Code Mixing and Code Switching in Tamil Proverbs

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Abstract

Code mixing and code switching are common multilingual phenomena. These phenomena occur when bilinguals substitute a word or phrase from one language to another language.

In a language contact situation, the process of code mixing, code switching and interference do take place. Code mixing is the intra-sentential switching whereas code switching is the inter-sentential switching.

Language contact sometimes occurs when there is an increased social interaction between people who living as neighbourhood and have traditionally spoken different languages. But more frequently it is initiated by the spread of languages of power and prestige.

As far as Tamil proverbs are concerned, the social variables like age, religion, social class, and education are playing a vital role to bring language changes in the old version of Tamil proverbs. Such variables are cause to bring language changes at intra-sentential level only. The process of code switching is taking place at monolingual situation among the educated person according to the social context, i.e., in formal situation. Though

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many proverbs are having written form, some of them which are used in platform speech, school education etc., switching from spoken into written style.

There are two types of mixing found in Tamil proverbs, namely,

1. Mixing of linguistic elements from two different languages.
2. Mixing of dialectal forms from one dialect into other dialect.

In this paper an attempt is made to explain the types of code mixing and code switching found in Tamil proverbs and the reasons for such mixing will be explained.

Results of Languages in Contact

Bilingualism is the alternative use of two or more languages by the same individuals. The individuals involved are 'Bilinguals'. Initially most people are monolingual in nature. When needs arise, for improving their knowledge, and for purposes of communication, use of more than one language is essential to each and every one. Thus, individuals, societies as well as nations can be bilingual.

Speakers of more than one language are known for their ability to code switching and mixing their languages during communication. This phenomenon occurs when bilinguals substitute a word or phrase from one language to another language. Some linguists suggest that people code switch as a strategy in order to be better understood and to enhance the listener's comprehension. From this one can understand that the code-switching among bilinguals has traditionally been received as a strategy to compensate less proficiency of language.

In a language contact situation, one can find three types of language interaction:

    1. Code mixing,
    2. Code switching and
    3. Interference.

Code mixing is the intra-sentential switching whereas code switching is the inter-sentential switching. Language contact sometimes occurs when there is an increased social interaction between people living as neighbourhoods and who have traditionally spoken different languages. But, more frequently, it is initiated by the spread of languages of power and prestige.

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As far as Tamil proverbs are concerned, the mixing of code and code switching are taking place based on certain social variables. In the case of proverbs the social variables like age, religion, social class, and education play a vital role to bring language changes in the old version of Tamil proverbs. Such variables are cause to bring language changes at intra-sentential level only.

The process of code switching in proverbs takes place in monolingual situations among the educated persons according to the social context, i.e., in formal situation. Many proverbs are now available in written form. However, some of them used in platform speech, school education, etc., switch freely from spoken to written style. As far as code mixing is concerned, there are two types of mixing found in it:

1. Mixing of linguistic elements from two different languages.
2. Mixing of dialectal form from one dialect into other dialect.

Social Variables

Many social variables influence the selection of the code. The frequency of switching and the degree of mixture depend on the topic of discourse and the level of education of the persons involved.

The rural countryside has traditionally been a monolingual (or better say, mono-dialectal) community. Within it, speech variations are prevalent and the investigations demonstrate that they are socially structured. Besides, the social variables like age, region, and religion play a vital role in language contact.

Age

The concept of code mixing is not language oriented. It is concerned more with the individual speaker's choice. Initially code mixing is possible within a sentence particularly in the nativized borrowed lexical items. It may be extended into different lexical items according to the knowledge of the native speakers in L_2.

As far as Tamil proverbs are concerned, one can notice the mixing of linguistic elements from English, Urdu, and Telugu in Tamil proverbs.

It has also been noticed that there are two kinds of English mixing in Tamil proverbs based on the factor of age.

> 1. Use of English words by the younger generation to create new Tamil proverbs.

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2. Use of simple, familiar/nativized borrowed items of English in Tamil proverbs.

Adult

1. a) Ayyare ungkura:ra:m lingam panca:mirtam ke:kkuta:m.
   While the priest is suffering for want of food, the Lord Siva asks for the mixture of banana, jaggery, ghee, milk and honey.

   b) ca:miye: **caikkiLla (cycle)** po:vuta:m pu:ca:ri **pullet (bullet)** ke:kkuta:m.
   When god himself is riding only by bicycle, the priest asks for the Bullet (motorbike) to ride.

2. a) e:ma:ntavanna: erutu macca:m moRa koNTa:Tuma:m.
   If a person is foolish, a buffalo would call him brother-in-law.

   b) e:ma:ntavanna: erume **e:ro:ppiLa:n (Aeroplane)** o:TTutumba:na:m.
   If a person is foolish, others would tell him (and he would believe it) that a buffalo drives an airplane.

