

## Linguistic Demography of Coastal Karnataka (A Habitat of Maximum Speakers of Unspecified Mother Tongues)

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The 1971 Census of India splits the Karnataka State into four geographical reigns: Coastal, Malnad, Southern Maidan and Northern Maidan. The districts are grouped in these regions are: 1. Coastal (South Kanara) 2. Malnad (North Kanara, Shimoga, Chikmagalur and Coorg) 3. Northern Maidan (Bidar, Gulbarga, Raichur, Bellary, Bijapur, Belgaum and Dharwar) and 4. Southern Maidan (Chitradurga, Tumkur, Hassan, Mysore, Mandya, Bangalore and Kolar).

In order to study of linguistic demography, by looking into the contact of the districts with the sea line of the state, the present-day Dakshina Kannada, Udupi and Uttara Kannada districts are considered as Coastal Districts of the State. The state has a coastline of around 370 kilometres. According to the 2011 Census Dakshina Kannada has 44.420%, Uttara Kannada 30.550% and Udupi 25.08% of the population of the Coastal Karnataka.

During the British rule, Kannada speaking regions of today's Karnataka were under the administration of 20 kingdoms (samsthanas)/district (jille)/ regions (prantyas) etc. The present-day coastal Karnataka was part of the Madras and Bombay Presidencies. Since 1947 and till 1956, Dakshina Kannada district was with the Madras Province. It became part of Karnataka in 1956 in the process of the reorganisation of the states on linguistic lines. The Uttara Kannada district though was with the Bombay Presidency under the British has undergone many changes in its composition of talukas etc., and it became part of Karnataka in 1960. The South Canara district was split into Dakshina Kannada and Udupi districts in 1997.

While discussing the *Linguistic Ecology of India* Mallikarjun (2019) had said that "...in the context of the Census of India, a 'mother tongue' is a concrete entity/unit and 'language' is an abstract entity /unit. Hence from the time census enumeration is undertaken in India, it elicits information on 'mother tongue' from the people. Once such data is gathered on mother tongue of the individuals..." languages are arrived at

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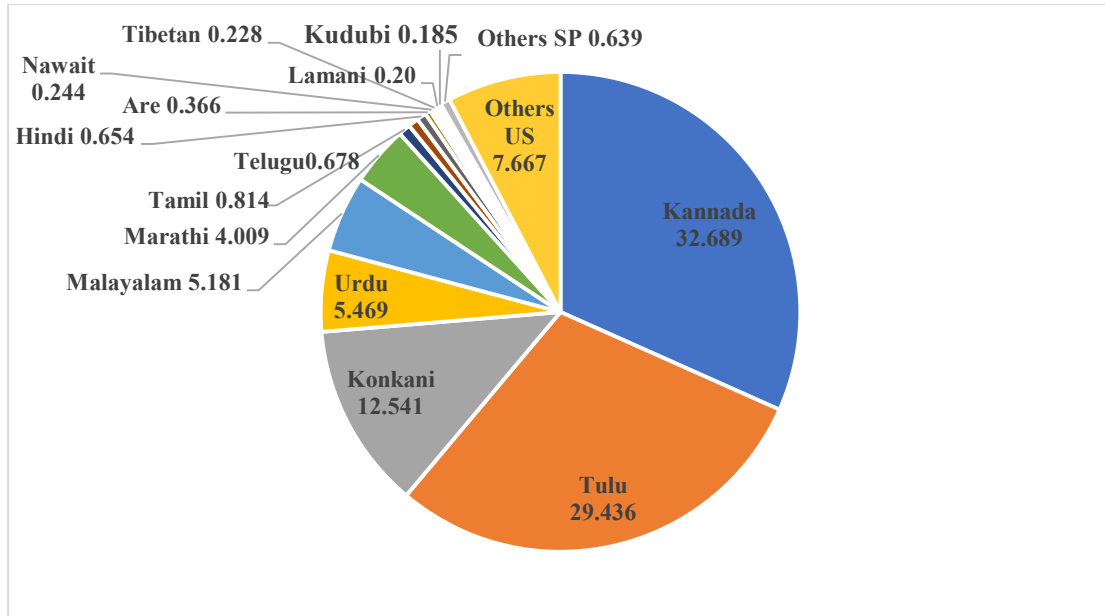
applying genetic or/and functional criteria. So, all Indian languages are mother tongues but all mother tongues of India are not languages. The decision of the Census of India (2011) that "...an inventory of mother tongues returned by 10,000 or more mother tongue speakers are grouped under appropriate languages at the all-India level... others are placed in 'other' mother tongue category". In this background it is fascinating to note that out of 3,86,552 'other' mother tongue speakers in Karnataka, coastal Karnataka has a unique distinction of having 'other' unspecified (US) mother tongue speakers numbering - Dakshina Kannada:3,35,775, Udupi: 23,712 and Uttara Kannada 1,220. I shall discuss the details in the following paragraphs about this category of mother tongues and their distribution. I think that this particular linguistic demographic situation has no parallel in the country.

