

Linguistic Ecology of Karnataka (A State in the Union of India)

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Introduction

First let us look at two concepts. *Landscape* is ‘all the visible features of an area of land, often considered in terms of their aesthetic appeal.’ *Ecology* ‘is the relationships between the air, land, water, animals, plants etc., usually of a particular area, or the scientific study of this.’ It takes hundred or thousand or more years to bring changes in the grammatical structure of a language. Even after that time the change may remain incomplete. This refers to the internal changes in a language. But the economic, social and political and policy decisions in a country do not need more time to modify the linguistic demography. This reflects the external changes relating to a language.

India became independent in 1947, conducted its first census after independence in 1951. It reorganised its administrative units on linguistic lines in 1956 and conducted the first census after reorganisation in 1961. The census data of 2011 helps us to understand the changes that have taken place in fifty years since 1971. This paper explores the linguistic demography of Karnataka, one of the states in India in terms of its landscape and ecology using the census data of 50 years from 1971 to 2011.

Karnataka

Karnataka is one of the states and union territories in southern part of India. It was carved in the process of linguistic reorganisation of the geographical territories of the country in 1956 with Kannada as its major language. After reorganisation of the state the population of it, as per the 1961 census was 2,35,86,772. The same in 1971 stood at 2,92,99,014. The latest 2011 census records 6,10,95,297 (5.05%) as the population of the state. Now the rural population is 3,74,69,335 (61.33%) and the urban population is 2,36,25,962 (38.67%). Among them 3,09,66,657 (50.68%) are male and female are 3,01,28,640 (49.32%).

If we leave the North East of the country, Karnataka is the most multilingual state. Kannada is the Official Language of Karnataka as per the Official Languages Act -1963. It is also one of the important languages of judiciary, administration and education in the state. Karnataka is geographically surrounded by the states having Marathi, Konkani, Telugu, Tamil and Malayalam as official languages.

Decennial Census and Languages

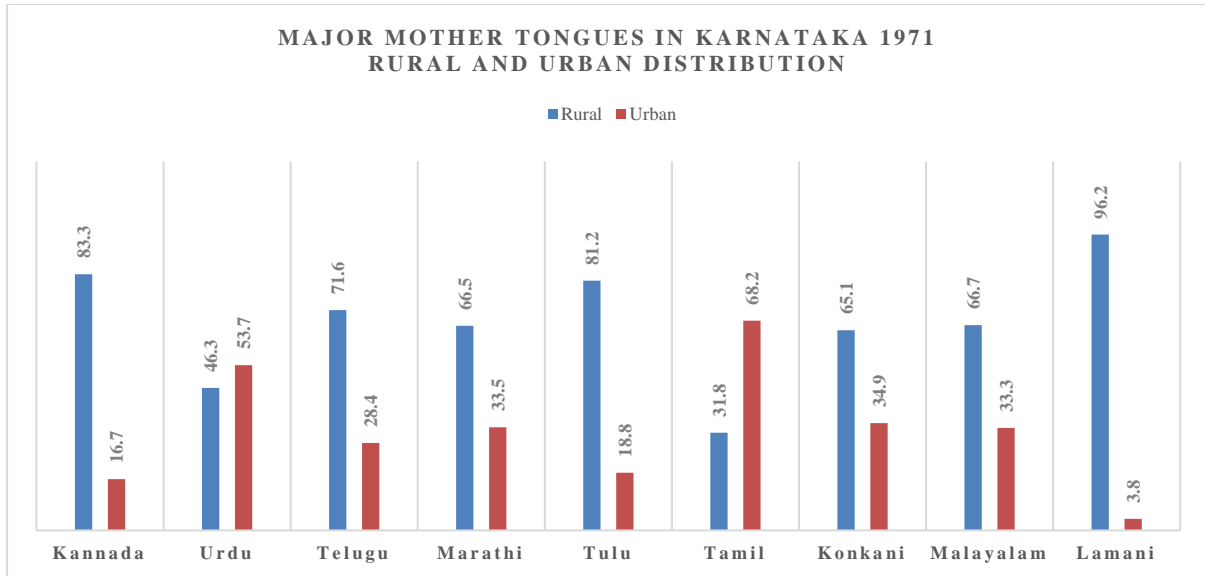
Indian census is an important resource which provides data on linguistic landscape of the country and its states. It uses two concepts mother tongue and language. In 1971 Mother tongue was identified as ‘the language spoken in childhood by the person’s mother to the person. If the mother died in infancy, the language mainly spoken in the person’s home in childhood will be the mother tongue. In the case of infants and deaf-mutes, the language usually spoken by the mother is recorded’. In the 2011 census too, this definition continued to be the same. Thus, in the context of the Census of India, a ‘mother tongue’ is a concrete entity/unit. Once such data is gathered on mother tongue of the individuals, languages are arrived at by applying genetic or functional criteria. So, language is an abstract entity/unit. All Indian languages are mother tongues, but all mother tongues of India are not languages. In the post-independence India, due to the division of Indian languages into the category of Scheduled and Non-Scheduled languages, most of the language related discussions are cantered around this bifurcation. Discussions around mother tongues have reached a cipher. While looking into the ecology of languages of a state it is essential to take into account the languages that are numerically more in its geographical territory irrespective of their status as scheduled or non-scheduled language. At the micro level when we discuss linguistic situation of a state or union territory, it is better to consider the unit of ‘mother tongue’. I like to focus on mother tongues of the state also, to paint a realistic picture.

Mother Tongues in Karnataka

The 1971 census lists 9 major mother tongues spoken by more than 1% of its population. They were spoken by the 99% of the population of the state. The table and the graph given below illustrate their distribution in the rural and urban areas.

Table-1
Major mother tongues in Karnataka- 1971
Rural and urban distribution speakers

1971	Mother tongue	%	Rural	Urban
1	Kannada	65.94	83.3	16.7
2	Urdu	9.00	46.3	53.7
3	Telugu	8.17	71.6	28.4
4	Marathi	4.05	66.5	33.5
5	Tulu	3.56	81.2	18.8
6	Tamil	3.66	31.8	68.2
7	Konkani	1.96	65.1	34.9
8	Malayalam	1.41	66.7	33.3
9	Lamani	1.16	96.2	3.8
	Others	1.09		



The Table -1 above informs that speakers of majority of major mother tongues are in rural areas. More than 80% of speakers of Kannada, Tulu, and 96.2% of speakers of Lamani/Lambadi are in the rural areas and more than 50% of Urdu and Tamil speakers are in the urban areas.

Fifty years ago, the 1971 census recorded the existence of 166 mother tongues also in Karnataka. The Table-2 given below is indicative of the changes that have taken place in the numerical strength of 28 mother tongues from 1971 to 2011. This table includes, in addition to the mother tongue components of the 22 scheduled languages; English the associate official language of India; Tulu and Coorgi indigenous mother tongues; Yerava an important tribal mother tongue and Tibetan the mother tongue of recent Tibetan settlers in Karnataka.

