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**Interference of Mappila Dialect in the Standard Malayalam Language –
with special reference to the writing performance of Primary School Children**

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Abstract

This paper is based on a small-scale study on the impact of Mappila Malayalam dialect forms on the writing ability of the standard Malayalam language of Upper Primary School Students in the Malappuram district, where Mappila dialect is prominent. The study collects the nonstandard Mappila Malayalam occurrences that appeared in the students writing. It also classifies this occurrence into different linguistic categories (phonological, morphological, syntactical and lexical) in an effort to find out outstanding problems for each category. Findings indicate a significant positive correlation between degrees of Mappila Dialect interference in the writing of standard Malayalam. Such findings can be useful in gaining a better insight into the issues of language in education and for the preparation of appropriate teaching material that can facilitate the reduction of non standard occurrences in the writing of the student.

Introduction

Variation in language is a part of a well-organized and structured language system, occurring in specific linguistic contexts. Since structured variation of this kind is unconscious, it is likely to be beyond our conscious control, and therefore it is naive in the extreme to suppose that children

could be taught to readily substitute one form for another. All over the world it is found that the mass language and the official language are unrelated.

The 'standard' is the variety of language used in writing. It is the language of media, commerce and administration. The language used for educational purpose is not the one they use in their daily life and at home. Thus it offers a great opportunity for the investigator to find out the relationship between dialect and linguistic competencies in standard language. The problem for dialect speakers with oral and written language production was mainly due to the interference of the dialect with the standard. Although the dialect interference is tended to decrease during their course of education, it continues to be an important source of error up to university level of education.

The present study attempts to identify the interference of the Mappila dialect of Malayalam in the writing performance of standard Malayalam language among primary school students and to classify these dialect elements in to different linguistic categories- phonological, morphological, syntactic and lexical. It is hoped that the finding may contribute to a better understanding to the phenomenon of dialect interference in the writing skill of students and for the preparation of the appropriate materials that may facilitate the reduction of dialectic elements in the writing of the standard Malayalam language.

The students using Mappila dialect of Malayalam often found difficulty in conceiving ideas through the highly Sanskritized standard Malayalam used in text books.

For example:-

1. *Drishti gocharamallatha* (standard Malayalam usage in science text book)
2. *Kannukondu kananpattatha* (common usage)

Both the words are used to signify "the one that can not be seen through eye". The second one is easier for the student to conceive the idea. Owing to the extreme influence of their dialect student reflexively omit the feature of standard Malayalam and prefer their dialectic feature even in the written performance of the language.

Features of Mappila Dialect of Malayalam

The Malayalam language spoken by the Mappila Muslim community of Kerala is called Mappila dialect of Malayalam or simply as *Mappila Malayalam*.

The dialect is extensively spoken in the north Malabar region of Kerala i.e. in the districts of Malappuram Kozhikode, Kannur, Kasaragode, Trissur and Palakkad. The Mappila Malayalam shows deep influence of the Arabic language. Thus the dialect is a little bit different from the mainstream Malayalam.

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It should also be noted that Mappila dialect of Malayalam was highly influenced by Arabi Malayalam. Specifically, Arabi Malayalam is a *mixed language*, the result of contact between the language of the Kerala and Arabia. It followed the grammar and syntax of Malayalam. But its vocabulary included words from Arabic, Urdu and Tamil. It was written in Arabic script, with some new symbols to denote unfamiliar Malayalam consonants.

Arabi –Malayalam script was the chief medium of education for the Malabar Muslim and among a large section of Mappilas, still it is a medium of instruction in Madrasa. It helped them to preserve, though indirectly, the purity attributed to Arabic. Matters related to religious belief and code of conduct were taught and assimilated in this medium.

The use of this script was not confined to religious instruction. In due course it entered into the daily life of the people. When Mappilas began to express their thought and feeling through this medium, it acquired a literary dimension. Many words alien to the spoken language of the Mappilas can be encountered in these literary writings. “Arabi-Malayalam has enriched Malayalam language, by developing a literary vehicle of its own, known as Mappila literature. It consists of both prose and poetical literature. Prose composition composed of the work on religion, history and stories etc., many of the texts for private Madrasas is still in Arabi-Malayalam. But it is poetical literature in Arabi-Malayalam generally known as Mappilapattu, that has entered to the massed by its melody and facile expression.” (Ibrahim Kunhu A P, 1989:99)

Arabic Malayalam is still very much alive in Malabar. Even though the number of printing press devoted to this script has been dwindling over the years, books and periodicals are still being published. Even today the medium of instruction in more than 6000 Madrasas (religious institution for children) run by Samasta Kerala Islam Matha Vidyabhasa Board continue to be Arabic Malayalam. (Dr Abdul Hameed V P 2007:170)

Majority of the Mappila students are getting Madrassa Education in Arabi-Malayalam medium and it influences their dialect and also the linguistic performance. In the oral performance, the students automatically switched-off to the local dialect.