Hence, here while discussing *Linguistic Demography of Coastal Karnataka*, we are debating about spread of mother tongues in the three coastal districts. Any discussion about *Indian languages* is not complete without a discussion about the core elements of languages-mother tongues. The table and the chart below illustrate the linguistic demography of the coastal Karnataka in terms of mother tongues as signified in the latest Census of India 2011.

**Table-1**  
**Mother tongues in Coastal Karnataka:2011**

<b>Mother tongues</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Mother tongues</b>	<b>%</b>
Kannada	31.689	Telugu	0.678
Tulu	29.436	Hindi	0.654
Konkani	12.541	Are*	0.366
Others US	7.667	Nawait*	0.244
Urdu	5.469	Tibetan	0.228
Malayalam	5.181	Lamani*	0.200
Marathi	4.009	Kudubi*	0.185
Tamil	0.814	Others SP	0.639

\*Mother tongues amalgamated into other languages



In Coastal Karnataka, Kannada is the mother tongue of 32.689%, Tulu of 29.436%, Konkani of 12.541% speakers. The percentage of the rest of the mother tongue speakers is illustrated in the table-land chart above. There are two more important dimensions of linguistic demography here. One is mother tongues amalgamated into languages and another one is a category of unspecified mother tongues. If we discuss the linguistic demography in terms of languages only, we fail to give due honour to the mother tongues, which have lost their individual identity since they are amalgamated into different languages.

Here in coastal Karnataka some such mother tongues are - Are: 0.366%, Kudubi:0.185 Nawait: 0.244% and Lamani: 0.200%. They have been merged into the languages - Marathi, Konkani and Hindi based on various criterion formulated by the Census. In the table-1 and chart above Others SP refers to the mother tongues of the scheduled and non-scheduled languages. Here it is necessary to record that *A Survey of Konkani in Karnataka, Goa, and Maharashtra* was conducted by the Language Division of The Registrar General, Census of India between July 1969 and May 1970 for identifying the Konkani speakers and their speech. It reported that “As per 1961 Census the total Konkani population in Karnataka was returned under four mother tongue names- Daldi, Goanese, Konkani, and Nawait”. Now in 2011 only Nawait has surfaced but no other mother tongues.

The second overlooked category of mother tongues are *unspecified* mother tongues. When we observe the distribution of such unspecified mother tongue speakers in Karnataka – (86.864%) majority of them are in Dakshina Kannada (16.068%) and the rest of them in Udupi (2.013%) and Uttara Kannada (0.084%). We know only numbers of speakers of those mother tongues but not the names of their mother tongues

in public domain. Such mother tongues are spoken by 3,35,775 persons. A huge number. That means as per the norms of the Census -2011, on All India basis mother tongues of less than 10,000 speakers belong to this group. So, in coastal Karnataka more than 34 names of mother tongues are unknown to the general public, a loss of the rich intangible heritage that is embedded in them. The table below illustrates the distribution of them in talukas of two districts.

**Table-2**  
**Unspecified mother tongue speakers-2011**

District/ Taluk	%	District/ Taluk	%
<b>Dakshina Kannada</b>	<b>86.864</b>	<b>Udupi</b>	<b>6.134</b>
Mangalore	54.404	Udupi	71.141
Bantwal	28.016	Karkal	16.848
Beltangadi	12.199	Kundapura	12.010
Puttur	5.272	-	-
Sulya	0.105	-	-