**Table -2
Mother tongues in Karnataka
Comparison: 1971-2011**

	Mother tongue	1971	2011
1	Assamese	N	0.02
2	Bengali	0.02	0.14
3	Bodo	N	0.0007
4	Dogri	N	0.0013
5	Gujarati	0.09	0.11
6	Hindi	0.44	1.42
7	Kannada	65.94	66.49
8	Kashmiri	N	0.0048
9	Konkani	1.96	1.25
10	Maithili	N	0.0028
11	Malayalam	1.41	1.22
12	Manipuri	N	0.0066
13	Marathi	4.05	3.29
14	Nepali	0.01	0.03
15	Odia	N	0.104

16	Punjabi	0.02	0.042
17	Santali	N	0.0004
18	Sindhi	0.03	0.024
19	Tamil	3.36	3.44
20	Telugu	8.17	5.83
21	Urdu	9.00	10.83
22	Yerava	0.04	0.043
23	Coorgi/Kodagu	0.04	0.18
24	Tulu	3.56	2.60
25	Banjari	0.11	0.04
26	Lamani/Lambadi	1.16	1.59
27	Tibetan	0.03	0.04
28	English	0.06	0.038
	Others	0.5	1.2224

When we look at the numerical strength of these mother tongues it can be deciphered from the Table -2 above that there is no uniform or comparable increase or decrease in their strength. Mother tongues like Assamese, Bodo, Dogri, Kashmiri, Manipuri, Maithili, Odia, and Santali which had negligible percentage of speakers in 1971 are no longer negligible in 2011. Now they have got numbers. Mother tongues like Konkani, Malayalam, Marathi, Telugu, Tulu, and English have reduced in their percentage of speakers. There is an increase in the of percentage of speakers of Kannada, Hindi, Lamani, Tamil, Tibetan, Urdu and Yerava. Among this group,

According to the 2011 census now in Karnataka, more than 1% of speakers speak one of the 10 major mother tongues. Fifty years ago, as we saw above it was only 9 mother tongues and now Hindi is the new addition to this category.

Table - 3
Major mother tongues in Karnataka -2011

	Mother tongue	%
1	Kannada	66.49
2	Urdu	10.83
3	Telugu	5.83
4	Marathi	3.29
5	Tulu	2.60
6	Tamil	3.44
7	Konkani	1.25
8	Malayalam	1.22
9	Hindi	1.42
10	Lamani	1.59
	Others	2.04

Landscape of Mother tongues in Karnataka: 2011

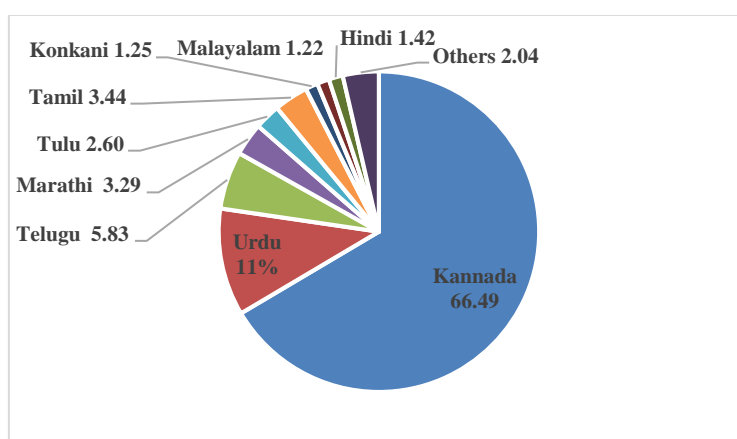
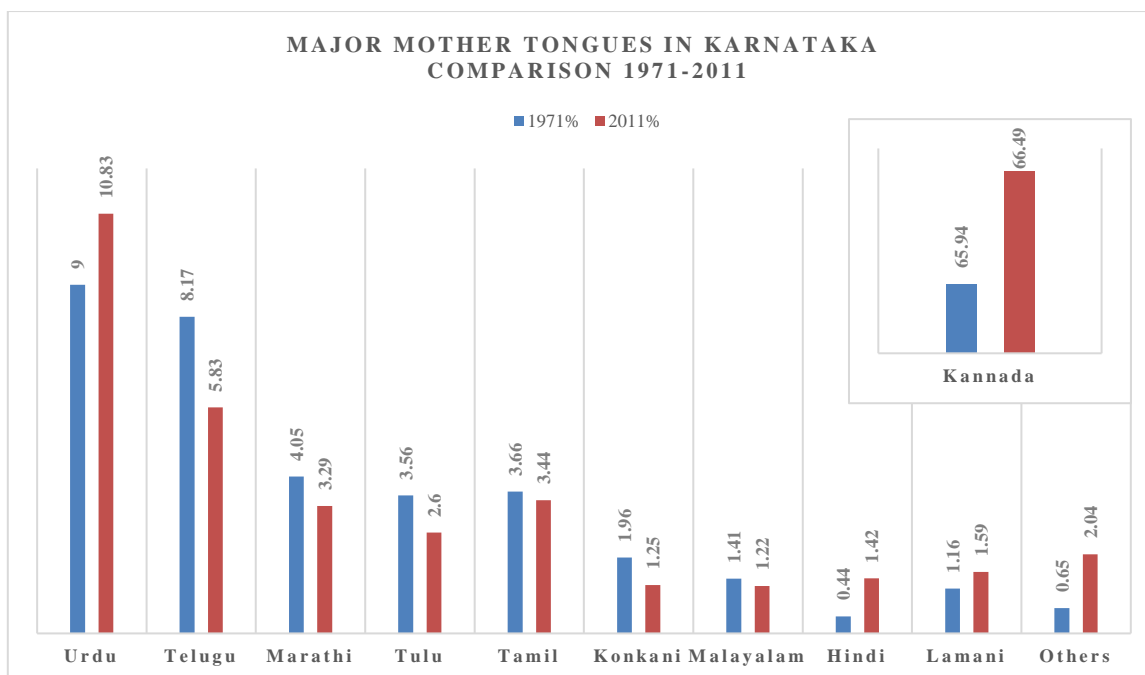


Table - 4
Ten Major mother tongues in Karnataka
Comparison 1971-2011

	Mother tongue	%1971	% 2011	% Increase/ Decrease
1	Kannada	65.94	66.49	+0.55
2	Urdu	9.00	10.83	+1.83
3	Telugu	8.17	5.83	-2.34
4	Marathi	4.05	3.29	-0.76
5	Tulu	3.56	2.60	-0.96
6	Tamil	3.66	3.44	+0.22
7	Konkani	1.96	1.25	-0.71
8	Malayalam	1.41	1.22	-0.16
9	Hindi	0.44	1.42	+0.98
10	Lamani	1.16	1.59	+0.43
11	Others	0.65	2.04	+1.39



Death of Tribal Mother Tongues

Language shift due to social or economic or political reasons among mother tongues spoken by a small number of speakers is expected, especially if they exist amidst a politically and economically powerful languages. This shift leads to the loss of their mother tongue. Karnataka is a real time witness to this.

