

Language Contact and the Maintenance of the Tulu Language in South India

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This paper explores the motivations behind the survival of Tulu, a minority language in South India, despite sociopolitical reasons for its speakers to shift to Kannada, a larger and more economically viable language. I argue that the lack of codeswitching between Tulu and Kannada has facilitated the maintenance of Tulu in the South Kannara district of South India where Tulu is largely spoken. Individual interviews were conducted with 15 informants in South Kannara and in Bombay to elicit information about language attitudes and language identity. Based on these interviews, I examine the various motivations—linguistic, social, and political—as to why speakers do not codeswitch between Tulu and Kannada in South Kannara. I then compare the linguistic situation in South Kannara to the situation in the city of Bombay (which has the largest number of Tulu speakers outside South Kannara) where there is codeswitching, and language shift from Tulu to other languages is taking place. The findings of this study illustrate the complexity of language contact situations and the role of codeswitching, language identity, and language attitudes in language maintenance.

1. Introduction

Tulu and Kannada are Dravidian languages that have been in contact for several centuries in South India. Kannada, which has 40 million speakers nationwide, has a well-developed literary history, with earliest written inscriptions of the language dating back to the 9th century AD. Kannada has a rich literary heritage and is the language used in the universities, government, and the law courts of the state. Tulu, with an estimated 1.5 million speakers, is largely spoken in the small South Kannara district of the Indian state of Karnataka. The earliest written evidence of Tulu dates back to the 17th century AD, but Tulu does not have a script in current usage. Tulu, over the centuries, has lost its script and is now a spoken language. Despite the loss of script, however, Tulu remains a stable spoken language in South Kannara.

Tulu speakers in South Kannara are bilingual in Tulu and Kannada. Kannada speakers may or may not be bilingual in the two languages. Given the fact that the two languages have been in contact for an extended period of time, it might be predicted that codeswitching between the two languages would be a likely consequence. However, in South Kannara, speakers do not codeswitch between the two languages. In contrast, in the

city of Mumbai¹, which has the largest concentration of Tulu speakers outside South Kannara, codeswitching between Tulu and other languages is common. Also, in Mumbai, among younger-generation Tulu speakers, language shift from Tulu to other languages like Hindi, Marathi, and English is taking place.

Studies on language shift and codeswitching have often posited a relationship between codeswitching and contact-induced change. According to Myers-Scotton (1993b), language shift may occur without intermediate codeswitching, yet codeswitching is an “obvious mechanism which ...promotes language shift...” (p. 223). There are, however, instances of language change where codeswitching is not a factor “for reasons such as community disapproval of codeswitching or because the bilinguals in a particular contact situation usually talk to monolinguals, not to other bilinguals” (Thomason, 2001, p. 133). The focus of this paper will therefore be on understanding why Tulu speakers in South Kannara, unlike their counterparts in Mumbai who codeswitch between Tulu and other languages, do not codeswitch between Tulu and Kannada while speaking with other bilingual Tulu speakers. The paper will also look at whether the lack of codeswitching in South Kannara is a factor contributing to Tulu language maintenance in the region.

1.1. The Study

Field research for this study was conducted over a period of two months in two locations: the South Kannara district and the city of Mumbai. In South Kannara, fieldwork was carried out in the village of Katapadi. The research for this study involved conducting individual interviews and collecting responses to a questionnaire. The questionnaire was divided into three sections. Part I dealt with background information, Part II with ascertaining the languages spoken by the informants, and Part III covered issues related to language maintenance and Tulu identity.

I begin by looking at the social context of Tulu and Kannada in South Kannara where no Tulu-Kannada codeswitching takes place and where there is Tulu language maintenance. I then compare this situation with that in the city of Mumbai where there is codeswitching between Tulu and other languages and where language shift is taking place. Next, I draw conclusions about not only the social motivations for codeswitching, but also, in the case of Tulu and Kannada, the social motivations for *not* codeswitching. Finally, I posit a relationship between the lack of codeswitching and the maintenance of the Tulu language in South India.