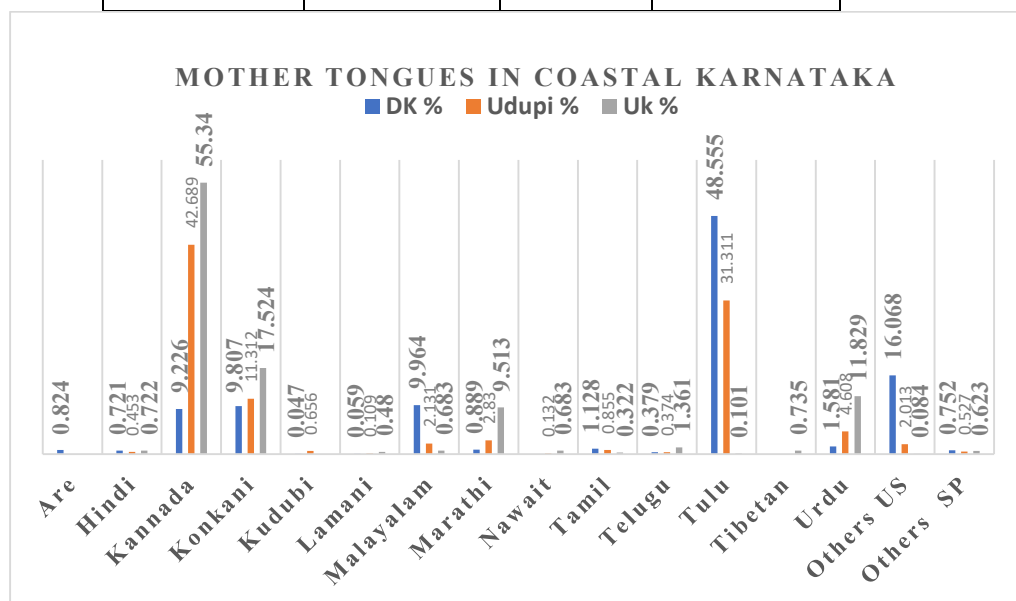
At the taluka level maximum unspecified mother tongue speakers are in Mangalore and Udupi talukas only and a very small number of them are in Sulya taluka of Dakshina Kannada district. The Table-2 illustrates the same.

The Table-3 and the chart there on illustrates the distribution of speakers of various mother tongues in the three districts of the coastal Karnataka thus providing a comparative picture. The mother tongues with the \* mark in the table-3 below is having a very smaller number of speakers in the concerned districts Are- 7 in Udupi and 6 in Uttara Kannada, Kudubi -37 in Uttara Kannada, Nawait -136 in Dakshina Kannada, Tibetan -131 in Dakshina Kannada and 33 in Udupi districts. Majority of Are speakers being in Dakshina Kannada (0.824%), Nawait are in Uttara Kannada (0.683%) and Udupi (0.132%), Kudubi are in Udupi (0.656%) and Dakshina Kannada (0.047%).

**Table-3**  
**Mother tongues in three districts of Coastal Karnataka-2011**

Mother tongues 2011	Dakshina Kannada %	Udupi %	Uttara Kannada%
Are	0.824	*	*
Hindi	0.721	0.453	0.722
Kannada	9.226	42.689	55.34
Konkani	9.807	11.312	17.524

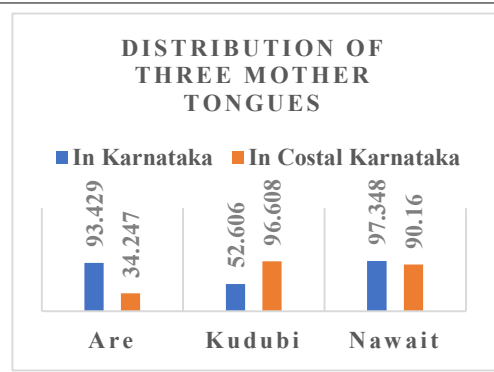
Kudubi	0.047	0.656	*37
Lamani	0.059	0.109	0.480
Malayalam	9.964	2.131	0.683
Marathi	0.889	2.830	9.513
Nawait	*	0.132	0.683
Tamil	1.128	0.855	0.322
Telugu	0.379	0.374	1.361
Tulu	48.555	31.311	0.101
Tibetan	*	*	0.735
Urdu	1.581	4.608	11.829
Others US	16.068	2.013	0.084
Others SP	0.752	0.527	0.623



The table-4 and the chart following this illustrates the distribution of the three mother tongues in Karnataka and their percentage in Karnataka and the coastal Karnataka.

**Table-4**  
**Distribution of the three new mother tongues**

Mother tongues	% In Karnataka	% In Coastal Karnataka
Are	93.429	34.247
Kudubi	52.606	96.608
Nawait	97.348	90.16



