LINGUISTIC CONVERGENCE IN THE LINGUISTIC BEHAVIOR OF TODA OF THE NILGRIS

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Abstract

This paper focuses its heed on one of the communities inhabiting the Nilgris of Tamilnadu. The speakers of Toda who are basically multi/bi linguists and there are chances to encounter multilingual situation in general and at least bilingual situation in their day today living environments. The hegemony of Tamil at which they live and the social needs of tribal community people compel the speakers of Toda to knowingly or unknowingly, willingly or unwillingly borrow intentionally or unintentionally linguistic elements from the regional language called Tamil. Sometime other regional languages like Kannada and Malayalam also have an influence on Toda language. This occur not only the lexical level of Toda but also the grammatical level. It, in turns gives birth to the linguistic convergence between Toda and Tamil and sometimes across or between tribal languages like Kota, Kattunaikan, Kurumba, Paniya or other regional languages like Kannada and Malayalam. This Phenomenon shakes the very foundation of the Toda linguistic system which will consequently lead to linguicide of Toda. This paper unearthed certain grammatical elements wherein convergence took place in the Toda by the impact of Tamil and other tribal and regional languages with enough empirical illustrations.

Keywords: Linguistic convergence, grammatical levels, Linguicide

1. Introduction

The Toda language belongs to the Dravidian linguistic family and is believed to have developed around the 3rd century BC. It has affinities with Tamil, Kannada and Malayalam, but it separated from pre-Tamil before these three emerged as independent languages. The Todas traditionally had no written form of language Today, they use the Tamil script for writing purposes. The Nilgiris District comprises six taluks viz Udhagamandalam, Kundah, Coonoor, Kotagiri, Gudalur and Pandalur. These taluks are divided into four Panchayat Unions viz Udhagamandalam, Coonoor, Kotagiri and Gudalur besides two Municipalities, Wellington Cantonment and Aruvankadu Township. The District consists of 88 Revenue Villages and 15 Revenue Firkas. There are three Revenue Divisional in this district viz., Udhagai, Coonoor and Gudalur. There are 35 Village Panchayats and 11 Town Panchayats in this District. All India Radio had a daily broadcast in Toda about agriculture from its Indore station, but it was reduced to two days a week because the response from the people was limited. However, there are some radio and

television programmes in Toda about culture and folk songs. There are some religious and cultural audio and videocassettes also available in Toda. The most important goddess of the Todas is Tökisy (Tö•kisy). Modern Todas believe that she, rather than her brother Ön, created the Todas and their buffaloes. The Todas revere the "gods of the mountains," said to reside on the Nilgri peaks, and the gods associated with the sacred dairies. The Toda belief system also encompasses elements of Hinduism, especially Hindu concepts of ritual purity and impurity. Today, many traditional Todas worship Hindu deities, such as Shiva, Marriamman, and Aiyappan, and participate in pilgrimages to Hindu sacred places.

2. Convergence

Linguistic convergence is a type of language contact induced change whereby languages with many bilingual speakers mutually borrow morphological and syntactic features making typology of those two languages similar. Sometimes the interference of the majority language over minority is more and sometimes it will be less. That is, in certain levels of the language the convergence is very high and in some other cases it is medium and in other cases it is very low. The changes generally emerge from majority to minority and sometimes it may from minority to majority also. This is otherwise referred to as the direction of convergence. Some of the features that come into a native system due to the convergence get social acceptance gradually and treated as standard usages in course of time. Such usages also replace the native usages in some cases in the normal day to day interaction with this conceptual understanding the present research paper traces the direction and quantum of convergence at different levels of Toda language.

3. Convergence in Toda language

In a bi/multi lingual situation, the languages which come into contact with one another in a particular area undergo changes due to the interference of one language on another. The incidence of bilingualism varies from one contact situation to the other. Some of the features that come into a native system due to the convergence get social acceptance gradually and treated as standard usages in course of time. Such usages also replace the native usages in some cases in the normal day to day interaction. Though they try their level best to retain the originality of their mother tongue, because of socialization, their mother tongue Toda gradually converged towards Tamil.