In 1961 post reorganisation of states Yerava tribal population of the state was 14,927 and Yerava mother tongue speakers was 14,489 (97.065%). In 2011, population of the Yerava tribe is 30,359 and the number of Yerava mother tongue speakers is 24,574 (80.94%). The number of mother tongue speakers continues to decline and is less than the number of corresponding tribal population. Population of the tribe is increasing but population of percentage of mother tongue speakers is not increasing correspondingly. A decline from 97.065% (1961) to 80.94% (2011). This indicates that the trend of decreasing of mother tongue speakers of this tribe continues unabated.

Here itself it is also important to note that 1971 tribal mother tongues like Koracha (3473), Korava (2832), Koraga (879), Kudubi (1090), Malekudi (165) etc., have lost their linguistic identity due to their numerical minority and got merged into 'others' of Karnataka in 2011. But some information about some of these tribes and their mother tongue could be found in the census of 2011 elsewhere. Now they are not reporting the name of their mother tongue. But they are reporting some other language/s of their environment as their mother tongue. Some Koragas are reporting Kannada as their mother tongue (Total: 3452, Urban:698 and Rural: 2757). Some others are reporting Tulu as their mother tongue (Total: 10920, Urban:4238, Rural:6682) etc. None of them are reporting Koraga as their mother tongue. Same is the case with Male Kudi tribe. Some are reporting Kannada as their mother tongue (Total: 591, Urban:47 and Rural: 544). Some others are reporting Tulu as their mother tongue (Total: 8377, Urban:147 and Rural: 8230) etc.

In case of Yeravas it is loss of number of speakers of Yerava mother tongue. But in case of Koragas and Malekudis is abandoning their mother tongue and accepting some other language as their mother tongue. Total loss of mother tongues. Living example of endangerment of tribal languages/mother tongues in Karnataka.

Languages in Karnataka

The Linguistic landscape of Karnataka given above provides a static picture, whereas the linguistic ecology presents a dynamic picture by observing into the changes taking place in languages in a particular area. Like in the country, the linguistic situation is changing from decade to decade in Karnataka also.

After knowing about mother tongues in Karnataka, let us look at the numerical strength of the languages. In our discussion here, I like to deviate from the division of languages into scheduled and non-scheduled languages. So, while discussing the linguistic scenario of the state I like to include major non-scheduled languages of the state along with the scheduled languages as 'languages of Karnataka'. Four such non-scheduled languages are English, Tulu, Coorgi and Tibetan.

Table - 5
Languages in Karnataka: 1971- 2011

Languages	1971 %	2011 %
Assamese	N	0.016
Bengali	0.02	0.143
Bodo	N	N
Dogri	N	0.001
Gujarati	0.01	0.187
Hindi	0.44	3.29
Kannada	65.97	66.53
Kashmiri	N	0.005
Konkani	1.95	1.29
Malayalam	1.45	1.266
Maithili	N	0.002
Manipuri	N	0.006
Marathi	4.05	3.379
Nepali	0.005	0.031
Odia	0.01	0.104
Punjabi	0.02	0.042
Sanskrit	N	0.001
Santali	N	N
Sindhi	0.03	0.027
Tamil	3.38	3.45
Telugu	8.18	5.84
Urdu	9.00	10.83
English	0.057	0.038
Tulu	3.559	2.610
Coorgi	0.042	0.180
Tibetan	0.030	0.045
Others	1.797	0.687

This Table -5 is more conventional one. It presents the percentage of speakers of 26 languages in the state of Karnataka. It also indicates the increase or decrease in percentage if any and provides the bird eye view of strength of speakers of languages. And indicates the change that has taken place in their relative strength in fifty years. According to this all the languages which had negligible percentage of speakers in 1971 in the span of 50 years have acquired population that could be counted. There is an increase in the percentage of speakers of Hindi (2.85%), Kannada (0.56%), Odia (0.021%) Punjabi (0.022), Tamil (0.07%), Urdu (1.83%), Coorgi (0.138%) and Tibetan (0.015%). An abnormal increase in the population of Hindi speakers in Karnataka in a span of 50 years has to be noted. Now let us come to the languages that have decreased in percentage of speakers. They are Konkani (0.66%), Malayalam (0.184%), Marathi (0.671%), Telugu (2.34%), Tulu (0.949%) and English (0.019%). In this group of languages there is an abnormal loss of percentage of speakers of Telugu and Tulu in Karnataka.

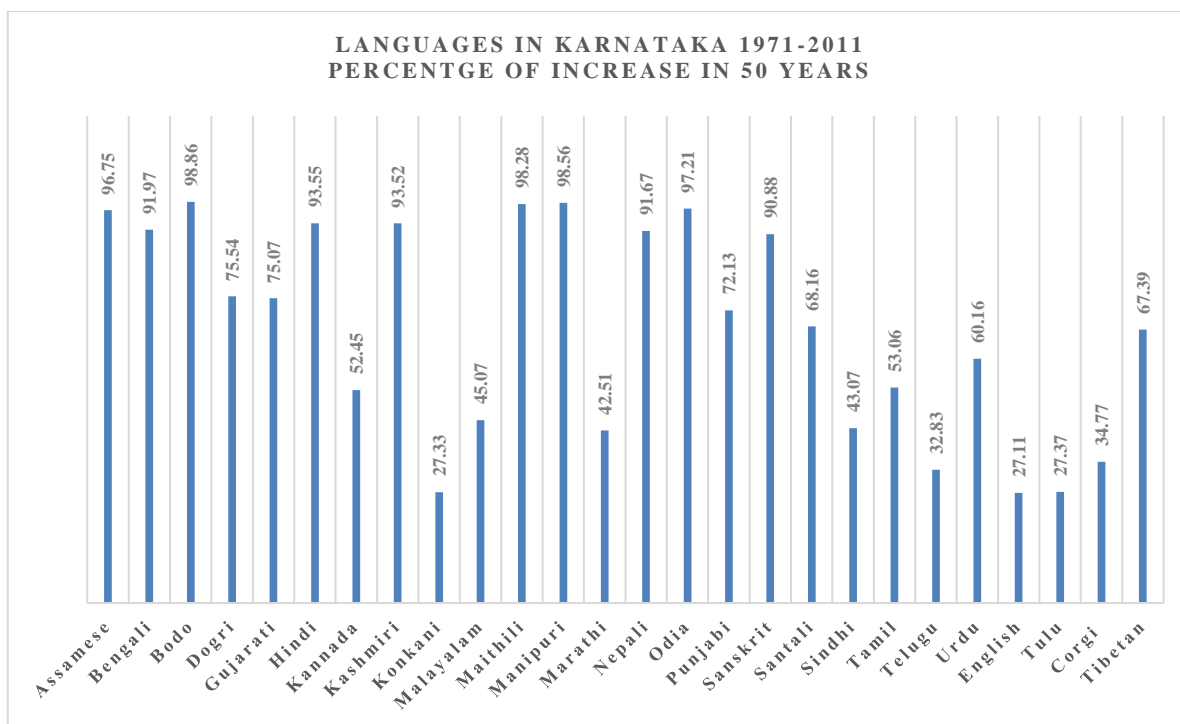
The Table-6 and 7 are not of conventional type that scholars come across. Table-6 presents the increase of speakers of different languages in the state reflected in the 1971 and 2011 census. Whereas the table -7 presents the increase/decrease of speakers of different languages in 10 years 2001 and 2011 census. One mirrors the actual growth of number of speakers within span of 50 years and another one in 10 years. In table -7, Actual number of increased populations is also given.