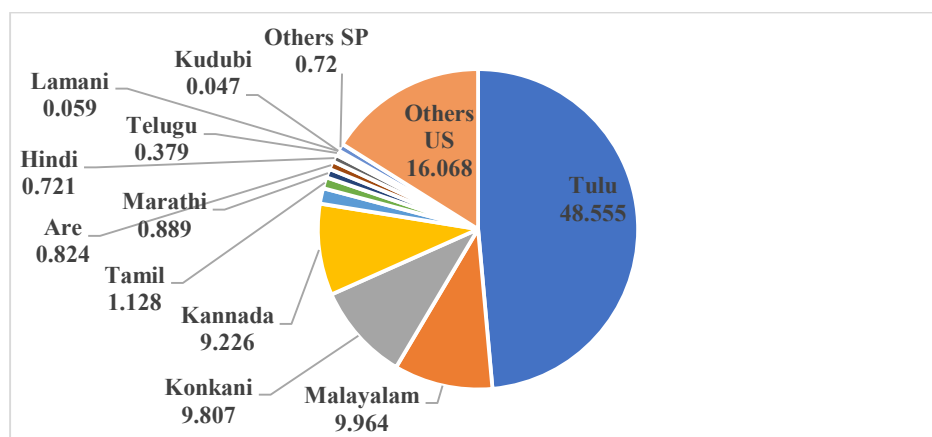
Majority speakers of these three mother tongues- Are (93.429%), Kudubi (52.606%) and Nawait (97.348%) are in Karnataka. Among them two mother tongue speakers Kudubi (96.608%) and Nawait (90.160%) are in coastal Karnataka only.

Kannada, the state Official Language is a majority Mother tongue in two districts - Udupi (42.689%) and Uttara Kannada (55.34%). Tulu is the majority mother tongue in Dakshina Kannada (48.555%), here Kannada is the mother tongue of 9.226% of speakers. The percentage of Malayalam speakers (9.984%) is more in Dakshina Kannada than Kannada speakers. Also, in Udupi Kannada speakers (42.689%) outnumber Tulu speakers (31.311%). In Uttara Kannada, Kannada speakers (55.34%) outnumber Konkani speakers (17.521%). Urdu is the third numerically large mother tongue in Uttara Kannada (11.829%) and second large one in Udupi (4.608%).

With this comparative information of mother tongues in the coastal districts of the state we can look at the linguistic demography of mother tongues in these three districts autonomously, district wise including their rural and urban distribution. Since the tables and charts of mother tongues are self-explanatory, only their rural and urban distribution is explained.

**Table-5**  
**Mother tongues in -2011 Dakshina Kannada**

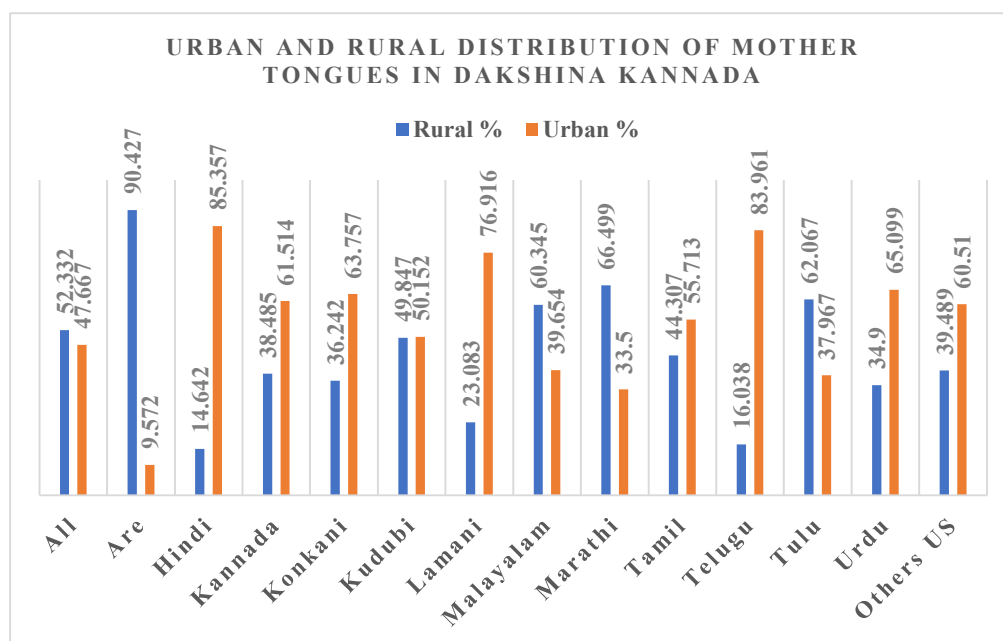
Mother tongues	%	Mother tongues	%
Tulu	48.555	Are	0.824
Malayalam	9.964	Hindi	0.721
Konkani	9.807	Telugu	0.379
Kannada	9.226	Lamani	0.059
Urdu	1.581	Kudubi	0.047
Tamil	1.128	Others SP	0.752
Marathi	0.889	Others US	16.068



