Language Choice and Use of Delhi Malayalees in Multilingual Settings

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Abstract

Transnational migration generally results in multilingualism. The migrant families have a minimum of two languages at their disposal. In addition, the language policies of each families differ. The families along with other domains determine the language use choice of an individual. Apart from the familial background, the generation that the migrant belongs to also determines the language use and choice of a multilingual.

Three Delhi based Malayalee migrant families formed the data for this study. The three families vary in terms of the combination of different migrant generations. The patterns of language use among the Malayalee migrants in different domains and across different interlocutors is the focus of this study.

Keywords: Delhi Malayalees, Multilingual Settings, Multilingualism, Migrant generations, Patterns of language Choice and Use

1. Introduction and Background

How do multilinguals use their two or more languages that they have at their disposal? The simple answer would be- multilinguals use their two languages alternatively to communicate with people belonging to different language backgrounds. Needless to say, when a multilingual meets a monolingual, they may choose to speak the language of the monolingual speaker. However, if a multilingual meets another multilingual, the answer may not be that apparent. The choice and use of the language would depend on various factors such as the domain and more importantly the interlocutors (Meyerhoff, 2006; Fishman, 1972; Weinrich, 1968; Schmidt-Rohr, 1932).

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The interlocutors play an important role in determining the language choice and use of the multilingual (Meyerhoff, 2006). The language choice and use does not solely depend on the speaker, in case both are multilingual, but it also depends on the interlocutors' degree of multilingualism as well. While operating on a scale of language mode, the multilingual speakers can activate their language mode depending on the interlocutor. If the interlocutor is a monolingual, the monolingual mode is activated and if the interlocutor is multilingual, the multilingual mode is activated. The language modes operate on a continuum and are not dichotomous (Grosjean, 2001).

In addition to the interlocutors, the domains have an important role in determining language choice and use of a multilingual speaker. Domain based analyses of language use first proposed by Schmidt-Rohr (1932). He proposed as many as nine domains of language use to account for the language use of expatriate Germans in multilingual environments. These include: (1) family (2) playground (3) School, including (a) language of instruction, (b) language taught, (c) language used between classes, (4) Church (5) Literature (6) Newspapers (7) Army (8) Courts (9) Administration. Following Schmidt-Rohr, Fishman (1972) proposed five important domains to judge the patterns of language use across a variety of multilingual settings. These include family, friendship, religion, education and employment.

There are also factors that influence the concept of domain- topic, role relation and locale (Fishman, 1972). Topic acts as a regulator for language use; the topic of conversation influences the language choice with an interlocutor. The role relation is also determined by the interlocutors. For instance, while speaking with the father, language X may be used and with the mother language Y. Similarly, different languages may possibly be used with siblings and peers. The locale is the place where the conversation happens.

With regard to various domains, it is reported that 'family' tops the list (Fishman, 1972; Weinrich, 1968; Schmidt-Rohr, 1932). Family is the first domain in which an individual is exposed to (Hazen, 2002). The social attitudes of the parents (along with other members) and the language policies implemented in the family are considered an important factor in determining the language use (Curd-Christiansen, 2013; De Houwer, 1999; Harding & Riley, 1986; Lanza, 1997; Lyon, 1996). If parents have a negative attitude towards a language, it is highly likely that the language would not be used (De Houwer, 1999). Apart from the parental attitudes, the existence of siblings (especially elder ones) increases the opportunity for the younger one to get exposed to the language of the host community (Hoffman, 1985). However, if the parental attitude is positive, the individual could end up with a strong linguistic skill-set (King &Lanza, 2018; Pauwels, 2005).

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In addition, the nature of exposure in a familial background influences the individual's multilingual ability. The more the individual is exposed to a language as a child, the more they use it. Thus the individual becomes more proficient in the language (Harding & Riley, 1986). This study focuses on three Malayalee families who have migrated to Delhi. Almost all the members of these three families are multilingual in Malayalam (native language), Hindi (language of the host community) as well as English. Malayalam is the native language that the migrants carried with them.