In spite of having an interactive life with other community, the intonation of the most of the Muslims, even today are widely distinct from the rest. It is very difficult even for the member of other community in the same region to comprehend the intonation and accent of the Muslims. In their dialect there are several linguistic elements borrowed from Arabic. (Panikkar G K: 1973).

Dr. Usha Namboothirippadu (Samoohya Bhasha Shastram (mal) 1994:69) noted the following differences of Mappila Malayalam, when compared with other dialect and standard form of Malayalam

1. The absence of the following consonants

Malayalam	Unicode name	Transliteration
ഷ	SSA	sś or sh
ശ	SHA	ş or s
ഴ	ZHA	ġ or zh

2. The absence of voiced aspirated sounds
3. Two peculiar phonemes i.e., /f/ and /L/ as in *kafir* and *allah*
4. ഴ /va/ is often pronounced as /ba/
5. ഴ /ġ/ is transformed to ഴ /ya/ or ശ /ga/

The present study does not aim to explore all the features of the Mappila Malayalam. It concentrated on categorizing the dialect features which often interfere in the written performance of standard Malayalam.

Method of Study

The study is conducted in January 2009 at Government Higher Secondary School, Kottappuram, Malappuram, among 80 students of the class VI (at the age group of 11-12) of Upper Primary section. The school is selected randomly among the list of schools situated in the area where Mappila dialect is prominent. This age range was chosen because research suggests that it is the stage where children show increasing independence in their writing and a growing awareness of different genres and writing techniques. The written performance of the students, who have opted ARABIC as the first language, have been getting Madrasa Education through the medium of Arabi-Malayalam and are using Mappila dialect, is analyzed.

With the permission of the school principal and the cooperation of respective class teachers, the study was conducted within the class rooms. The students were asked to prepare a write-up on any topic of their interest such as stories, memories, etc.

The pupils were allowed to plan and revise the topic in order to encourage them to express themselves freely and they were asked to work independently. The average length of the writing produced by the children was about 150 words.

Limitation of the Study

A limitation of the study was the smaller number of the classes used (two) and the validity of these classes in representing the entire students who use Mappila dialect. Even so, the result reveals the following findings.

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Evaluation of the Students Performance and Classification of Dialect Occurrences

The following comments can be made in the respective categories of dialectic occurrences.

Phonological Features

Phonological differences could be comparatively rare, partly because the differences in phonology are actually reflected in the oral rather than the written performance of the student. But the writings produced by the students reveal a lot of occurrences as a sign of their phonological features. Some examples are cited below.

Students tend to write the words in standard Malayalam as they pronounce it in their dialect. From the point of view of standard language, this could be considered as mere spelling mistakes, but these occurrences are inevitable reflection of Mappila dialect.

As a result of the lower level of Sanskritization occurred in Arabi-Malayalam, Mappilas prefer a form of simplified pronunciations and discard aspirated sounds.

There is a tendency to delete the existing sound, create new sounds and substitute a new sound in the place old one in a peculiar way.

Deletion of Sounds

Standard Malayalam

Eḷunettu—eneettu (Woke up)
Avar (they)
Avide (There)

Mappila Malayalam

neech
or
Au

The first sound in the *avide*, *a* is deleted and *va* is subjected to labialization and transformed to *u*

Creation of New Sound

In some cases one or more sounds are added

E.g. Standard Malayalam
school
oppam

Mappila Malayalam
uschool
opparam

Substitution of New Sounds

E.g. Standard Malayalam

Mappila Malayalam

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valya
vali
vangi
irachi

balya
vayi
mangi
erachi

Among these examples the substitute of **va** to **ba** is more frequent

Syntactic Features

In Standard Malayalam language the suffixes used to denote Dative (*udhesika*) case are either *kku* or *nu*. But in Mappila Malayalam it is used altogether in some cases which are reflected in the pupil's writing.