**Table-6**  
**Rural and Urban distribution of Mother tongues in Dakshina Kannada District**

Mother tongues	Rural %	Urban %	Mother tongues	Rural %	Urban %
All	52.332	47.667	Malayalam	60.345	39.654
Are	90.427	9.572	Marathi	66.499	33.500
Hindi	14.642	85.357	Tamil	44.307	55.713
Kannada	38.485	61.514	Telugu	16.038	83.961
Konkani	36.242	63.757	Tulu	62.067	37.967
Kudubi	49.847	50.152	Urdu	34.900	65.099
Lamani	23.083	76.916	Others US	39.489	60.510

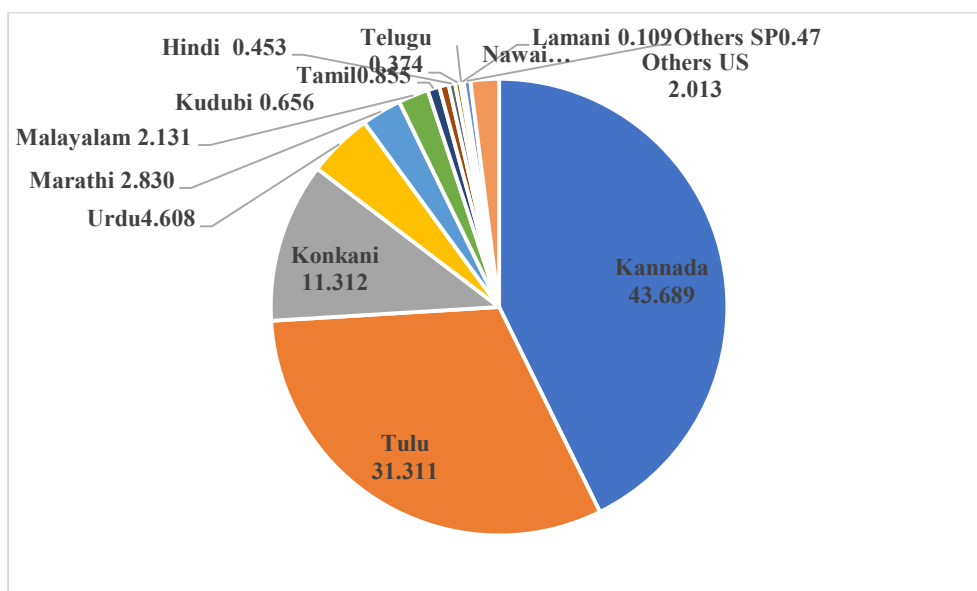
The rural areas (52.322%) are more populated than the urban areas (47.667%). Majority speakers of mother tongues Are (90.427%), Malayalam (60.345%), Marathi (66.499%) and Tulu (62.967%) are in rural areas. At the same time majority speakers of Hindi (85.357%), Kannada (65.514%), Konkani (63.757%), Lamani (76.916%), Tamil (55.713%), Telugu (83.961%), Urdu (65.099%) and Unspecified mother tongues (60.510%) are in Urban areas.



**Table-7**  
**Mother tongues in Udipi District-2011**

Mother tongues	%	Mother tongues	%
Kannada	42.689	Tamil	0.855
Tulu	31.311	Kudubi	0.656

Konkani	11.312	Hindi	0.453
Urdu	4.608	Telugu	0.374
Marathi	2.830	Nawait	0.132
Malayalam	2.131	Lamani	0.109
Others US	2.013	Others SP	0.47



