

## **Lambada- Telugu Contact: Factors Affecting Language Choice in Bilinguals**

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**ABSTRACT:** *Language contact between Lambadi and Telugu in Telangana region has been in effect since before independence. Generations of contact has resulted in bilingualism of various degrees among them. This bilingualism has produced variation in the use of Lambadi language with respect to psychological, social and cultural factors further under the influence of urbanization and globalization. Part of a series of research, addressed to analyze the synchronic effects seen as a consequence of the contact of lambada with a dominant language (culturally and in numbers), this paper aims to state and consolidate all factors influencing the language maintenance and shift among Lambada speakers. Under such circumstances, an analysis of language choice under the influence of factors ranging from situation, topic, domain, role, media as theorized by Fishman(1965) are applicable with furthermore additions resulting from Lambadi being an oral language. Language contact and choice, of two languages with scripts has to be viewed in a different perspective than the contact between an orally passed down language and a language with script. Media variance tips the needle towards the scripted language for all governmental and technical purposes and thus eliminates the resistance to shift from mother tongue which is otherwise universally seen. Similar differences have been studied and an effort to give a construct more suitable to the multilingual contact study of the case under study has been done in this paper.*

**Keywords:** *Lambadi, Language contact, Bilinguals, Language choice*

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

India has a majority of speakers of Indo-Aryan languages comprising 70% of the total number of population here followed by Dravidian languages' speakers comprising 20% of the total. Among the four major families of languages found in India, these two families together represent the majority of Indian population. India is a linguistic area states Emeneau, in his 1956's paper and a vast linguistic area like this has a constant contact between languages with the differing geographical co-ordinates from the extreme north of the mainland to the southernmost point of the islands in the Indian ocean and as a consequence almost all of the Indians are multilingual or bilingual in the least. Most interesting among these are the contact phenomena between an Indo-Aryan language and a Dravidian language which can be seen in the deccan plateau region. There are probabilities of an Indo-Aryan language being a mainstream language while a Dravidian language being a minority or of a Dravidian language being the host language and an Indo-Aryan language being the minority one. Usually, mainstream language influences the usage of minority language in a bilingual even after being fluent in both of them. This said, what influences the choice of a language by an interlocutor in a particular situation, in a within-group limitation has been theorized by Fishman in his paper "Who speaks what language to whom and when?" in a stable bilingual setting in 1965. Using his theoretical constructs and analysis, similar analysis has been undertaken by this paper in a peculiar case of urban migrated Lambada tribal population speaking a scriptless language within a group consisting a majority of Telugu speakers. The influence of mother tongue and telugu in different situations, roles, domains, and the language shift caused due to these situations has been analysed and documented in this paper.

### **Lambadas- From then to now**

The present case study is of a tribal Indo-Aryan language named Lambadi, a spoken language belonging to central and southern parts of India. The origin of this tribe is associated with gypsies around the world who share common nomadic existence and ways of living. Nationally, this tribe is associated with the history of Mughal empire and freedom struggle. Originally, due to their nomadic nature, Lambadas were salt-sellers who knew the terrains of northern India thoroughly. When Mohammed Ghorī invaded India, these tribes helped Prithvi Raj Chauhan in his victory against him and thus stopped Hindustan, temporarily, from falling into the hands of Ghorī. But with the second onslaught, Prithvi Raj Chauhan lost the war and soldiers of Ghorī's troops started hunting Lambadas down in vengeance for the first loss. This led them to migrate away from Rajasthan and northern terrain towards a safer Deccan plateau areas which now hosts states like Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. With the independence of India in 1947, these tribes slowly left their nomadic lifestyle and started to gather together and form settlements named Thandas in the outskirts of villages. The community had hunters

and gatherers, started domesticating animals, fishing, cultivating crops and cattle breeding. Their culture has environment at the heart, ecological existence can be seen in their rituals for crop harvesting, daily practices, festivals, pregnancy, marriage and their dressing protects them from all harsh climates.