In order to understand the changes, let us analyse these two tables together. In Karnataka, Kannada, Tulu, Coorgi are indigenous languages. Now, Tamil, Telugu, Marathi, Konkani and Malayalam are the neighbouring languages. The rest of the languages do not have any geographic continuity with the state. The Gujarati, Sindhi and Urdu are residing here from centuries. In 50 years, the percentage of Kannada speakers increased by 52.45% and Tulu by 27.39%, Konkani also by 27.23%. Whereas it is clear from the table-6 percentage of speakers of all other languages increased abundantly.

Table - 6
Languages in Karnataka:-1971-2011, % of increase of speakers in 50 years

Language	1971-2011 % of increase
Assamese	96.75
Bengali	91.97
Bodo	98.86
Dogri	75.54
Gujarati	75.07
Hindi	93.55
Kannada	52.45
Kashmiri	93.52
Konkani	27.33
Malayalam	45.07
Maithili	98.28
Manipuri	98.56

Marathi	42.51
Nepali	91.67
Odia	97.21
Punjabi	72.13
Sanskrit	90.88
Santali	68.16
Sindhi	43.07
Tamil	53.06
Telugu	32.83
Urdu	60.16
English	27.11
Tulu	27.37
Corgi	34.77
Tibetan	67.39



The table -7 reflects the increase of percentage of speakers of different languages in 10 years between 2001 and 2011. The percentage of Kannada speakers increased by 14.30% and Tulu by 6.25%, Konkani also by 2.57%. During the same period Telugu went down by 3.62%. The long-time residents Gujarati, Sindhi and Urdu had an increase of percentage of speakers by 10.83%, 13.33%, 16.29% only. But Hindi and other languages during the same period had a high increase in percentage of speakers. This may point towards large scale migration due to economic opportunities in the state.

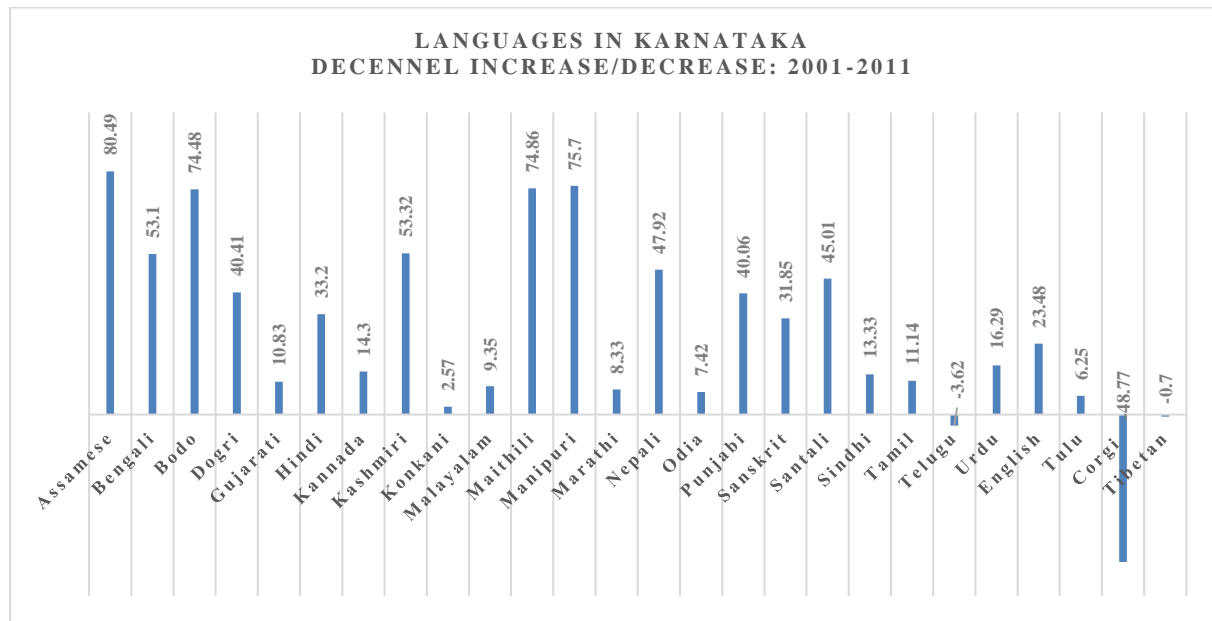
**Table - 7
Languages in Karnataka: Decennial increase/decrease of population: 2001³-2011**

Language	Difference 2001-2011	2001-2011 % of increase/decrease
Assamese	7,946	80.49
Bengali	46,707	53.10
Bodo	327	74.48
Dogri	337	40.41
Gujarati	12,421	10.83
Hindi	6,68,487	33.20
Kannada	58,13,055	14.30
Kashmiri	1,812	53.32
Konkani	20,255	02.57
Malayalam	72,384	09.35
Maithili	1,355	74.86
Manipuri	3,106	75.70

Marathi	1,72,123	08.33
Nepali	9,236	47.92
Odia	47,590	07.42
Punjabi	10,409	40.06
Sanskrit	388	31.85
Santali	140	45.01
Sindhi	2,260	13.33
Tamil	235169	11.14
Telugu	-129257	-03.62
Urdu	10,78,414	16.29
English	5,454	23.48
Tulu	99,765	06.25
Corgi *	-53,895	-48.77
Tibetan	-192	-0.70

I doubt about the accuracy of population number recorded in the 2001 census for corgi language. It is unreliable. Corgi language speakers in 1971 was 70,988, in 2001 it was 1,64,403

an increase by 93,415 persons in 50 years and in 2011 it was 1,10,508 a decrease of population by 53895 persons in 10 years.



The table – 8 gives a comparative picture of growth of Indian languages in Karnataka in 10 years and 50 years. This supplement consolidates the information in tables 6 and 7. Deliberately Coorgi and Sanskrit are not included in this table.