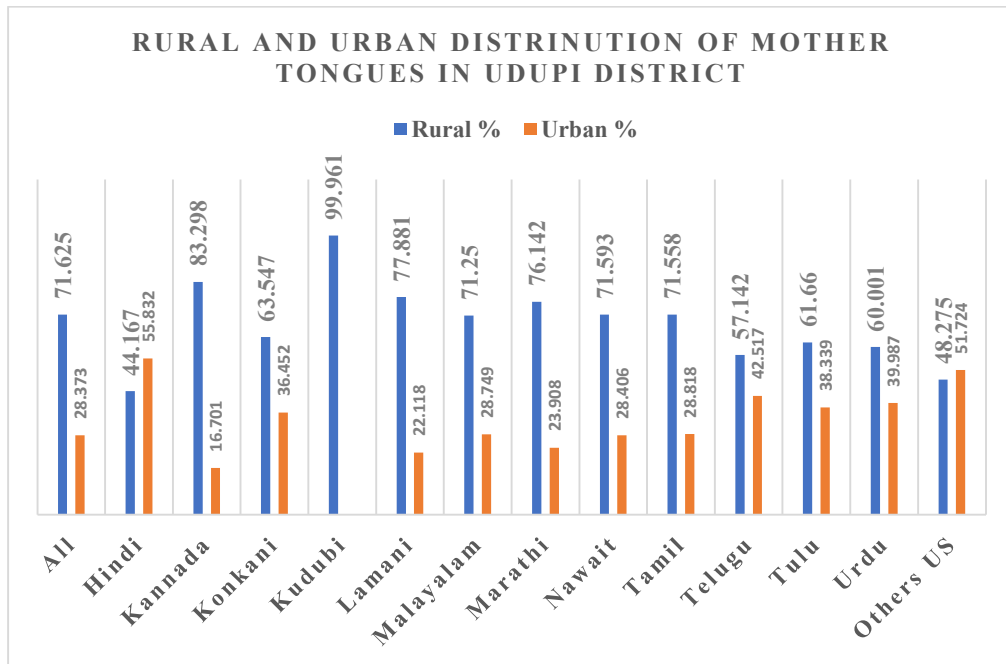
**Table-8**

**Rural and Urban distribution of mother tongues in Udupi district**

Mother tongues	Rural %	Urban %	Mother tongues	Rural %	Urban %
All	71.625	28.373	Marathi	76.142	23.908
Hindi	44.167	55.832	Nawait	71.593	28.406
Kannada	83.298	16.701	Tamil	71.558	28.818
Konkani	63.547	36.452	Telugu	57.142	42.517
Kudubi	99.961	-	Tulu	61.660	38.339
Lamani	77.881	22.118	Urdu	60.001	39.987
Malayalam	71.250	28.749	Others US	48.275	51.724

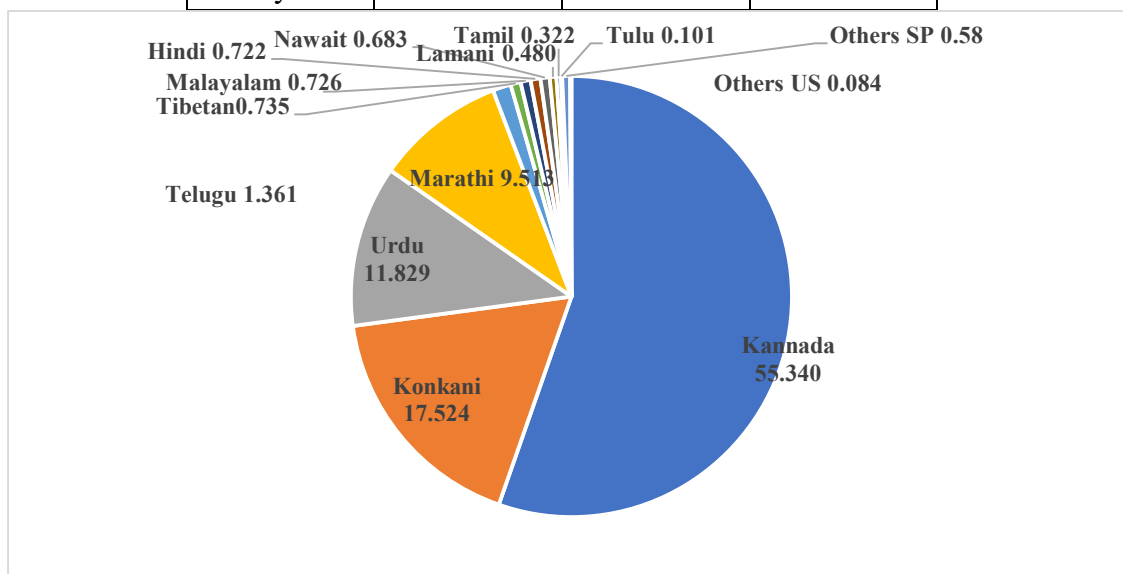
In case of Udupi district also the rural areas (71.525%) are more populated than the urban areas (28.373%). Majority speakers of mother tongues- Kannada (83.298%), Konkani (63.547%), Kudubi (99.961%), Lamani (77.881%), Malayalam (71.250%), Marathi (76.142%), Nawait (71.593%), Tamil (71.558%), Telugu (57.142%), Tulu (61.660%) and Urdu (60.001%) are in rural areas. Whereas the majority speakers of Hindi (55.832%) and Unspecified mother tongues (51.724%) are in Urban areas.