Hindi is the super-stratum language of the speech community. It is also the official language of India. Hindi is used by a major part of the Indian population for socialization. In addition, Hindi is also taught in all the states as compulsory curricula across India. English is widely used for socialization, especially among the youth. It is also used in professional and educational domains as the medium of instruction.

The language choice and use of these families in various domains and across different interlocutors is the main focus of this study.

2. Migrant Families from Kerala to Delhi

People migrate from one country to the other, one state to the other, or one city to the other. Inter-state mobility is very common in India. One such mobile community in India is that of the Malayalam speakers (Malayalees) from Kerala (the southern state of India). Migrants from Kerala have established settlements across the globe and in various cities within India. The cosmopolitan Union Territory of Delhi is one such hub for many migrants including Malayalees. In Delhi, the Malayalees have a strong well knit community. To add to their bondage, there are many associations such as the Delhi Malayalee Association and for the youths in the Delhi University, the Mythree association which ensures the social welfare of Malayalees in Delhi. These social organizations also celebrate the Kerala festivals (Onam and Vishu) and host monthly/annual get-togethers.

The Malayalee migrants have also ensured that the religious institutions, consisting of the Malayalee population, are established. There is a temple in East Delhi which is a Malayalee temple (Guruvayurappan Temple). Close to the temple area, there is an auditorium which showcases the latest Malayalam movies. In addition, there are weekly feasts which include the traditional Kerala meal, *saḍya*, which is eaten on a banana leaf. There are also many churches spread over Delhi where the services are conducted in Malayalam.

Most of the Malayalee families ensure proper Malayalam spoken at home. The Malayalees in Delhi thus have strong social networks not only in Delhi but continues to be an integral part of the family networks in Kerala.

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Three Malayalee families, belonging to three migrant generations settled in Delhi form the data of this study. The three families have comparative socio-economic backgrounds and belong to the same residential area, Mayur Vihar Phase-1, of East Delhi.

3. Methodology and Participants

The data-set consists of voice specimens of oral interaction of the participants among themselves and also in different domains. The language domains included the home environment (family), local community (peers/friends) and social environment (churches/temples). Within these domains, the interlocutor formed an integral part of the study. The language choice of each participant in various domains was observed. This formed the main data for this study. The data consisted of around 20 hours of recordings which was drawn with the help of a digital recorder.

The data was quantitatively analyzed using GoldVarb 3.0 b3 (D. Sankoff, Tagliamonte& Smith, 2005). Coding was done for linguistic and social factors. The social factors included age, generation, domain, language and interlocutors. It was based on these social factors that the three migrant families were analyzed.

The three families migrated to Delhi from different parts of Kerala and they consist of different combinations of migrant generations. In the first family, the wife forms the first, the husband forms the second and their two sons form the third generation Malayalee migrants in Delhi. In the second family, the case is reversed. The husband forms the first, the wife the second and their children form the third generation Malayalee migrants in Delhi. In the third family, both the parents form the first generation and their daughters form the second-generation Malayalee migrants in Delhi.

	Family 1 (Theodore family)			Family 2 (Benjamin family)			Family 3 (Babu family)		
Generation	Relation	Name	Age	Relation	Name	Age	Relation	Name	Age
1st Migrant	Mother	Sandra	47	Father	Subin	39	Mother	Sapna	39
							Father	Rajeesh	45
2nd Migrant	Father	Raijiv	52	Mother	Limmy	32	Daughter	Rajalakshmi	13
3rd Migrant	Son	Sid	21	Daughter	Shallot	5	Daughter	Surya	3
	Son	Sharath	13	Son	Kevin	9			

Table 1 Malayalee migrant families in Delhi

4. Language Choice within the Family and Code Switching

The families may consist of members belonging to different migrant generations. The combinations of different migrant generations within a family make it interesting to note the

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output (in terms of language choice and use) with regard to the various types of input. In relation to the language use of the participants in the family domain, many instances of code-switching also arise. The language choice among the members of the family and a few instances of code-switching among the three families are discussed in the following subsections.