2. Ethnographic Background

2.1. South Kannara District

South Kannara district is located in the South Indian State of Karnataka. In South Kannara, fieldwork was conducted in the village of Katapadi. Katapadi, a medium-sized village in the region, is a multi-caste community with a population of approximately 30,000. The closest town is the temple town of Udupi. There are four major caste- or community-based groups in the village: Brahmin, Billava, Bunt, and the tribal community. Christians and Muslims also live in the village.

¹ The name of the city of Bombay was changed to Mumbai in 1995.

2.2. *Languages Spoken in South Kannara*

Tulu is widely spoken in South Kannara, and the district is often referred to as ‘Tulunadu,’ the place where Tulu is spoken. Besides Tulu and Kannada, the other languages spoken in South Kannara are Konkani, Kodagu, and Mapila Malayalam. The following table illustrates the number of monolinguals, bilinguals, and trilinguals in my sample of 15 Tulu speakers:

(1) Bilingualism and trilingualism among 15 Tulu speakers

Tulu speakers	Monolingual	Bilingual	Trilingual	4 or more languages
In South Kannara	-	-	2	4
In Mumbai	-	-	-	9
Totals	0	0	2	13

All my informants speak at least three languages. Most of the informants speak four or more languages. Besides Tulu and Kannada, the growth of network television across the country has also brought programs in Hindi, English, and other languages to homes in the village of Katapadi. A Kannada speaker can survive without knowing Tulu, but it would be difficult for a Tulu speaker to survive without knowing Kannada. Hindi and English are the other languages taught in schools in the region. While Hindi has started making inroads because of the increasing popularity of Hindi films and songs, knowledge of English is rapidly gaining importance as an important qualification for obtaining employment in non-agricultural-based jobs in the city.

2.3. *Community² and Caste*

The informants in this study come from three distinct communities: the Brahmin community, the Billava community, and the Bunt community. Because of my own status as a Bunt, most of my informants are from the Bunt community. The lack of everyday interaction between the communities, especially in South Kannara, made it difficult to break the barriers of caste and community to interview people belonging to the other communities. The following table shows the caste-breakdown of the informants in the study:

(2) Caste-breakup of informants

Community	Brahmin	Billava	Bunt
No. of informants	2	1	12

In the caste hierarchy that consists of the four castes, Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Shudra, the Bunts claim to be Kshatriyas, and the Billavas are Vaishyas. While caste lines in modern urban India have become diffused, in rural India, the hierarchy between the various castes is still salient. Inter-marriage between the various Tulu-speaking communities is very rare. The lack of social interaction between the castes has led to each caste developing its own social dialect. According to Kekunnaya (1994), the various dialects of Tulu are the Brahmin dialect spoken by the Brahmins, the Jain dialect spoken by the Jains, the Common dialect spoken by the Bunts, Billavas, Gowdas, Mogaveeras, and

² The concepts of religion, caste, and community are very complex in India. Very often, the three terms are used interchangeably. In this paper, I refer to ‘community’ as a subset of speakers, loosely based on caste, belonging to the larger group of Tulu speakers.

Kumbaras, and the Tribal dialects spoken by the tribal communities of the region. A caste dialect is generally restricted to other members of the same caste. In an interaction between a Brahmin and a Bunt, for example, usually the Common dialect, i.e., the one used by the Bunt community, is used. While not all the communities in the area rank high on the socio-economic scale, many Bunts are landowners and businessmen, and they are very often patrons of the temples run by the Brahmins. In South Kannara, the Bunt community wields considerable economic and political clout.

2.4. *Language, Education, and the Media*

All my informants from South Kannara are speakers of both Tulu and Kannada. Tulu is, more often than not, the first language a native Tulu speaker is exposed to in South Kannara. Kannada is often learnt later in the formal context of school. The only school in Katapadi is a Kannada-medium school. Because of the status of Tulu as a minority language in the state, there are no Tulu schools, nor is Tulu taught as a subject in schools. The only English-medium school is some distance away from the village and is more expensive. The Brahmin community, unlike the other communities in the region, is for caste-based reasons more educated. Formal education among the other communities is relatively recent. Until recently, only the richer landowners sent their children to schools and colleges. Now, however, many families in the village send their children to schools and for higher education.