Towards the end of 70s, they further started migrating to cities in search of temporary livelihood, education or for marriage. Depending on their purpose, they established impersonal contacts or permanent settlements in the area where the majority of the speakers speak Telugu. Through the generations, now the community is bilingual to the point of diglossia- Telugu is used for all inter-group communication, entertainment, official functions whereas intragroup communication has Lambadi or Telugu. Since their language is not useful for education, entertainment, business or public speaking slowly the communities have stopped learning it as a mother tongue.

**Factors affecting language choice:**

**a) Group:** The psychological choice of a language for a bilingual, under the purview of having similar efficiencies in both the languages, is affected by the group he is associated with at any particular point of time. Group can be viewed as a sociological criterion like age, sex, race, religion or in a functional way like office, sports, home, friends, and society. In the case of Lambadas, even among the similar sociological groups, the native speakers have to sometimes switch between their mother tongue and telugu, depending upon the number of speakers present of either of the language. But religion allows them to be monolinguals pertaining to certain rituals which are indigenous and exclusive to these tribal people. Again, majority of them have taken up either Hinduism or Christianity, in line with the mainstream people's affiliation. Office invariably, for the sample under observation, demanded the use of Telugu as no domain has the space for Lambadi. Home, is divided into two generations with the older generation speaking only Lambadi for their communication but with the successor generation, sometimes it is Lambadi if the children have been taught their mother tongue and it is a mixture of Lambadi and Telugu if the children are only receptive bilinguals. Friends can again be classified into mainstream Telugu speaking ones or of the same tribe migrated ones which would then decide the language of choice.

**b) Situation:** Another deciding factor when the choice of language is considered is 'situation'. This can be branched into many subtypes viz. physical setting, topic or a functional demand of the situation. Physical setting would include the intimacy or distance of the speakers involved, formality or informality of the style of speech they usually employ towards each other, whether they are seeking solidarity or non-solidarity as a result of their speech with the speaker, whether there is a status and power equality or inequality between the speakers. And with the special context of Indians, the caste and religion also to certain extent create a 'situation' forcing them to choose a particular language and a particular style of speaking. In any multilingual situation, there is always one language which would be considered as a standard one and another as a more sub-standard, more-vernacular, more-argot like than others and it is usually that sub-standard language which is considered to be associated with informality, equality, solidarity and likeability. In the present case, Telugu is considered as a standard one and hence used to exhibit one's status in the society as it symbolizes one's literacy, power, assimilation into mainstream, equality with the mainstream counterparts and Lambadi is the language used to gain solidarity among their native speakers, family, and can be associated with , by the younger generation, as it symbolizes their secure childhood and a stable upbringing.

**c) Topic:** The universal fact among two bi- or multi- lingual speakers is that even when they naturally prefer to speak to each other in a particular language, when coming to certain topics, they vacillate to some other common language which indicates that topic also regulates the choice of language among two speakers. Even if it is possible to have a conversation involving views about politics or national economy, it usually drags the other language into picture for the communicative ease and completeness. Being a tribal language, certain vocabulary for a recent governance construct, or something as enormous as the nation's economy would not be part of it. So apart from the ease of talking about those topics in Telugu, sometimes the lack of vocabulary for a particular expression, then causes a switch between these two languages and the conversation pursues in Telugu or by borrowing, in Lambadi. And it is established that at least some socio-culturally recognized spheres of activity are usually more under the sway of a particular language than the other, for example, entertainment and media.

**d) Domains:** When German language abundance was being charted and compared with the languages in contact, Schmidt-Rohr(1963) was the first to suggest domain configurations which will reveal the overall status of language choice in these domains of behavior. Later on, these domains were recognized by the UNESCO's ad-hoc expert group on 'Language vitality and Endangerment' where in they recommend providing renewed usage of each domain for their speakers in their native language as an important way for preservation of a language apart from just researching on it by the experts. Domains recommended by Schmidt-Rohr were nine: the family, the playground and street, the school ( further sub-divided into language of instruction, subject of instruction, and language of recess and entertainment), the church, literature, the press, the military, the courts, and the governmental administration.