**Table -8
Comparative table of growth of Indian languages in Karnataka in
10 years and 50 years**

Language	% of Difference 10 years 2001-2011	% of Difference 50 years 1971-2011
Konkani	02.57	27.33
Tulu	06.25	27.37
Odia	07.42	97.21
Marathi	08.33	42.51
Malayalam	09.35	45.07
Gujarati	10.83	75.07
Tamil	11.14	53.06
Sindhi	13.33	40.07
Kannada	14.30	52.45
Urdu	16.29	60.16
English	23.48	27.11
Hindi	33.20	93.55
Punjabi	40.06	72.13
Dogri	40.41	75.54
Santali	45.01	68.16
Nepali	47.92	91.67
Bengali	53.10	91.97
Kashmiri	53.32	93.52
Bodo	74.48	98.86
Maithili	74.86	98.28
Manipuri	75.70	98.56

Assamese	80.49	96.75
Telugu	-03.62	32.83
Tibetan	-0.70	67.39

Hindi in Karnataka

This needs a special and specific attention. Let us look at the table – 8. It provides the growth of Hindi in the state.

Table- 9

Hindi	1971	2011
Mother tongue	1,28,043 [0.44%]	8,71,809 [1.42%]
Language	1,29,842 [0.44%]	20,13,364 [3.29%]
Difference between language and mother tongue	1799 [Nil%]	11,41,562 [1.87%]

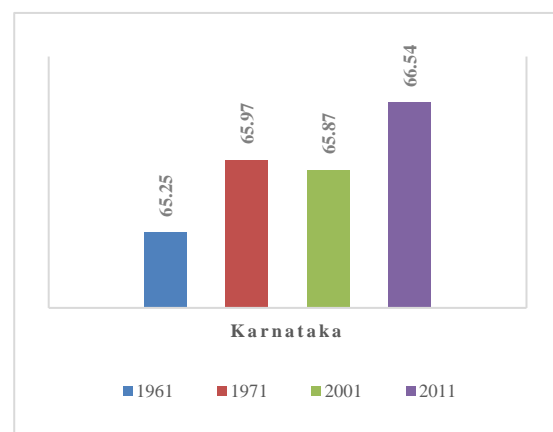
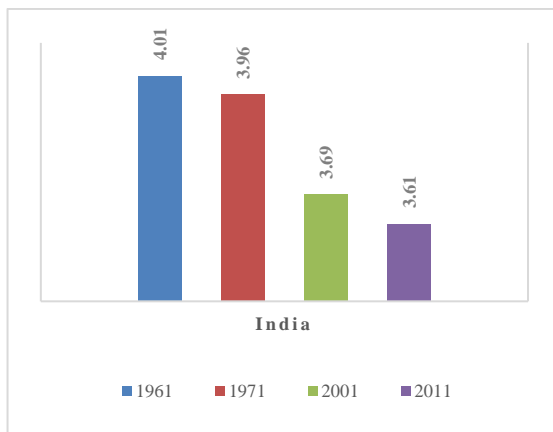
Karnataka has become a major host for Hindi speakers in Post-independence India. They are the maximum beneficiaries.

Kannada in India and Karnataka

It can be seen in the table-8 that in 60 years the percentage of Kannada speakers in India has reduced from 4.01 in 1961 (that is the first census after reorganisation of states) to 3.96% in the subsequent census in 1971 to 3.69 in 2001 and to 3.61% in 2011. Gradually the proportion of number of speakers of Kannada is decreasing in India.

**Table – 10
Kannada in India and Karnataka 1961-2011**

	1961	1971	2001	2011
India	4.01%	3.96%	3.69%	3.61%
Karnataka	65.25%	65.97%	65.87%	66.53



However, the proportion of number of Kannada speakers in Karnataka has increased from 65.25% in 1961 to 66.54% in 2011. An increase by 1.29%.

The table – 9 exemplifies the distribution of Kannada speakers within Karnataka and outside of it. We already saw earlier how non-Kannada population has made inroads into Karnataka. But Kannada speaking population are not moving out of state. Their population outside Karnataka is on decline from 10.97% in 1971 to 7.00% in 2011.

Table - 11
Percentage of Kannada speakers inside and outside Karnataka: 1971-2011

	1971	2001	2011	Difference 1971 - 2011
Inside Karnataka	89.03	91.86	93.00	+ 3.97
Outside Karnataka	10.97	8.14	7.00	-3.97

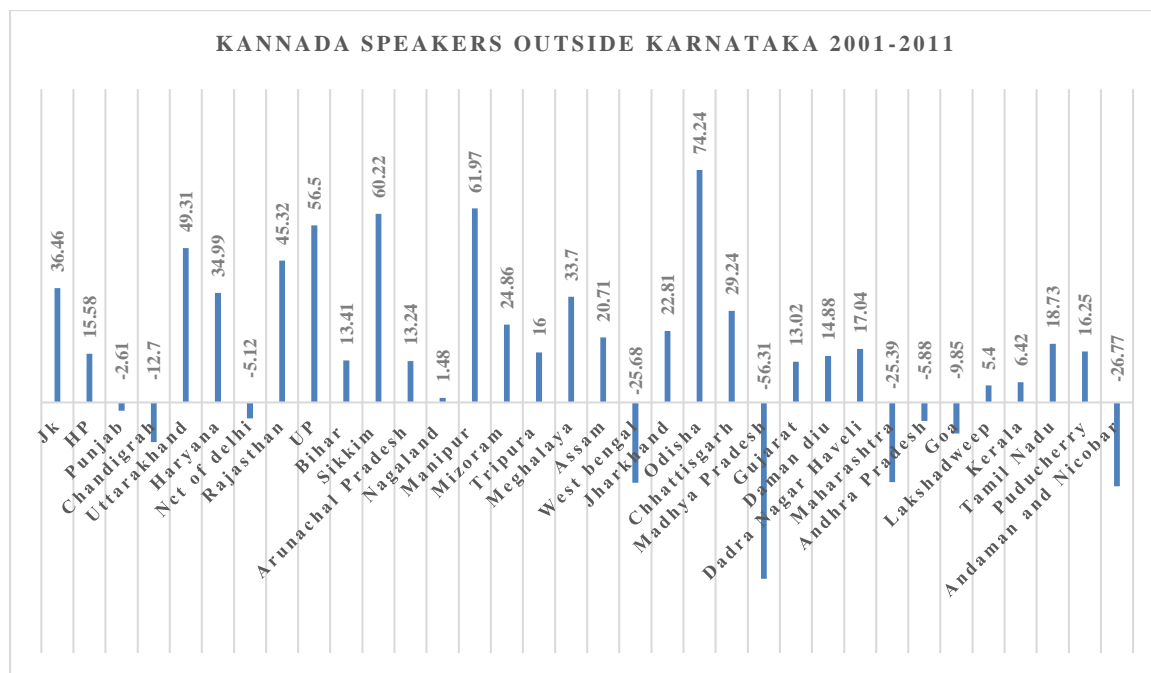
The table – 10 illustrates the distribution of Kannada speakers outside the state of Karnataka in different states and union territories. It provides increase or decrease in terms of number of people as well as percentage of the same. First let us look at the states and union territories where there is decrease in Kannada speaking population in one decade of 2001 to 2011. They are Punjab, Chandigarh, NCT of Delhi, Madya Pradesh, Andaman and Nicobar, bordering states of Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Goa. Major increase of Kannada speakers is in another neighbouring state of Tamil Nadu. This table and chart could be seen for further details.