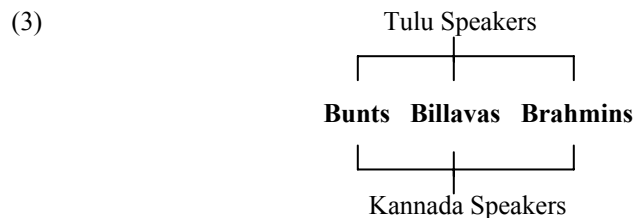
Tulu speakers in South Kannara are constantly exposed to Kannada on television, in films and over the radio. A few Tulu programs are now broadcast on the radio after the recent establishment of an *All India Radio* (AIR) station in the port city of Mangalore in South Kannara. There are also a few television programs in Tulu. Street signs and any other form of public signage are always in Kannada or in both Kannada and English.

2.5. *Migration Patterns*

The Tulu-speaking community, like the other communities in the region, has seen extensive migration to urban areas like Mumbai in search of better jobs. Almost every family in the region has one or more of its members living in Mumbai. The new Konkan railway trains linking the district to other parts of the country have made the people living in South Kannara district more mobile. Also, there are now many people from outside the district who come there in search of work on the farms.

2.6. *Marriage*

Tulu and Kannada speakers belong to one of the various communities (Bunt, Billava, Brahmin, etc.) living in the region. As illustrated in the following diagram, Tulu and Kannada speakers can belong to the same caste-based community even if the languages they use at home may be different:



While intermarriage between the communities is very rare, marriage between Tulu and Kannada speakers who belong to the same community is not uncommon. A Bunt Tulu speaker, for example, can marry a Bunt Kannada speaker. Marriage between a Bunt and a Billava, on the other hand, even if they are both Tulu speakers, is extremely rare. In other words, when it comes to marriage, caste is more important than language. The Tulu and Kannada-speaking community in South Kannara is very tight-knit. While marriage outside the community is almost unheard of in Katapadi, such marriages are more frequent in the city of Mumbai.

2.7. Location 2: The City of Mumbai

The city of Mumbai (population 13 million) has approximately 200,000 Tulu speakers. The other languages spoken in Mumbai are Marathi (the State language³), Hindi English, and Gujarati. Besides Hindi, Marathi, Gujarati, and English, speakers of almost every language spoken in the different parts of India have made Mumbai their home.

Despite the distance (approximately 1600 km), from the city of Mumbai to the South Kannara district where Tulu is spoken, Tulu speakers in Mumbai retain very strong ties with their native villages in South Kannara. Air travel in India is very expensive, but trains constitute a cheap and efficient way to travel between the two regions. The inauguration of the faster Konkan Railway trains between Mumbai and South Kannara has reduced travel time to around 16 hours; it used to previously take almost two days to get to South Kannara by train from Mumbai. Not all the Tulu speakers from Mumbai speak Tulu and Kannada with equal fluency. Tulu speakers in Mumbai are exposed to Hindi, Marathi and Gujarati far more than they are exposed to Kannada.

Younger members of the Tulu-speaking community in Mumbai now use other languages along with Tulu at home. Among the informants who live in Mumbai, Tulu-English, Tulu-Hindi, and Tulu-Marathi codeswitching is quite common. As compared to the informants in South Kannara who reported that they used only Tulu at home, informants in Mumbai reported that they also spoke Hindi and Marathi at home.

(4) Languages reported as spoken at home by informants

Place of Residence	Number of informants	Languages reported as spoken at home
South Kannara	6	Tulu
Mumbai	9	Tulu, Hindi, Marathi

In other words, in Mumbai, other languages are entering into arenas that were hitherto reserved only for Tulu.

