic minorities. Indian linguistic minorities had certain unique features. Simpson's (1981) view points about minorities may suit well to Indian linguistic minorities.

Multilingual situation in Tamil Nadu

There are different social groups living in TN. Most people living in TN, speak Tamil as their mother tongue. Besides Tamil, there are other languages spoken as a 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 TN due to social-political reasons. Kannada and Telugu speakers have migrated to TN from Karnataka and AP respectively, due to the invasion of Muslim rulers. Marat speakers came over to TN as soldiers for their head of the polity and other speakers such as Saurashtra, Hindi, Gujarati, and Konkani came to TN for the sake of business and employment. Their languages are called 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. Their languages are called as minor languages.

Telugu speakers in Tamil Nadu

Telugu is spoken mainly in the present state of AP. Telugu is the second-largest linguistic group in India. It is spoken by 9 per cent of the total population of India and 82 per cent of the Telugu-speaking people live in AP (Census of India 1981) majority of the remaining Telugu-speaking people are scattered primarily in the neighbouring states where they constitute 9 per cent in TN, 9 per cent in Karnataka 2 per cent in Maharashtra and 2 per cent in Orissa of the total population of these states. A large scale of migration from Telugu-speaking areas to Tamil-speaking areas down south is undeniably clear by the sheer number. The migration from Telugu Country to the interior TN 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 parts of TN. The total number of Telugu minorities living in all districts of TN (1991 census) is 3975561.

Language use

Almost all Telugu speakers are bilinguals in this region. They speak Telugu in home situations or with their relatives and occasionally with other community people whose mother tongue is Telugu. However, outside the 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, and ritual, and in peripheral domains they use Tamil.

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 the Telugu community tend to learn both 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.

Use of Telugu in Education

There are no provisions in TN for the Telugu-speaking Community to learn Telugu through formal and structured means. In schools and 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 to the impact of the regional language Tamil and wherever, they find gaps in communicating through their mother tongue, their Tamil elements are substituted to fill the gap and to serve the purpose of communication.

Varieties of Telugu

As stated above Telugu is spoken by different communities in TN. 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 TN 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 inter locutor can identify the idio syncratic feature of their 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.

Oracy vs Literacy

Although Telugu is a written and well-developed language, the minorities inhabiting in Southern region of TN make use of the Telugu language only for oral communication, that too in restricted domains. Most of the informants reported their Telugu was different from the spoken AP. And, they find a dichotomy between their variety and AP. Even when one makes use of standard AP Telugu will be communicable to the Telugu speakers (irrespective of caste) found in the Southern region of TN. Thus, the literacy Telugu knows these consequently, Telugu literacy is not used in any of the social activities these Telugu speakers do.

Use of Telugu in prayer

Since prayer is one of the significant cultural activities which express one's identity most of the time, they use the Telugu language to worship. Because their tradition is expressed through some other rituals. But all other kinds of linguistic behaviour are performed through the Tamil language.

Use Telugu Social institutions

As stated above, Telugu maintained the function of these speakers only in core domains, they do not use their Telugu in many of the social functions they celebrate.

Instead, they use Tamil, for example, no community prints its invitation in Telugu, rather is printed in 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 TN to study their sociology of Telugu, Socio linguistic variations among different communities, language loyalty, attitude, language shift, maintenance, and loss. So, the present study will unearth certain innovative findings with empirical evidence and frame policy for linguistic minorities.

All the Telugu bilinguals in the Southern region of TN have a choice between Telugu and Tamil. But as the Telugu speakers live for a long period (about 400 years) for good in the Southern region of TN where Tamil is the dominant and majority language, the Telugu speakers restrict the use of the 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 the southern region of TN, all educated Telugu Bilingual are aware of Tamil, Telugu, and English. But an uneducated Telugu speaker has only Telugu and Tamil. (Spoken alone). Thus, an 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, and Friendship. Neighbourhood, education, Government, employment, etc. These are some of the domains most often selected.

The selection of the language by the Telugu bilingual can be explained in terms of implication scales. Gal (1979) designed the scale to study the language behaviour 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 inter locutors by columns. This scale is slightly modified to suit the variable selected for this study. The participants or interlocutors in this study are Grandparents, Parents, Spouses, Children, Relatives, Friends, and Officials. Self (a. prayer and b. planning). The general language choice pattern of the Southern region of TN Telugu speakers is given below.

Almost all belonging to the 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 the younger generation. Except for 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 on language selection among the younger generation. The language choice between grand parents and parents is always Telugu in the Brahmin community and Naidu communities. But in other communities (except Chettiar) with the grand 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 grand parents, 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 is because of the reason that in the workplace, it is very rare to find a person who knows Telugu. Moreover, to discuss official matters, the Telugu language proficiency the Telugu speaker possesses is enough.

There is a general feeling among the members of the younger generation that their language may not be good to converse with the Telugu people elsewhere. This is observed at the time of the interview with their informants. The elder generation converses 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 the conversation may take place. Many of them will not have any learning on bilingual speakers' language choices. But there are certain areas where a particular language is more likely to be used than the others. For example, in the official domain, even though Telugu is recognized as a co-official language only Tamil is being used. The Telugu speakers living in the Southern region of TN 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 the case of language use in the domain of friendship, almost 75 per cent 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 the 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.

Conclusion

The following conclusions regarding the pattern of language use as far as the interaction in the 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 the community tend to use the Telugu language quite often when making close interaction networks. Boyer, Arundadiar and Asari community people irrespective of age and education level shift to the Tamil language even when making interaction in close network. It is in total observed that the language use of Telugu minorities of the southern region of TN is getting mitigated because of the reason that the opportunity of using mother tongue among the Telugu minorities in the social situations in 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 have been some variations in the range of language use across the Telugu linguistic minorities of different castes.

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