4.1 Theodore Family

Rajiv's parents migrated to Delhi during the mid-1950s and so Rajiv (52 years) is the second Malayalee migrant generation in Delhi. He is married to Sandra (47 years) who moved to Delhi with marriage in 1992. They have two sons, Sid (21 years) and Sharath (13 years) who represent the third Malayalee migrant generation in Delhi. Rajiv (2nd Migrant Generation) insists on speaking proper Malayalam at home and therefore all the members of the family speak in Malayalam consciously. But often Rajiv and the younger son (Sharath, 3rd Migrant) code switch to Hindi. The conversation is initiated in Malayalam but then it continues in Hindi as in (1).

(1) Rajiv: *ŋinəkkuveNo?* (Malayalam)
           you-gen want-qstn particle
           Do you want?
   Sharath: *nɛhi, mujhenɛhicahiye*(Hindi)
           no   I- gen no   want
           No, I do not want.
   Rajiv: *kyũ?* (Hindi)
            why?
   Sharath: *bhuknəhihɛ*(Hindi)
            hunger no   be-present
            I am not hungry

This instance of code switching shows that even though consciously Rajiv (2nd Migrant Generation) wants to use Malayalam at home; the influence of the language of the host community (Hindi) contributes in terms of language choice. Sandra, their mother (1st migrant generation) speaks with the husband and children in Malayalam. She doesn't use Hindi or English while conversing with them. What is interesting is that the brothers, who represent the second locally born generation converses only in Malayalam. The elder brother (Sid) does not use Hindi in his speech while conversing with any member of the family. He strictly separates the two languages and uses Hindi with his peers and with anyone outside the house

4.2 Benjamin Family

Subin, who is 39 years of age migrated from Kerala in 2003 and settled in Delhi (his parents are currently residing in Kerala). He got married to Limmy (32 years) in 2005. Subin and Limmy contrast with the Theodore family in the sense that the husband (Subin) is from the first

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Malayalee migrant generation and the wife (Limmy) represents the second Malayalee migrant generation in Delhi and Subin is the first migrant generation. They have two children Kevin (9 years) and Shallot (5 years) who represent the third Malayalee migrant generation in Delhi. Limmy was born and brought up in Delhi. She has a younger brother and they converse with each other in Hindi and English. Before marriage, the use of Malayalam at home was very less. Only when her family visited Kerala for vacation, Malayalam was used with her grandparents and relatives. Limmy is comfortable in using Hindi and English with the Children. With her husband, maximal use of Malayalam can be seen in her speech. She tries to speak with all the relatives back home in Malayalam as she also wants to fit in. A lot of code switches can be seen in Limmy's conversation.

(2) Limmy (to Kevin): Where are you going? Wash your face and change your dress. Green Capri *pəhno* (wear) *ɔr* (and) t-shirt *pəhno* (wear).
(to the laundry boy) aaj ka he kya? (Is it today's [dress])
(to the interviewer) *hostel ʈiricupono?*(Do you have to go back to the hostel?)

All these code switches were in a single conversation. Limmy starts her conversation in English, with instances of code mixing in Hindi. Then Limmy responds in Hindi when the interlocutor was from the host community. Limmy then immediately switched to Malayalam while talking to a native Malayalee speaker. Subin (the husband) uses only Malayalam at home with the wife and children. Kevin (9 years) and Shallot (5 years) alternate between Malayalam and Hindi with each other. However, Shallot uses more Hindi in her speech compared to English and Malayalam. The influence of the host language on the native language can be seen.