3. Political Background to the Study

The Government of India recognizes 18 of what it calls 'Official Languages' in the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution (1950): Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi,

³ India was divided into linguistic states in 1956, and each state was assigned a 'State language'. The State Language was assigned based on one of the languages listed in the Eighth Schedule. The language spoken by the largest number of people in the state was, in most cases, assigned 'State Language' status.

Kannada, Kashmiri, Malayalam, Marathi, Oriya, Punjabi, Sanskrit, Sindhi, Tamil, Telugu, Urdu, Konkani, Manipuri and Nepali. Though English is not listed in the Eighth Schedule, it was provided, in 1950, that English would continue to be used along with Hindi as an ‘associate official language’ for a period of 15 years (i.e., until 1965) (Gupta & Abbi, 1995, p. 2). The growing dominance of English as a world language and its use by the country’s urban elite has led to the deadline being postponed *sine die*. The Non-Scheduled, i.e., ‘non-official’ languages, constantly vie to be part of the Eighth Schedule, because the Central Government provides funds to States and Union territories for the educational and cultural development of these languages. Also, the government-run radio and television stations (*All India Radio* and *Doordarshan*, respectively) encourage programs in the languages of the Eighth Schedule (Krishnamurti, 1995, p. 16).

- (5) Distribution of 10,000 speakers by language in Karnataka (Census of India, 1991)

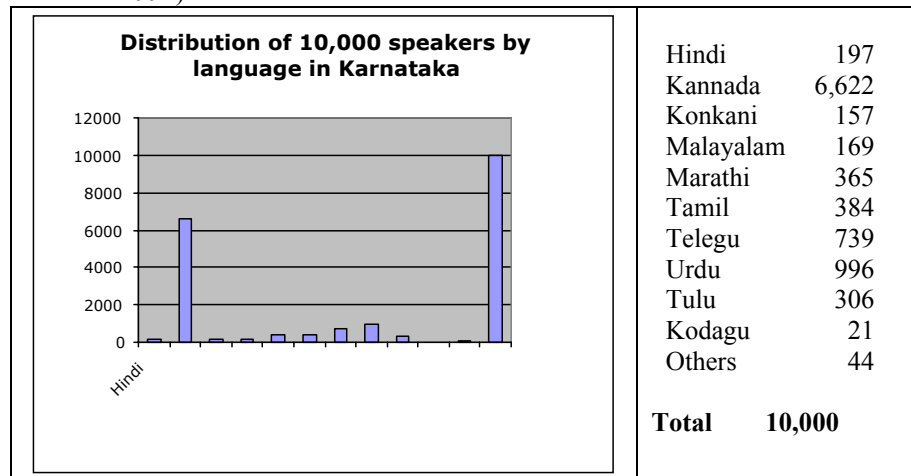


Table 5 shows that Tulu is a minority language in the state of Karnataka. The status of Tulu as a minority language also means that, unlike Kannada, it is not taught in schools. Thus, whether one’s native language is an ‘official language’ very often determines whether one is educated in that language in schools, or whether that language is even taught as a subject in schools. Official status of a language also determines the language used in the popular media. Native speakers of official languages therefore have an advantage over native speakers of non-official languages. As Gupta and Abbi write (1995, pp. 3-4), the Eighth Schedule, by selecting languages, empowers these listed languages and, as a corollary, impoverishes and marginalizes the unlisted languages.