Seven among these nine domains, lack the use of Lambadi in an urban set-up. Being a scriptless language,

advancing it as a medium of instruction or language of instruction is not possible, unless innovative methods to incorporate it are suggested by policy-makers and researchers. Further, being a minority language with the population speaking this tribal language being well under a million, making it a language of instruction for the majority population belonging to Telugu is impossible and unnecessary. Similarly, a regional language or a national language would be used for all press, military, courts and governmental functions but a minority tribal language's use would just be non-functional. And the native population is so small that governance for these speakers cannot be in their language as they keep migrating out to the cities. The other two domains of family and playground are now showing a shift of language preference from Lambadi to Telugu even among the most secluded natives of the urban setting.

This lack of usability for the native language in the new domains, added to the dwindling number of speakers, language contact with Telugu, and urbanization is leading to the lack of language maintenance, driving a language shift and has fallen into the categories of classifying it as an endangered language.

e) **Role-relations:** When the reference group, situational style, topics and domains are kept under control, we still find a speaker using one language more than the other or switching to one language than using the habitual one. This indicates the difference of role among the two speakers involved and these roles can be driving the language to be intimate, informal, and formal or the extreme inter-group. Family as a domain can be very inductive to multilingualism or can also be an extreme resistor of the change. Multilingualism, usually enters the family domain after spilling from other domains in which it was previously unseen. Family thus has been a specific sample of study for investigators of multilingualism, who classify it into merely family 'members' such as father, mother, child, governess and tutor (Mackey, 1962) or into specific roles like grandfather to grandmother, grandmother to grandfather, grandfather to father, grandmother to father, grandfather to mother, grandmother to mother, grandfather to child, grandmother to child, father to mother, mother to father etc., (Gross, 1951). This second approach realizes the role of a person both as a hearer and a speaker as there is a distinction between multilingual comprehension and multilingual production and recognizes their language as not just a preference but as a result of a role relation. Further to the change of language in all these productive and receptive roles, pertaining to Indian context, a few more roles can be added which show an influence on language choice like Grandfather to a male child, Grandfather to female child, Mother to a male child, Mother to a female child, Father to a male child, Father to a female child, Father to an Elder male child, Father to a younger male child, Mother to an elder female child, mother to a younger female child, an older sibling to a younger one, A brother to a sister and so on. In the role-relations mentioned, an another added element is whether the speech is one-on-one or a passive voice to a third person. Passive voice to a third person reflects formality about the conversation being described if there is power- relation among the duo being considered.

Such role relations can also be seen in general in the society at every point of time. Religion, work, business, school, administration, justice all have role relations in the form of preacher-devotee, employer-employee, buyer-seller, teacher-student, officer-clerk, judge-criminal etc. when considered only as an instances. With the advent of globalization and a million kinds of work apart from different types of relations, the role has an innumerable number of ways to influence language and all of them usually use the dominant language and a minority language like Lambadi whose origin is in tribal culture, has been unable to incorporate vocabulary revolving around all of these millennial roles.

## II. CONCLUSION

In stable multilingual settings among equally competing, equally equipped languages, language shift has been observed classically since the sociolinguistic studies started in the 50s era. Multilingual phenomena have universal reproduction among experiments synchronically and diachronically. As such, a case of Lambada and Telugu language contact has not shown any exemption too. Further, it has much deeper and seemingly irresolvable issues related to language maintenance and the lack thereof. Lack of script, assimilation into mainstream, lack of accommodation to new domains of language use, dwindling number of speakers has eroded the language of its lexicons and has pushed it into the boundaries of endangerment, which has further been exaggerated by the language contact between Telugu and Lambada.

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