4.3 Babu Family
Rajeesh came to Delhi for work in 1990. He got married and brought his wife Sapna in 1999. Rajeesh and Sapna belong to the same generation (first Malayalee migrants in Delhi). They have two daughters, Rajalakshmi who is 13 years old and N who is 3 years old. They represent the second Malayalee migrant generation in Delhi. Rajeesh is adamant on speaking only Malayalam at home. He made it a point that the eldest daughter (Rajalakshmi) is not only fluent in speaking Malayalam, but also ensured her literacy in the Malayalam language. She knows how to read and write in Malayalam. The younger daughter (Surya, 3 years) also uses proper Malayalam at Home despite her age, where she can get easily influenced by the host language.

(3) Interviewer: *ninakku leave aaṇ-o?*
you for leave be-pres-qstnprtcl.
Do you have leave?

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Surya: *leave allaavaḏiaaṇṇu*
Leave no leave be-pres
I don't have leave I have 'leave'.

Surya doesn't know the meaning of the English word 'leave' but knows the Malayalam counterpart *'avaḏi'*. This instance shows that the native language (Malayalam) is used, especially in the home environment despite the influence of the super-stratum language of the host community. In the case of this family, English is not widely used as compared to Hindi.

5. Patterns of Language Use by the Malayalee Migrants in Delhi

The patterns of language use among the Malayalee migrants are discussed in this section. In the day to day encounters, the three families use Malayalam, Hindi and English. This paper analyses the patterns of language use in various domains: (i) family- across interlocutors including Mother, Father, Spouse, Child, Siblings, (ii) friends- Peers/ Non- Malayalees, (iii) relatives -in Kerala (telephonic conversations) and (iv) religious institutions.

The patterns of language use among each family are analyzed separately.

5.1 Patterns of Language Use in Theodore Family

Table 2 depicts the use of English, Hindi and Malayalam in Theodore family in order of their usage. The data is based on their day to day interactions. The table drawn is based on the personal interactions as well as the observations made while interacting with one another in different environments- home, local community and religious institutes. The data was coded using GoldVarb 3.0 b3 and tabulated based on the language choice of the participants in different environments. The table depicts the degrees of language use of the three languages (Malayalam, Hindi and English) at their disposal.

Speaker (Generation)	Mother	Father	Spouse	Child	Sibling	Peers/ N-Mal	Relatives In Kerala	Religious Institutions
Sandra (1st Migrant)	M	M	M	MH E	M	H E	M E	MH E
Rajiv (2nd Migrant)	M H E	MH E	M H E	MH E	-	H E	ME	M H E
Sid (3rd Migrant)	M	M H E	-	-	M	H E	M E	M H E
Sharath (3rd Migrant)	MHE	MHE	-	-	M HE	H E	MH E	M H E

■ Used Minimally ■ Used Maximally ■ Used Almost Equally
H: Hindi E: English M: Malayalam

Table 2 Patterns of language use in Theodore family

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Sandra (47 years), who is from the first migrant generation, uses only Malayalam while speaking to her parents, husband (second migrant generation), and sisters, and with her relatives in Kerala. Only while interacting with her non- Malayalee friends in Delhi and domestic help, she uses Hindi. English is used minimally, but in case the Hindi equivalent cannot be recollected, then the use of English can be seen with domestic help and the other friends in Delhi.

Rajiv (52 years) belongs to the second migrant generation in Delhi. He maximally uses Malayalam with his parents, wife, relatives (in Kerala) and in Church. In the religious institutions and with the relatives in Kerala, Hindi is used along with English equally. In all the other domains, it is used minimally.

Sid (21 years) represents the third migrant generation. He uses Malayalam in the home environment. It is interesting to note that, despite being the third migrant generation, Malayalam is used maximally, especially in the home environment. Sid doesn't code switch to Hindi or English, even while conversing with his younger brother. He maintains the proper use of Malayalam. With the members of the church and other social domains, Malayalam is used widely. Sid uses Hindi and English only when necessary. It is also interesting to note that though Hindi is the dominant language of the host community, Sid prefers to use English more than Hindi.