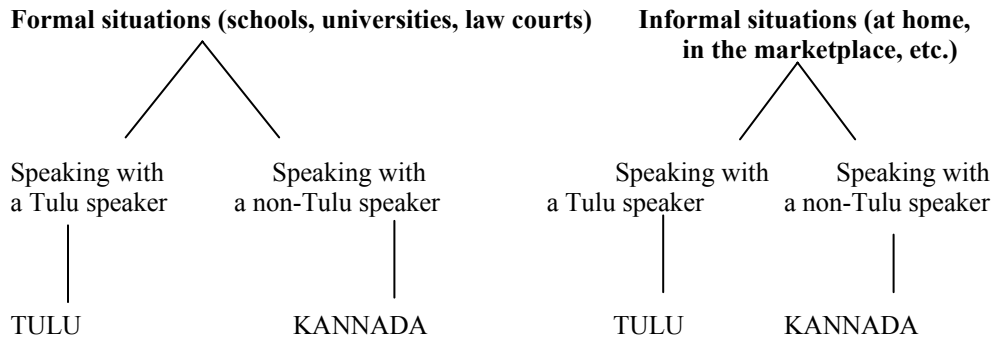
One of the main reasons why Tulu is not taught in schools, however, is the ‘Three-language formula’. According to the formula, students from non-Hindi areas study their regional language, Hindi, and English. Hindi speakers, on the other hand, study Hindi, English and another language. In Karnataka, Kannada, Hindi, and English are the languages in the formula. For minority languages like Tulu, therefore, there is no instruction in schools. The lack of formal instruction in Tulu necessarily means that the language is learnt only in non-formal settings at home. Moreover, because Tulu does not have a script in current usage, there is no written reinforcement of the language.

4. Motivations for Not Codeswitching

Researchers working on codeswitching have argued that codeswitching does not take place when the speakers of one language view the other language either as being imposed on them or as being culturally different from their language (Myers-Scotton, 1993a) or when there is clear and extreme functional differentiation between the two languages (i.e., each language is inappropriate in certain situations) (Rubin, 1968). As in the case of Spanish and Guarani in Paraguay described by Rubin, Tulu speakers do not view Tulu and Kannada as indexical of two different ethnocultural memberships. As discussed earlier, within the same community, marriages between Tulu and Kannada speakers do take place. While Tulu speakers accommodate to their Kannada-speaking spouses, and Kannada becomes the language of the home, they still retain membership in the Tulu-speaking community. Furthermore, the Kannada script is often used to write Tulu, and many Tulu speakers use the Kannada language itself when they need to write.

Also, unlike Spanish and Guarani, there is no clear functional differentiation between Tulu and Kannada. While Kannada is the language used in schools for instruction and for official purposes, students and instructors in schools and universities will speak Tulu to each other if they are Tulu speakers and there are no Kannada speakers present. Moreover, even in the government or courts of law (arenas where Kannada is used), Tulu will be used if the interlocutors are Tulu speakers. In the case of the law courts, Kannada is reserved for the official proceedings of the court, but outside of these official proceedings, Tulu will be used if the interlocutors are Tulu speakers. In other words, there is no strict compartmentalization of the two languages into specific domains. Codeswitching will hence normally be predicted

- (6) The domains where Tulu and Kannada are used by a Tulu speaker



The above diagram illustrates that there are no fixed domains where the Tulu speaker uses Tulu or Kannada. Whether an interlocutor speaks, or does not speak, Tulu is the defining reason why either language is used in any situation. Kannada is the default language if one of the interlocutors is a non-Tulu speaker, but if all the interlocutors are Tulu speakers, Tulu will be used. Fishman (1967) writes that in cases such as these without diglossia, the two languages compete for use in the same domains and the dominant language displaces the less dominant one. However, in South Kannara, dominant Kannada does not seem to be displacing less-dominant Tulu.

The situation is in some ways similar to the situation in Oberwart, Austria reported by Gal (1979). Here, bilinguals speaking Hungarian to each other always shifted to German in

the presence of a German speaker. Hungarian in Oberwart symbolized the old peasant way of life whereas German symbolized a higher worker status. This social distinction between peasants and workers was very relevant to linguistic change in Oberwart. "Social diversity and class stratification...created the conditions encouraging language shift" (Gal, 1979, p. 23). Language shift was led by women and the youngest generation. Middle-generation Oberwarters, however, who were committed neither to the worker nor peasant way of life, engaged in German-Hungarian codeswitching (Gal, 1979, p. 21). Codeswitching was thus a step in language change and an instrument of social change in Oberwart. Unlike the Oberwart situation, however, Tulu and Kannada do not have unequal social statuses. While Kannada is the literary language, is the official language of the state, and has a larger number of speakers, there is local prestige associated with speaking Tulu. The language is associated with the richer land-owning communities like the Bunts in the region. Tulu is also the language of local rituals and folk songs and functions as a maintainer of strong community ties. Tulu speakers, unlike middle-generation Oberwarters were less committed to being identified as Hungarian speakers, have far more reason to be committed to being identified as Tulu speakers.