4. Reasons for the Linguistic convergence in Toda language

When languages are in contact, there may be a give and take relationship between or among them. This will result in the loss of the original colour of one language and the replacement of certain linguistic elements of another or other language, which are in contact. Scholars attribute various reasons for the convergence. However, a little or little use of mother tongue by the native speakers of the language concerned will be a significant reason. Todas are not frequently using their mother tongue because of the following reasons

1. There is no need for the usage of their mother language.

2. Urbanization and other scientific development are also reasons for the Linguistic conveyance in Toda tribes.

3. The social system attached with their language i.e If they talk their Language in front of other communities the other community people treat them as low.

4. Youngsters are not interested in using their mother tongue Toda. They prefer to use the majority language; Tamil. So the attitude and sociology of linguistic situations prevailing in their living places are responsible for convergence or loss.

5. Linguistic convergence at Lexical and grammatical level

There are many instances where the convergence has been identified. In all these cases, convergence takes place from majority language to minority language. The convergence takes place in all levels of language and vocabulary is vulnerable for external influence when a language is in contact with other languages .Grammar is a level of language which iš affected by another language only in the long run and only when the contact situation is in high danger. This will then lead to convergence. The places where convergence takes place in Toda tribal language are listed below.

5.1 Convergence at Lexical Level

In Toda, some words are taken from English and due to extensive usage, they are nativized.

/narʃ/ 'nurse'

/pe:ppar/ 'newspaper'

/bəs/ 'Bus'

/ka:ppi/ 'Coffee'

Similarly Toda borrows words from Tamil. Following are some of the examples.

/mundiri / 'cashew'

/kattirika:ji/ 'brinjal'

/pugəiʋaɳɖi/ 'train'

/ʋeɳʈəka:jɪ/ 'lady's finger'

/sunnɑ:mʋ/ 'lime'

Kannada language features are also found to exist in Toda language. Here are some examples

/bɛ̃ɟʋli/ 'garlic'

/pu: ko:ʃ/ 'cauliflower'

/mi:n/ 'fish'

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Like Kannada, Malayalam features are also found inToda. Some examples are given below

/uːḷi/ 'onion'

/paṭṭaːṇi/ 'pea'

5.2 Convergence at the grammatical level

Mostly the convergence takes place at the lexical level, but morphological features are still maintained in the linguistic behaviors of Todas. However certain grammatical features are replaced by the dominant language features. It happens because of the dominance of other language features of their living area. Take for example the instrumental case of Tamil is –aal but, the Toda instrumental case marker is –in , but the Toda people use

merj-in > merj-aal ' by any'

Thus , lexical and morphological elements are converging across various languages when the multilingual Todas interact with other people. This happens within monolinguistic communities or multi linguistic communities' linguistic behaviors.

For examples

peeppar eem - papers

mundiri eem - Cashews

Kivi eem   - Plants

paTT eem   - cats

In all these words though they belong to English, Tamil and Kannada and Malayalam respectively, they use only Toda plural markers.

Conclusion

It is observed by schematizing the data that the Toda language incorporates linguistic elements from different languages as the linguistic situation and linguistic behaviors of Toda people are unique. Because of their living environment, Tamil, English, Malayalam, Kannada and their tribal languages are also found in their spoken discourse. The features from these languages are also manifested in the linguistic behavior of the Toda people.

While they are influenced by their linguistic features, they simply mix all those features with their indigenous linguistic elements. However, it is learnt that the grammatical features are to some extent, maintained by them in their linguistic behaviors. For example, while they borrow words either from Tamil or Malayalam or Kannada or even English, they maintain their own grammatical features.

Many grammatical elements of Tamil and Malayalam are being used as Toda in the linguistic behavior of native Toda's speech. However, only a small number of features of other tribal languages spoken in the Nilgiris, have found place in the native Toda speech. So, native speakers of Toda language have to be made aware of the seriousness of

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protecting their indigenous language by a pertinent awareness programme by the government.

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