Sharath (13 years) who represents the third migrant generation uses Malayalam maximally with the Mother, Father, Brother, Relatives and other extended networks in Kerala and in the Church. Hindi is used maximally with peers in the neighboring areas even if the peers include Malayalee speakers. The minimal use of Hindi can be seen with the Mother and the brother. English is used equally with Malayalam while talking to the relatives back home and in the Church. English is minimally used with the Mother, brother and peers.

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5.2 Patterns of Language use in Benjamin Family

Speaker (Generation)	Mother	Father	Spouse	Child	Sibling	Peers/ Non-M	Relatives In Kerala	Religious Institutions
Subin (1st Migrant)	M	M	M	MH E	M	H E	M	M H E
Limmy (2nd Migrant)	H M E	H ME	M H E	H EM	H EM	H E	M E	M H E
Kevin (3rd Migrant)	H M E	MH E	-	-	H EM	H E	M E	M H E
Shallot (3rdMigrant)	HME	HME	-	-	H ME	H E	MH E	H E M

■ Used Minimally ■ Used Maximally ■ Used Almost Equally
H: Hindi E: English M: Malayalam

Table 3 Patterns of language use in Benjamin family

The father, Subin (42 years) uses Malayalam with the parents, wife and siblings. Hindi is not used at all. In church Hindi and English are equally used and with the children Hindi and English are minimally used.

The most interesting pattern in terms of language choice and use can be seen in the speech of Limmy (32 years, 2nd migrant). Malayalam is maximally used with her husband, relatives in Kerala and in the church. Malayalam is minimally used with her brother. Hindi is maximally used with her brother, domestic help, colleagues and friends (in Delhi). Hindi, Malayalam and English are equally used with her children. Hindi and Malayalam are equally used with her parents and Hindi and English is equally used with the husband. While interacting with her parents, domestic help, and peers and among the church members, English is used minimally.

Kevin (9 years), who represents the third migrant generation, uses Malayalam maximally while conversing with his father, relatives in Kerala and in the church. With the mother Malayalam, Hindi and English are used equally. In the church and with his father, Hindi and English are used equally. With his relatives Hindi and English are used minimally and with the sister Malayalam and English are used minimally. The use of English in his day to day encounter is comparatively minimal.

Shallot (5 years) who represents the third migrant generation uses Malayalam maximally only while talking to her relatives in Kerala. Hindi is maximally used with the Mother, brother, friends. Hindi and Malayalam are equally used with the father and in church Malayalam, Hindi

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and English are equally used. With the mother and brother, English and Malayalam are equally used.

5.3 Patterns of Language use in Babu Family

Speaker (Generation)	Mother	Father	Spouse	Child	Sibling	Peers/ Non-M	Relatives In Kerala	Religious Institutions
Sapna (1st Migrant)	M	M	M	M	M	H E	M	MH E
Rajeesh (1st Migrant)	M	M	M	M	M	H E	M	MH E
Rajalakshmi (2nd Migrant)	M	M	-	-	MH E	H E	M	MH E
Surya (2nd Migrant)	M	M	-	-	M H E	H E	M	M H E

■ Used Minimally■ Used Maximally ■ Used Almost Equally
       H: Hindi E: English M: Malayalam
Table 4 Patterns of language use in Babu family

The patterns of language use are similar in the case of Sapna and Rajeesh, who are the first generation migrants. Malayalam is maximally used with the parents, spouses, children, siblings, relatives (in Kerala) and the members of religious institution (temple). Hindi and English are used minimally in the temples. In all the other domains Hindi and English is absent. Needless to say, Hindi is maximally used with the peers and domestic help.