According to Myers-Scotton (1993a, p. 111), a major motivation for variety in linguistic choices in a given community is the possibility of social identity negotiations. Each of the languages involved in codeswitching is associated with a particular identity. While speakers in Myers-Scotton's model are considered to be creative and rational, the interpretation of their code choices is socially constrained by the normative framework specific to their community. However, there is much more fluidity contained in code choices than Myers-Scotton's model would predict. For example, in Mumbai, younger Tulu speakers, by codeswitching between Tulu and the other languages spoken in the area, seem to simultaneously negotiate between dual identities: that of being a member of a specific community from South India and that of being a cosmopolitan 'Mumbaiite.' Yet the other languages they codeswitch into are also languages native to other non-Tulu speaking communities in the city and come with their own set of community associations.

Similarly, if Tulu speakers in South Kannara did choose to codeswitch between Tulu and Kannada, they can be said to be indexing two positively evaluated identities:

1. The greater socioeconomic benefits and prestige associated with speaking Kannada.
2. The sense of identity as a member of the Tulu-speaking community that comes from speaking Tulu.

Yet, speaking only Tulu in certain social situations can have more social benefits than codeswitching between Tulu and Kannada. Thus, there is a range of issues one needs to take into account while looking at codeswitching in the South Kannara context.

Tulu speakers in South Kannara do not consider the possibility of negotiating between Tulu and Kannada. Myers-Scotton does not account for such a situation in her model. She predicts such a situation only if there is "a good deal of intergroup tension and this tension is expressed by language loyalty" (1993b, p. 128). Since intergroup tension is not the case in South Kannara, the reason why Tulu speakers in the region make the choice not to codeswitch needs to be looked at from the point of view of the relationship between language and identity.

5. Language and Identity

My informants overwhelmingly expressed the view that the Tulu language is a repository of their culture and identity and that it is through the language that unique aspects of their culture are being preserved. While Tulu speakers are culturally enmeshed within the larger Kannada speaking culture, there seems to be some sense of a unique identity associated with being a Tulu speaker. This sense of identity can also be seen in the responses that were obtained to the question about the kind of person the informants would like their children to marry. Two speakers out of the four informants in South Kannara said that they would not mind if their children married either Kannada or Tulu speakers. Two informants said they would like their children to marry Tulu speakers. In Mumbai, however, 7 out of 9 informants said that they would prefer that their children marry Tulu speakers. Only 2 informants said that they did not have a preference.

(7) Marriage preferences

Place of Residence	Prefer that their children marry:				
	Tulu speakers	Kannada speakers	English speakers	Tulu or Kannada speakers	No preference
South Kannara	2	-	-	2	-
Mumbai	7	-	-	-	2
TOTALS*	9	-	-	2	2

*Two informants did not have children and were therefore not asked this question.

The elicited responses, however, may have to do with the fact that Kannada is more of a dominant language in South Kannara than it is in Mumbai, where Marathi is the state language. In other words, speakers of Tulu in Mumbai are less in contact with Kannada than the speakers of Tulu in South Kannara. Speakers from both regions, however, prefer that their children marry Tulu speakers, or in the case of the two informants from South Kannara, Tulu or Kannada speakers. Thus, despite the fact that in Mumbai other languages are gradually replacing Tulu in domestic domains, Tulu speakers in Mumbai prefer that their children marry other Tulu speakers.