3. a) kalla:na:lum kaNavan pulla:na:lum puruSan.
   Even if a husband is a stone or a blade of grass (inanimate object), he is still considered as a husband by his wife.

   b) kalla:na:lum kaNavan **full** la:na:lum puruSan.
   Even if a husband is stone or a drunkard and an unworthy fellow, he is still considered as a husband by his wife.

4. a) ke:kkaRavan ke:naiya: irunta: ke:ppaila ney valiyutumpa:na:m.
   If a hearer is a fool, others would tellhim that the ghee will ooze out from the Ragi flour. (And he will believe it.)

   b) ke:kkaRavan ke:naiyana: irunta: villup paTam **a:sca:rukkup (Oscar)** po:vutumpa:na:m.
   If a hearer is a fool, others would tell him that the cine star, Vijay's movie villu will get the Oscar award. (And he will believe it.)

5. a) pa:mpu kaTicci polaccavanum irukka:n ceruppu kaTicci

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cettavanum irukka:n.
It is true that there are persons who survived even after snakebite and that there are also persons who died because of hurting slippers.

b) **cuna:mi (Tsunami)** alaiyila cikki uyir polaccavan irukka:n a:na:
cuTita:r valaiyila cikki uyir palaccavan illa.
It is true that there are people who escaped from Tsunami but those who are entrapped by girl's dress cannot escape from it.

Such kinds of proverbs are used by the younger generation, because they are learned in school as part of peer communication. They use the nativized borrowed lexical items like cycle, bullet, aeroplane, full, figure, etc., in Tamil proverbs.

Another Variety

6. naTukkut talaiyan pe:ccak ke:TTu namma polappu **Tavunaccu (down).**
Drummer life becomes dull as he thinks that the audience enjoys his music by shaking his head.

7. co:ttukku **la:TTery (lottery)** kaikku **pe:TTary (battery)** .
There no food to eat, but one still spends money on luxury things.

If a person is a bilingual, we can find the impact of another language in his or her speech. This is unavoidable. This interference takes place in all the levels of language. When two persons, who are bilingual in the same languages, interact with one another they switch over from one language to another.

As far as Tamil proverbs are concerned, the code mixing mainly takes place due to the influence of the other language spoken in the region in places like Dharmapuri, Kanyakumari and Tuticorin. Because these areas are multilingual areas some of the words from other languages are automatically used in Tamil proverbs.

Since Dharmapuri district is a multilingual area in Tamil Nadu, due to the influence of Telugu speakers some of the Telugu words like le:Tu, te:vuTu, ce:si, ceppi etc. are used in Tamil proverbs. Likewise some of the Tamil words are mingled with Telugu words forming proverbs in colloquial Telugu nowadays.

8. cukkukku mincina maruntu **le:tu**, cupramaNiyattukku mincina **te:vuTu** le:tu.

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*No greater than medicine than dried ginger, no greater god
than Supramanian.*

9. **attaka:ru viriste:** maN monta: **ko:Talu** viriste: pon monta:
   *If broken by the mother-in-law it is an earthern vessel, if by the
   daughter-in-law it is a golden vessel.*

10. a:yiram poy **ceppi** oru penTli **ce:ci.**
    Tell lies by the thousand and do a marriage.

11. taṉam mincite: matam **mincanu**.
    *If one gets more money the proudness increasing
    corresponding.*

12. poy coṉṉa va:ykku **po:janam** kiTaiya:tu.
    *The mouth accustomed to lies will be deprived of even parched
    corn.*

Code-switching

Mixing or switching of the codes is a natural linguistic phenomenon which characterizes
the bilingualism and multilingualism of the speech community.

According to Hymes (1977), even in a monolingual situation, one can find code
switching where a speaker switches from one variety or style to another. He claims that
code switching is the alternative use of two or more language varieties of a language or
even speech style.

As far as Tamil proverbs are concerned a speaker's switch can occur from one variety or
style to another in a monolingual situation. In Tamil proverbs one can notice two types of
switches.

1. Switches in platform speech and school education.

2. Switches across different social groups.

Switches in Platform Speech and School Education

In code switching, a single speaker uses different varieties at different times. This is, of
course, the automatic consequence of the existence of registers/varieties since the same
speaker necessarily uses different registers/varieties on different occasions. For example,
when a person is giving a public speech to an audience, especially in political meetings,

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it has become customary and a necessity to quote any suitable proverb in such speech. The speaker switches over from standard variety to a non-standard one and vice versa according to the situation in order to make his or her arguments familiar to the audience.

Like this, in school education, certain proverbs are used as an educative element to improve the language efficiency of the students. In this case, the proverbs are taught in both spoken and written style. The followings are some of the examples for shifting the proverbial expression from spoken style to written style and vice versa.

13. ka:ttuLLapo:te: tu:ttikka. (Spoken variety)
     ka:RRuLLapo:te: tu:RRikkoL. (Written variety)
     Winnow when the wind blows.