Table - 12
Kannada Language speakers outside the state of Karnataka 2001-2011
Decennial increase /decrease

States and UTs 2011 census	2001-2011 Increase Decrease in numbers	2001-2011 Increase Decrease in percentage
Jk	2535	36.46
HP	72	15.58
Punjab	-102	-2.61
Chandigarh	-54	-12.70
Uttarakhand	608	49.31
Haryana	1110	34.99
NCT of Delhi	-513	-5.12
Rajasthan	2688	45.32
UP	3636	56.50
Bihar	66	13.41
Sikkim	221	60.22
Arunachal Pradesh	71	13.24
Nagaland	5	1.48
Manipur	396	61.97

Mizoram	47	24.86
Tripura	108	16.00
Meghalaya	153	33.70
Assam	538	20.71
West Bengal	-563	-25.68
Jharkhand	302	22.81
Odisha	2727	74.24
Chhattisgarh	593	29.24
Madhya Pradesh	-2351	-56.31
Gujarat	2349	13.02
Daman Diu	68	14.88
Dadra Nagar Haveli	151	17.04
Maharashtra	-254056	-25.39
Andhra Pradesh	-31430	-05.88
Goa	-6692	-09.85
Lakshadweep	2	05.40
Kerala	5589	06.42
Tamil Nadu	240937	18.73
Puducherry	304	16.25

Andaman and Nicobar	-64	-26.77
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Multilingualism in India

The Census of India is gathering information about other languages known to speakers of different languages. In the post-independence India, the 1951 census information about a subsidiary language ‘if a person commonly spoke an Indian language besides mother tongue’ was collected. In 1961 Census it was expanded to ‘any language and number of such languages’ expanded to two languages. In 1971 Census, the information on ‘Other languages’ known was again collected from each individual. Changes in information elicitation reflect the linguistic concerns of the nation at that point of time. This is an official recognition of India as a multilingual nation.

Hence, in 1981, information on two languages Indian or foreign other than his/her mother tongue was collected. It was recorded in ‘...the order in which he/she speaks and understands them best and can use with understanding in communicating with others. He/she need not be able to read and write those languages. It is enough if he/she has a working knowledge of those subsidiary languages to enable him/her to converse in that language with understanding.’ In 1991 information on two languages known in addition to the person’s mother tongue were recorded in the order in which he/she speaks and understands them best and can use with understanding in communicating with others. In 2001 names of ‘First Subsidiary Language, Second Subsidiary language was collected.

In the 2011 census ‘other languages known up to two languages, Indian or foreign, in order of proficiency excluding mother tongue were recorded. The person need not necessarily be able to read and write these languages. If she/he had a working knowledge of these languages to enable her/him to converse in those languages with understanding, then such languages were recorded’. The data is presented as ‘Number of speakers speaking subsidiary languages (1st language) and ‘Number of speakers speaking subsidiary languages (2nd

language)’. We from our understanding interpret them as information on bilingualism and trilingualism.

It may be noted that Indian multilingualism is ‘self-declared’ by the language users and not a result of any evaluation of language competence against any set parameters. The following is the reported bilingualism percentage for India:

1961: 9.70%
 1971: 13.04%
 1981: 13.34%
 1991: 19.44%

And the trilingual population for 1991 was reported as 7.26%. With this bilingualism and trilingualism details we can analyse the same for the years 2001 and 2011 in detail for India in brief and in detail for Karnataka.

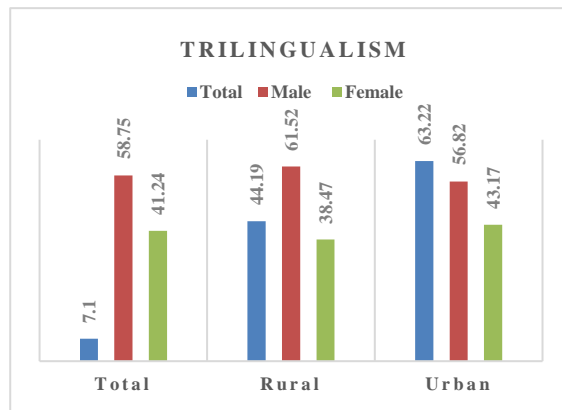
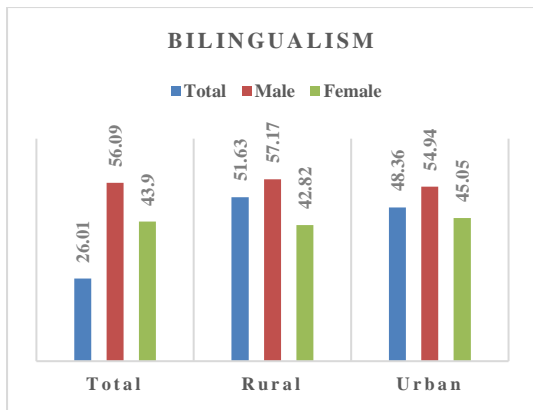
The table – 11 and the chart there on provide the details of on bilingualism and trilingualism in India. It can be seen that in the course of 50 years 1971-2011 bilingual population has almost doubled to from 13.04% to 26.01% in the country. In 2011, trilinguals population of the country stood at 7.10 % little less than 7.26% reported in 1991.

In 2011 more rural (51.63%) population are bilingual than the urban (48.36%) population in India. However, more urban female (45.05%) population is bilingual than the rural female (42.82%) population.

When it comes to trilinguals, urban (63.22%) population has more trilinguals than the rural (44.19%) population. The rural male (61.52%) population outnumbers urban male (58.68%) population in trilingualism. So is the case with female population. More urban women (43.7%) are trilinguals than the rural women (38.47%).