Rajalakshmi (13 years) who is the second migrant generation uses Malayalam maximally with the parents, sister, relatives (in Kerala) and members of the temple. With the parents there is no use of English and Hindi at home. Hindi and English are used minimally with the relatives in Kerala and in the temple. Hindi and English are used minimally with the sister. English is used minimally with peers.

Surya (3 years) who is the third generation Malayalee migrant uses Malayalam maximally in most domains and across interlocutors excepting the friends and other speakers in the host community.

6. Summary and Conclusion

Across the three generations, similar patterns do arise. The first-migrant generation uses Malayalam wherever possible and only if the situation demands, Hindi is used. The second migration generation tries to use Malayalam in the contexts that they can use, but the influence

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of the local speech community often involuntarily allows them to code-switch in Hindi and English with the bilinguals. The third migrant generation uses Hindi more than English and Malayalam even if the interlocutor is a Malayalee (except in the case of Sid).

In terms of families as a unit, the three families show differences in their patterns. In the first family, Sharath (3rd migrant, 13 years) code switches among Malayalam and Hindi very often with the members at home. But his elder brother, who is of the same generation, uses Malayalam while conversing with his parents and his sibling. The pattern of the elder brother shows a contrastive pattern than that of the siblings, though they belong to the same migrant generation. Studies (Hoffman, 1985) have showed that the siblings influence the choice of language, usually favoring the language of the host community. In the case of the younger third generation migrant, this is true. But the case is opposite for the elder brother of the same generation. The influence of the host language is very minimal.

In the second family, the pattern of Limmy (2nd migrant, 37 years) is very interesting. There is a lot of code switching in her speech especially while conversing with her children. The use of the native language (Malayalam), the host language (Hindi) and English is almost equal. Therefore, the influence of the host language is seen in the language choice and use of her children as well.

The third family shows a different pattern compared to the other two families. The parents are strict on the proper use of Malayalam at home and use various language techniques (King & Lanza, 2018; Pauwels, 2005) to ensure proper use of Malayalam at home. As a result, their children are proficient in Malayalam and show a pattern similar to the first migrant generation.

This study shows that the social factors like age, did not contribute much to the language choice of the bilinguals. But the interlocutors, generation and more importantly, the families proved to be an important factor in the language choice and use among the participants of this study. Some families showed that the language of the host community has not made an impact in determining the language choice among the members of the family (Babu Family). On the contrary, certain families showed that the language of the host community highly influences the language choice, even though they want to maintain their native languages (Lawson, 2004; Taumoefolau, 2002)

Various studies on language maintenance (Subramoniam, 1977; Nadkarni, 1975; Gumperz & Wilson, 1971) and language shift (Dey, 2010; David et al., 2003; Clyne &Kipp, 1997; Paulston, 1994) have been reported. In addition, there are studies which shows that both language maintenance and language shift do occur as a result of two languages in contact within the host community (Sridhar, 1988; Satyanath, 1982; Mukherjee, 1980). This study is an additive

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study which suggests that in terms of language choice and use, family is the most important factor that determines whether the language of the migrants is maintained or shifted.

Apart from the Malayalee migrants in Delhi, upon observation, it is to be noted that similar patterns do arise in the Malayalee migrants even in the south Indian state of Karnataka, especially in Bangalore. In terms of language choice, and even in the use of certain phonemes, the second and third migrant generations have a pattern different from the first migrant generations. This pattern paves way for further analysis of the Malayalee migrants within India and across borders as well.

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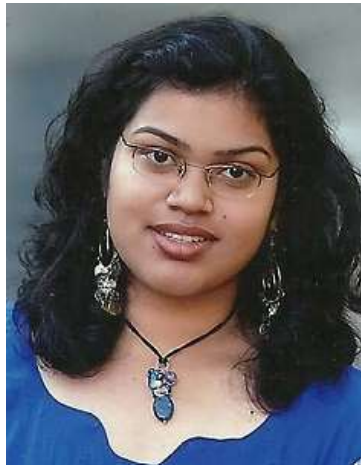
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