E.g. Standard Malayalam
Avanu

Mappila Malayalam
avanukku/ avanikku

Another tendency in this regard is to use *ikku* instead of *kku*

In genitive case (*sambandhika*) the suffix *nre* (*nre*) is normally used with the words end in the syllable *en*. In Mappila Malayalam several exceptions are found and it is evident in the scripts.

E.g. Standard Malayalam
Umma+ ude = Ummayude

Mappila Malayalam
Umma+nre= ummaante

The students prefer the suffix *nre* instead of *ude* in their written language as in the case of their oral language.

Suffix for Present Perfect Tense

E.g. Standard Malayalam

Mappila Malayalam

Ittund – vannittund

inu-ikkunu (vannunu / vannukkunu)

Another peculiar usage noted in the pupils' write up is the suffix '***aare***'. To denote the "after doing something", the common usage in standard Malayalam is '*athinusehsam*'. This is signified in Mappila Malayalam using '*aare*'.

E.g. Standard Malayalam
Kandathinusehsam

Mappila Malayalam
Kandare

The post position (*anuparayogam*) used in past form of verb *irunnu* become *ini*

E.g. Standard Malayalam
Kandirunnu

Mappila Malayalam
kandeeni

Morphological Features

In Subordinate Clause, *appol* (when) is transformed to *appam*.

E.g. Standard Malayalam

Mappila Malayalam

1. *Kandappol* (when I saw)

Kandappam

2. *Ummantode* (at the home of mother)

Ummante avide

ummantode

In standard Malayalam *avide* means 'there', but in Mappila Malayalam when added with *ummante* it attains a new meaning to convey the meaning of home.

Semantic Features

Certain terms used in standard Malayalam is altogether used with an entirely different meaning in Mappila Malayalam.

E.g. Standard Malayalam

Mappila Malayalam

Kura/kora (barking of the dog)

cough

Arambham (beginning). In addition with 'beginning' it also signifies the meaning such as *new*, *happiness*, *enthusiasm* etc,

Lexical Features

Some words peculiar only to Mappila Malayalam are also used in the writing of the students.

E.g. *thone* (many), *kachara* (dispute), *aittal* (such a type).

Result of the Study

The performance of the student is measured in total number of dialect interference per script and it is found that student committed an average 9 error due to the dialect interference. The average words per script were 150.

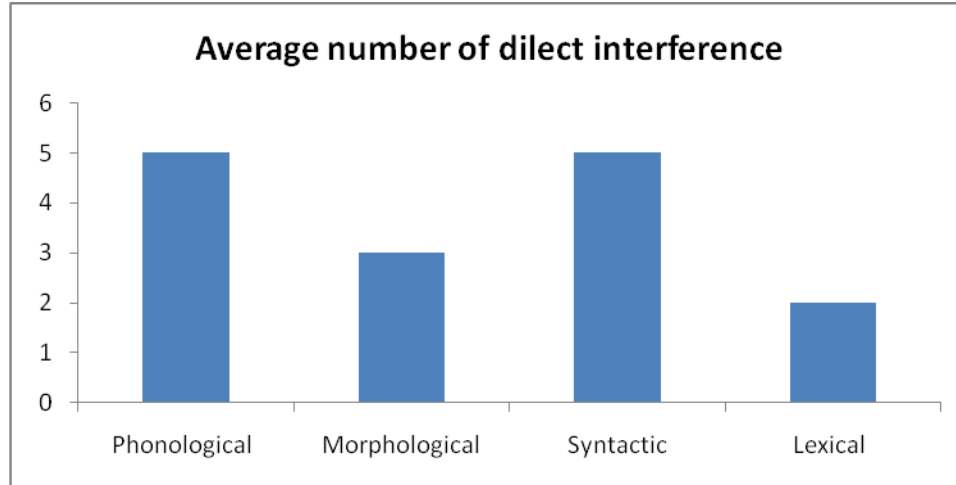
Then the errors due to the dialect interference are classified into four categories-- phonological, morphological, syntactic and lexical. On average, **5** phonological, **3** morphological, **5** syntactic and **2** lexical features of Mappila dialect is reflected per script. The result of this analysis is shown in the following figure.

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In conclusion, I would like to state that the phonology and syntax are the two main areas which students having Mappila dialect found difficulties with standard Malayalam. Morphological and lexical features of the dialect are also directly reflected in their writing. It is, therefore recommended that the primary school teachers can assist their student in overcoming the problem of non-standard usage by developing various appropriate learning tasks.

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