Table - 13
Bilingualism and Trilingualism in India: 2011

	Bilingualism			Trilingualism		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
Total	26.01	56.09	43.90	7.10	58.75	41.24
Rural	51.63	57.17	42.82	44.19	61.52	38.47
Urban	48.36	54.94	45.05	63.22	56.82	43.17



Multilingualism in Karnataka

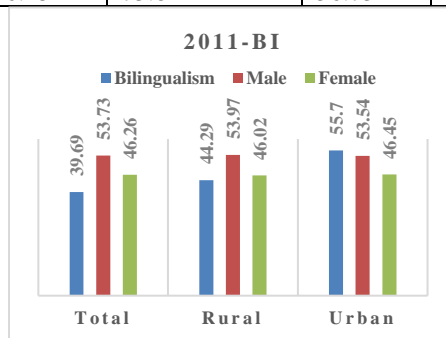
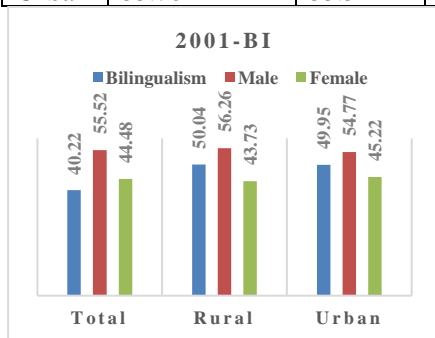
In 1971, 29.31% of population of Karnataka [Male (57.08%) Female (42.92%)] had reported that they know one or more languages in addition to their mother tongue, which is more than double of the national average of bilingualism 13.04%, at that time in the country. The number of subsidiary languages reported at that time was 30. In the beginning itself I said that Karnataka is most multilingual state in the country. This is reflected in the large percentage of population reporting that they know more languages in addition to their mother tongue.

Table - 14
Percentage of Bilingualism and Trilingualism in Karnataka: 2001

2001	Bilingualism			Trilingualism		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
Total	40.22	55.52	44.48	16.6	60.44	39.56
Rural	50.04	56.26	43.73	36.01	64.06	35.93
Urban	49.95	54.77	45.22	63.98	58.4	41.59

Table - 15
Percentage of Bilingualism and Trilingualism in Karnataka: 2011

2011	Bilingualism			Trilingualism		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
Total	39.69	53.73	46.26	12.81	57.69	42.30
Rural	44.29	53.97	46.02	26.15	60.35	39.64
Urban	55.70	53.54	46.45	73.84	56.75	43.24





The Karnataka state has a population of 6,10,95,297 persons. It is 5.05% of the total population of India. It is important to note that 39.69 % of its population know two languages and 12.81% know three languages. This exceeds the national average of bilingualism 26.1% and trilingualism 7.10% respectively. Population of bilingual and trilingual men (53.73% - 57.69%) is more than those of women (46.26% - 42.30%).

When it comes to the urban and rural spread of multilingualism, the urban population is more bilingual (55.70%) and trilingual (73.84%) than the rural (44.29%) and (26.15%) population. It is interesting to note the big gap in the figures of urban and rural trilingualism figures. This indicates that the third language is yet to make its inroads into rural Karnataka. It has a long way to go.

The rural male population (53.97%) are marginally more bilingual than urban male (53.54%) population. Conversely the urban female (46.45%) population are more bilingual than the rural female (46.02%) population. This trend is reflected in the case of trilingualism also. Rural men (60.35%) are more trilingual than their urban (56.75%) counterparts and the urban (43.24%) female are more trilingual than their rural (39.64%) counterparts.

Now with the 2011 information, we can compare the multilingual situation to that existed 10 years ago in 2001. The percentage of people who reported that they know two languages (40.22%) and three languages (16.6%) in 2001 is more than what it is in 2011. Now it has got reduced to 39.69% and 12.81%. In 2011, less percentage of rural people 44.29% have reported as they know two languages. But in the year 2001 their percentage was 50.04%. Same with the case with the percentage of persons knowing three languages in the rural areas. It was 36.01% in 2001 and it is 26.15% in 2011. At that time also, more men (55.52%) were bilingual than the females (44.48). Even in trilingualism men (60.44%) outnumber females (39.56%). Knowledge of three languages by people is more an urban (63.98%) phenomenon when compared to the rural (36.01%) areas. More urban females (58.4%) know three languages than rural females (43.24%). Reductionist tendency in multilingualism is a serious linguistic trend in managing multilingualism in a plural society. The reasons for this downward trend in both bilingualism and trilingualism from 2001 to 2011 need to be investigated in depth from sociolinguistic and economic angles.

The table – 13 and 14 track the micro information of spread of Kannada among speakers of other languages and spread of other languages among Kannada speakers. They refer to the

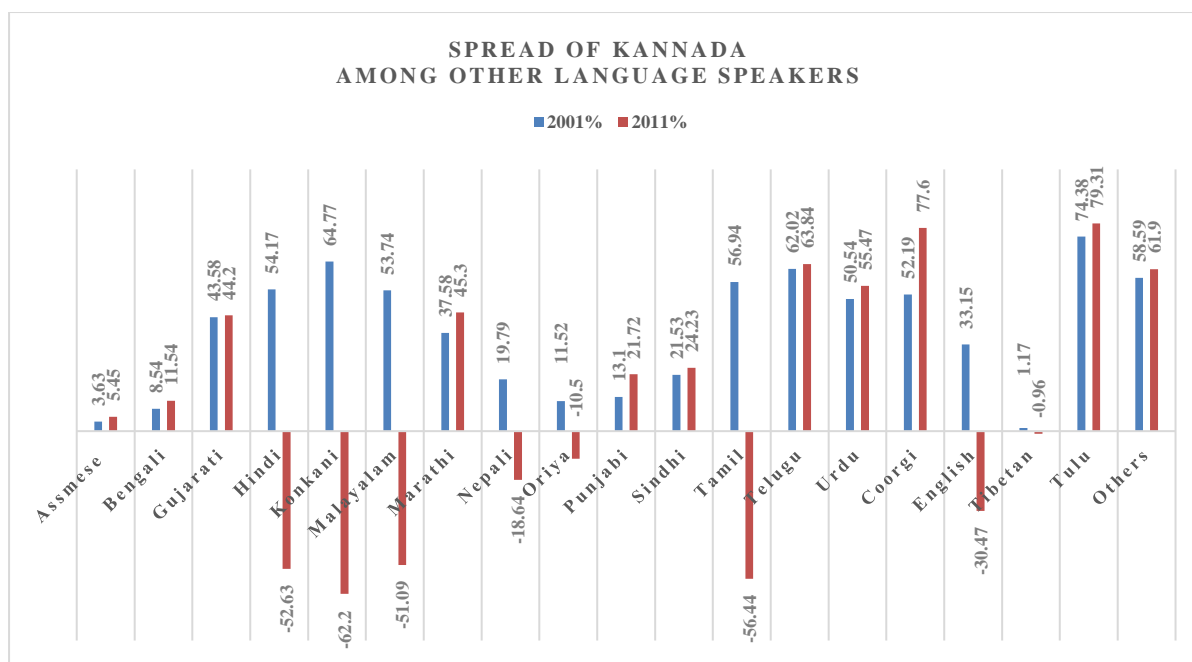
spread of first subsidiary language. Issues relating to the second subsidiary language/s are not covered.