14. na:monnu nenacca: teyvamonnu nenaikkum. (Spoken variety)
     na:monRu ninaikka teyvamonRu ninaikkum. (Written Variety)
     Man proposes but god disposes.

15. e<u>n</u>am e<u>n</u>attac ce:rum. (Spoken variety)
     i<u>n</u>am i<u>n</u>attaic ce:rum. (Written variety)
       Birds feather flock together.

16. neRakoTam taLumpa:tu. (Spoken variety)
     niRaikuTam taLumpa:tu. (Written variety)
      A full water pot is not agitated.

17. koRakuTam ku:tta:Tum. (Spoken variety)
     kuRaikuTam ku:tta:Tum. (Written variety)
      A water pot not full is agitated.

18. ancile: vaLaiya:tatu ampatile: vaLaiyuma:? (Spoken variety)
     ayntile: vaLaiya:tatu aympatile: vaLaiyuma:? (Written variety)
     Will that which was not bent at five, bend at fifty?

19. paci vanta:p pattum paRakkum. (Spoken variety)
      paci vantiTil pattum paRakkum. (Written variety)
       Hunger dissipates the ten.

20. pu:vo:Ta ce:nta na:rum maNakkum. (Spoken variety)
     pu:vuTan ku:Tiya na:rum maNakkum. (Written variety)

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As a fibre used for stringing flowers partook of their
fragrance.

21. tan venat tannic cuTum o:TTappam vu:TTac cuTum.
    (Spoken variety)
   tan vinai tannaic cuTum o:TTappam vi:TTaic cuTum.
   (Written variety)
    His own actions will burn him; a false cake will burn the
    house.

22. ko:l̲i miticcu kuncu ca:vuma:? (Spoken variety)
     ko:l̲i mitittuk kuncu muTam a:kuma? (Written Variety)
     Will a chicken become lame if the mother hen treads on it?

The written variety proverbs are used in the educational system as well in order to improve the language efficiency of the students. In such contexts, teachers give importance to standard variety rather than spoken variety. But, in ordinary conversational situation, people switch use mainly the spoken variety.

Switches across Different Social Groups

Language maintenance is a characteristic of a monolingual community. Every speech community that speaks a particular variety of language keeps using it traditionally, and this helps identify the social groups.

Labov (1966) proposed three types of linguistic variable, namely, indicators, markers and stereotypes. According to him, a variable may act as an indicator which has an indexical value correlating with the socio-economic class membership. Such indicators are recognized by the community at large but are not subject to stylistic variation, i.e., they are relatively permanent characteristics of the speech of certain individuals and groups, which do not change from one situation to another. In the following examples from Tamil proverbs the bold items exemplify this indicator function.

23. caTTippa:nakkuLLa iruntu vanta ma:tiri **vanturuccu**
    a:tta:
    Suddenly when a person is suffering from fever they used to say
    like this.

24. eTTu:r kaTa **pa:ppa:ka** etutta vi:TTukkume: **pa:ppa:ka**.
    He takes care of eight shops of others and also the opposite
    house.

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25. a:mpuTaiya:n aTiccatukku alale: aTutta:ttukka:ri
    cirippa:lennuta:n **alutuNTrukke:na:la:m**.
    I do not weep because my husband has beaten me, but because
    my neighbour will laugh at me.

26. u:rukkuta:n upate:cam **no:kkum ne:kkum** ille:.
    This advice is for the society only but not for you and me.

27. kuTukkuRa teyvam ku:raiya **piccuNTu** kuTukkum.
    The god, who gives will tear the thatched roof and give.

28. **tikkattava:Lukku** teyvame: tuNai.
    God is the destitute's only companion.

29. talaikku vantatu talappakaiyo:Tu **po:yiTuttu**.
    That which would have gone with the head has gone with the
    turban.

30. a:mpuTaiya:n cettu **avatippaTRacce:** aTutta:ttukka:ran
    akkuLIle: pa:ccuRa:n.
    While her husband was dying, her neighbour thrust his hand
    into the arm-pit (of the sorrowing wife).

31.. **kaiyaRutuNTa:lum** kaTangka:ran cuNNa:mpu
    tarama:TTa:n.
    Not to give lime for an injured hand.

32. ta:Ti pattiNTu **eriyaRcce:** curuTTukku neruppu ke:TTa:na:m.
    While one man's beard was burning, another man asked him for
    a light for his cigar.

The phrase /vantuviTTatu/ 'it has come' is in literary style. But the same phrase became /vanturuccu / or /vantuTucc/ in the speech style of non-Brahmin communities. Like this, the phrases /po:yiTuttu/ 'it has gone', kaiyaRutuNTu 'having cut the hands' avatippaTRacce: 'while suffering' are used in Brahmin communities. The term pa:ppa:ka 'will see-they' is used in Chettiyar community. There are many dialectal features that are used in the proverbs.

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Thus, the phenomenon of transferring the elements or code switching means that the cultural and social patterns and the language structure are transferred from one language into another language or one language variety into another.

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