**Table-9**  
**Mother tongues in Uttara Kannada-2011**

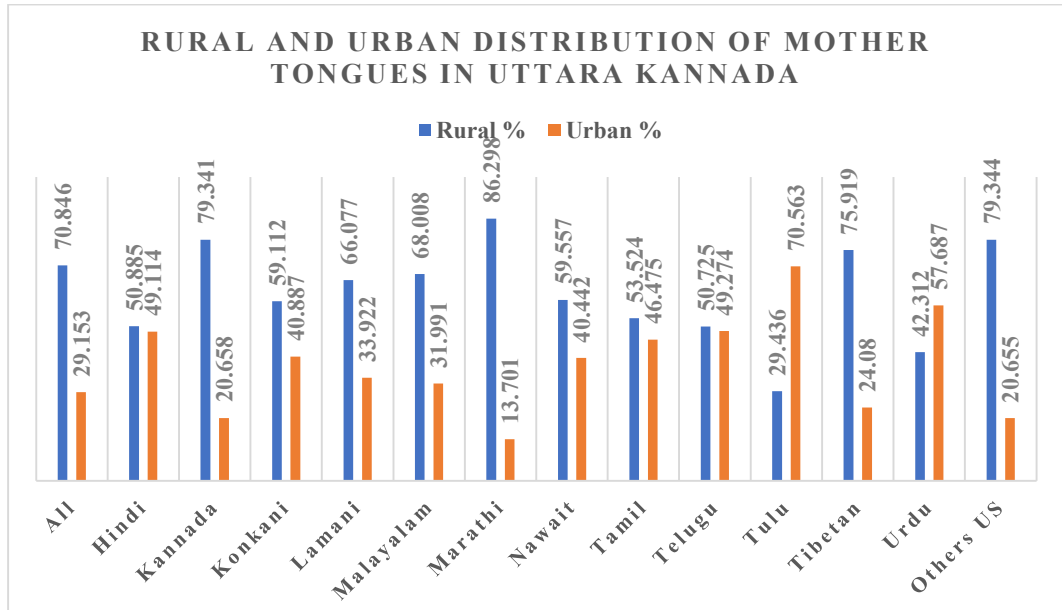
Mother tongues	%	Mother tongues	%
Kannada	55.340	Hindi	0.722
Konkani	17.524	Nawait	0.683
Urdu	11.829	Lamani	0.480
Marathi	9.513	Tamil	0.322
Telugu	1.361	Tulu	0.101
Tibetan	0.735	Others SP	0.58
Malayalam	0.726	Others US	0.084



**Table-10**  
**Rural and Urban distribution of Mother tongues in Uttara Kannada**

Mother tongues	Rural %	Urban %	Mother tongues	Rural %	Urban %
All	70.846	29.153	Nawait	59.557	40.442
Hindi	50.885	49.114	Tamil	53.524	46.475
Kannada	79.341	20.658	Telugu	50.725	49.274
Konkani	59.112	40.887	Tulu	29.436	70.563
Lamani	66.077	33.922	Tibetan	75.919	24.080
Malayalam	68.008	31.991	Urdu	42.312	57.687
Marathi	86.298	13.701	Others US	79.344	20.655

In Uttara Kannada district also rural areas (70.846%) are more populated than the urban areas (29.153%). Majority speakers of mother tongues- Kannada (79.341%), Konkani (59.112%), Lamani (66.077%), Malayalam (68.008%), Marathi (86.298%), Nawait (59.557%), Tamil (53.524%), Tibetan (75.919%) and other unspecified mother tongue speakers are in rural areas. Whereas the majority speakers of Tulu (70.563%) and Urdu (57.687 %) are in Urban areas.



When we look at the population distribution in the rural and urban areas of these three coastal districts comparatively, we find that more population in Udupi and Uttara Kannada districts are in rural areas than in Dakshina Kannada district. Majority of Hindi speakers are in urban areas in Dakshina Kannada but majority of them are in rural areas

in Udupi and Uttara Kannada. In Udupi and Uttara Kannada majority of Kannada speakers are in rural areas and in Dakshina Kannada they are in urban areas. Similarly, majority of Konkani and Lamani speakers are in rural areas in Udupi and Uttara Kannada and a smaller number of them in Dakshina Kannada. In all the three districts majority of Malayalam and Marathi speakers are in rural areas. However, majority of Tamil and Telugu speakers are in urban areas. Majority of Tulu speakers are in rural areas in Dakshina Kannada and Udupi, in Uttara Kannada they are in urban areas. Majority of Urdu speakers are in urban areas in Dakshina Kannada and Uttara Kannada and in rural areas in Udupi. The majority of other unspecified mother tongue speakers are in Urban areas in Dakshina Kannada, Udupi but in rural areas in Uttara Kannada.