Table - 16
Karnataka 1971, 2001-2011
Spread of Kannada among other language speakers*

Language	1971 %	2001 %	2011 %
Assamese		3.63	5.45
Bengali		8.54	11.54
Gujarati		43.58	44.20
Hindi	48.81	54.17	-52.63
Konkani	49.41	64.77	-62.20
Malayalam	25.70	53.74	-51.09
Marathi	31.48	37.58	45.30
Nepali		19.79	-18.64

Odia		11.52	-10.50
Punjabi		13.10	21.72
Sindhi		21.53	24.23
Tamil	34.23	56.94	-56.44
Telugu	45.82	62.02	63.84
Urdu	39.46	50.54	55.47
Coorgi	72.32	52.19	77.60
English		33.15	-30.47
Tibetan		1.17	-0.96
Tulu	42.25	74.38	79.31
Others		58.59	61.90

*The languages with negligible number of speakers is not reflected in the table and chart for 1971.



The table-13 and the chart give the details of spread of Kannada among other language speakers in Karnataka as first subsidiary language. Between 1971 and 2001 there is an increase in bilingualism among speakers of all language speakers with varying degrees. Maximum is Tulu 79.31% Coorgi-77.60%, Telugu 63.84%, and Konkani next to it with 64.77%. Tulu and Coorgi languages and people are indigenous to Karnataka and living in the Kannada environment since centuries. There are no surprises in it,

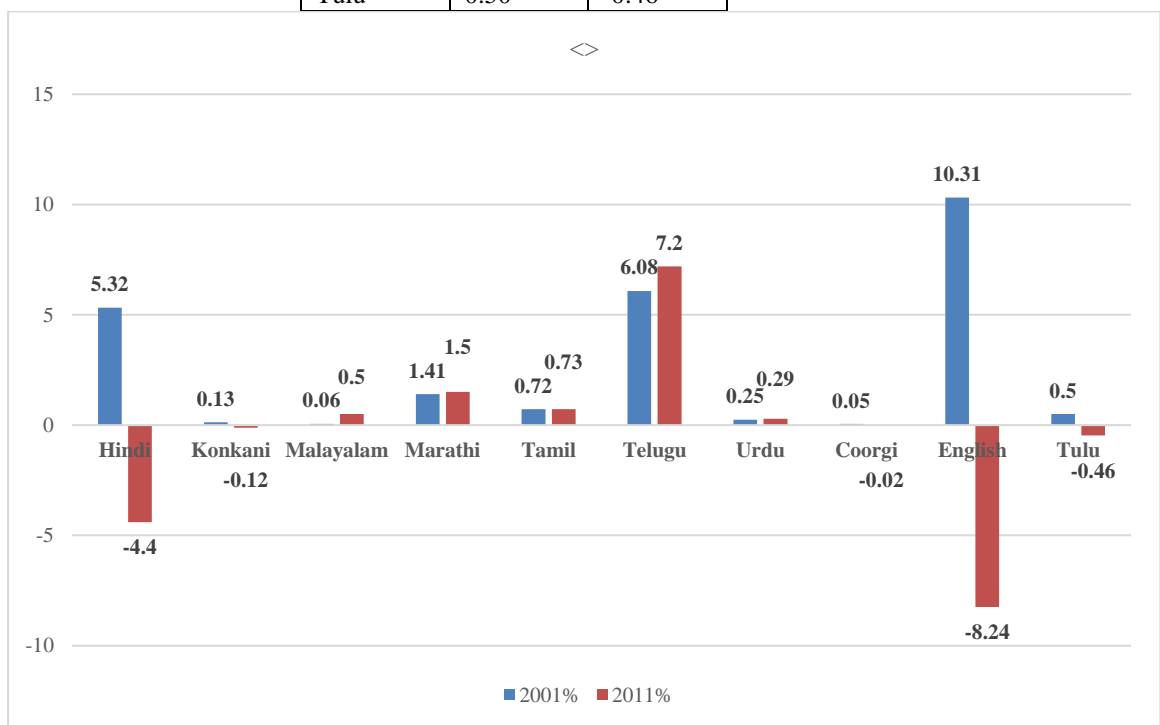
Least spread of Kannada is among the speakers of Tibetan-1.17%, Assamese-3.63%, Bengali-8.54%, Odia-11.52% Punjabi-13.10 and Nepali-19.79%. We can understand that the people of scheduled languages may be recent migrants and are content with Hindi as first

subsidiary language. But it is strange that the Tibetan speakers being the permanent settlers of the state and not having knowledge of Kannada and the reasons for the same are to be probed.

Between 2001 and 2011, the percentage of other language speakers reporting Kannada as their first subsidiary language has dropped: Hindi- 54.17% to 52.63%, Konkani-64.77% to 62.20%, Malayalam-53.74% to 51.09%, Tamil-56.94% to 56.44%, English-33.15% to 30.47%.

Table - 17
Karnataka 2001-2011
Spread of other languages among Kannada speakers

	2001 %	2011 %
Hindi	5.32	-4.40
Konkani	0.13	-0.12
Malayalam	0.06	0.50
Marathi	1.41	1.50
Tamil	0.72	0.73
Telugu	6.08	7.20
Urdu	0.25	0.29
Coorgi	0.05	-0.02
English	10.31	-8.24
Tulu	0.50	-0.46



In 1971, only 4.42% of the Kannada speakers had reported as they know English as first subsidiary language and 1.37% Hindi as third subsidiary language in addition to their mother tongue Kannada.

After 50 years also position of English remains unchanged as the second subsidiary language and Hindi as the third subsidiary language of Kannada speakers in Karnataka. However, the percentage of English subsidiary has increased from 2.42% in 1971 to 8.24% in

2011 and Hindi the third subsidiary from 1.37 % to 4.40%. But, like other languages, in case of Kannada speakers also there is drop in the reporting of other language as their first subsidiary language during 2001-2011: Hindi-5.32% to 4.40%, English-10.31% to 8.24%, Konkani-0.13% to 0.12%, Coorgi-0.05% to 0.02%, and Tulu-0.50 to 0.46%. Reasons for drop in Hindi and English bilingualism among Kannada speakers between 2001 and 2011 needs to be investigated further.

Inference

Though population of Kannada speakers is increasing in Karnataka, their population is decreasing in India from decade to decade. The population of Hindi speakers is fast increasing more than the speakers of all other languages in Karnataka. Kannada is not spreading fast outside the state. But instead it is decreasing in some of the states in the country. Percentage of bilinguals and trilinguals is much above the national average in the state. English and not Hindi continues to be accepted as the first subsidiary language by Kannada speakers.

Some of the tribal mother tongues are dead in the state and some others are dying due to the mother tongue shift taking place towards majority mother tongues with social and economic power.

Karnataka in India is a living example of endangerment of tribal languages/mother tongues in 21st century.

Data Sources

1. Karnataka State Gazetteer Vol - I. 1982. Government of Karnataka. Bangalore.
2. Decennial Language Tables of the Census of India. Government of India.