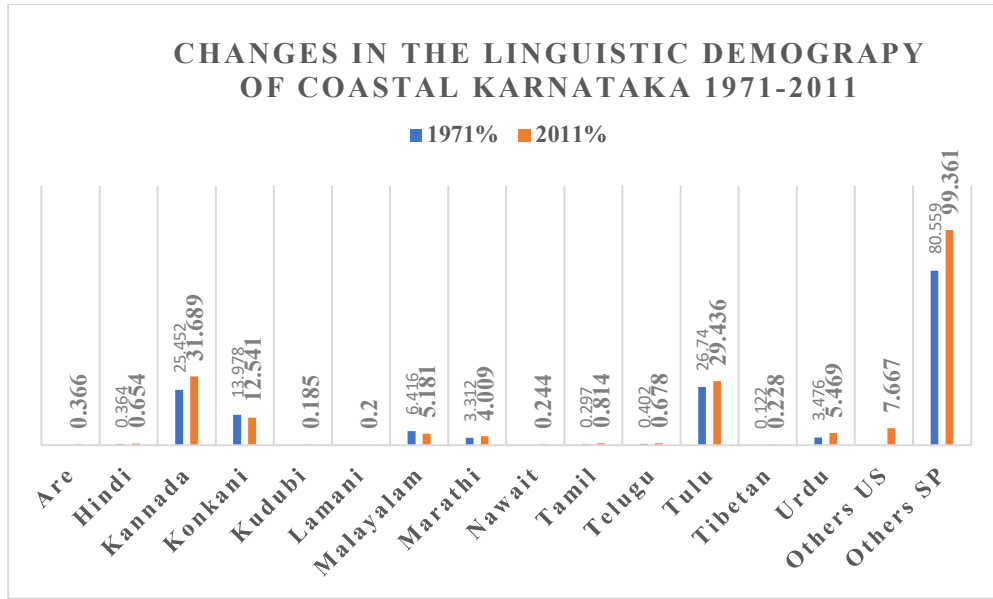
Now, we can look at the changes that have taken place in the linguistic demography of coastal Karnataka in 50 years 1971 and 2011. The Table-11 and the chart thereafter illustrate the same.

**Table - 11**  
**Changes in the linguistic demography of Coastal Karnataka 1971-2011**

<b>Mother Tongues</b>	<b>1971 %</b>	<b>2011 %</b>	<b>Mother Tongues</b>	<b>1971 %</b>	<b>2011 %</b>
<b>Are</b>	*	<b>0.366</b>	<b>Nawait</b>	*	<b>0.244</b>
Hindi	0.364	0.654	Tamil	0.297	0.814
Kannada	25.452	31.689	Telugu	0.402	0.678
Konkani	13.978	12.541	Tulu	26.740	29.436
<b>Kudubi</b>	*	<b>0.185</b>	Tibetan	0.122	0.228
<b>Lamani</b>	*	<b>0.200</b>	Urdu	3.476	5.469
Malayalam	6.416	5.181	Others US	*	7.667
Marathi	3.312	4.009	Others SP	80.559	99.361

\*No information

During 1971-2011 in the coastal Karnataka the percentage of speakers of Konkani (13.978% to 12.541%) and Malayalam has decreased (6.416% to 5.181%). Whereas the percentage of speakers of Kannada (25.452% to 31.689%), Marathi (3.312% to 4.009%), Tamil (0.297% to 0.814%), Telugu (0.402% to 0.678%), Tulu (26.740% to 29.436%), Tibetan (0.122% to 0.228%) and Urdu (3.476% to 5.469%) has increased.



Here, in the context of linguistic demography of coastal Karnataka shift in mother tongue and loss of mother tongue by the tribal population needs to be recorded. The 1971 Census of India tribal mother tongues of Karnataka like Koraga, Kudubi, Malekudi etc., spoken by - 879, 1090 and 165 speakers respectively have lost their linguistic identity due to their numerically marginal nature have got merged into 'others' in Karnataka in 2011.

However, some information about some of these tribes and their mother tongue could be found elsewhere in the Census of India 2011. Now, Kudubi is reported as the mother tongue by 0.185% of different tribal population in these districts. But some of the tribes are reporting some other mother tongue/s of their environment as their mother tongue. Out of 4631 Koragas in Dakshina Kannada 4112 are reporting Tulu as their mother tongue. Whereas in Udupi out of 8966 Koragas 5037 are reporting Tulu and 2348 Kannada as their mother tongues. The Malekudi tribal population in Dakshina Kannada is 6834 and in Udupi 1662. Among them in Dakshina Kannada 6662 persons and in Udupi 1662 persons are reporting Tulu as their mother tongue.

We hope that the next Census of India whenever held, will provide the names and identity of the mother tongues of 3,60,707 unspecified mother tongue speakers in Coastal Karnataka.

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