The responses to the question about the type of school the informants would rather send their children to are also significant:

(8) Type of school informants said they would send their children to:

Place of Residence	Tulu medium school	Kannada medium school	English medium school	English or Kannada
South Kannara	2	-	2	-
Mumbai	-	-	8	1
Totals*	2	0	10	1

* Since not all informants had children, all of them were not asked this question

The informants from Mumbai almost overwhelmingly expressed the view that they would send their children to an English-medium school. Only one informant said that she would send her children to a Kannada- or English-medium school. Half the informants

from South Kannara said that they would send their children to a Tulu-medium school, and half said they would prefer to send their children to an English-medium school. In India, English is the language of the elite. It is spoken by only 3-4% of the population, and its speakers are largely concentrated in urban areas like Mumbai. Despite the fact that there is a movement towards obtaining official language recognition for Tulu and towards the teaching of Tulu in schools, Tulu speakers in South Kannara seem ambivalent about sending their children to Tulu-medium schools. The informants from Mumbai do not share this ambivalence. They want to send their children to an English-medium school. It is also interesting to note that none of the informants wish to send their children to Kannada-medium schools, even though the only schools most people can currently afford to send their children to in South Kannara are Kannada-medium schools. In other words, there seems to be a recognition that the most socioeconomic benefit is to be gained by speaking English.

English seems to be aiding language shift in the city of Mumbai, where there is Hindi-Tulu, Marathi-Tulu and English-Tulu codeswitching. However, Kannada-Tulu codeswitching does not take place in South Kannara or in Mumbai. In Mumbai the absence of Tulu-Kannada codeswitching can be explained because Kannada is not one of languages spoken in the area. Tulu speakers in Mumbai tend to use Tulu with each other and use Kannada only if they meet a Kannada speaker, which is not very often. The situation in South Kannara, on the other hand, is less easy to explain given the fact that speakers of these languages have been in close cultural and economic contact for several centuries.

According to Wardhaugh (1987), when speakers of different languages come into contact with each other, it is a “certainty” that one language will spread at the expense of others. Language spread, he writes, happens when “language boundaries” are weak, i.e., when the difference between two languages is not supported by religious, ethnic, political differences, or even functional boundaries such as in a diglossic situation. Here, according to Wardhaugh, the languages will not only be in contact; they will also be in competition. On the other hand, when such boundaries between languages are strong, there may be little pressure from one language on the other. In the case of weak language boundaries, bilingualism, he predicts, may “prove to be only a temporary waystage to unilingualism.” Unilingualism gradually increases as the more powerful language assumes more and more functions and is acquired as the only language by more and more speakers.

While Tulu and Kannada do exhibit signs of being in ‘competition,’ such as the loss of the Tulu script and the exclusive use of Kannada for official purposes in schools, universities, and the courts of law, there do not seem to be any other signs of impending language loss. Tulu speakers seem to have maintained their language despite the fact that Kannada is the more widely spoken and more economically viable language. Bilingualism is the norm, but unilingualism in Kannada, despite Wardhaugh’s prediction, does not seem likely given the current socioeconomic situation. In other words, the situation is what Thomason (2001, p. 21) would call a “stable contact situation”, i.e., “a contact situation that has persisted without dramatic change for more than three or four generations and that shows no sign of incipient change” (p. 23). Such a situation can be compared to the situation that exists between Spanish and Guarani in Paraguay described by Rubin (1968) and the situation in Kupwar (India) described by Gumperz (1971), where multilingual communities speaking different languages have co-existed for centuries. One of the reasons why languages are maintained in India is that the language one speaks very often is associated with the community or caste one is from. If the community is a relatively

privileged one that enjoys social and economic prestige in the region, there is motivation to maintain the language as a marker of group membership.

6. Language Identity and Language Maintenance

Jackson (1974) describes one situation where extensive bilingualism and language maintenance is the norm. The situation exists among the Vaupes Indians of Columbia, where some 20 languages are spoken in a small geographical area. The Vaupes Indians are multilingual, and the language they use is the most important marker distinguishing language-aggregates and their members. According to Jackson, the Vaupes Indians use language as a 'badge of identity'. Language plays a significant role as a symbol of membership in a language-aggregate, and the rules governing marriage and residence in communities throughout the area are determined by language. Language thus functions as a 'symbol of social identity.' Unlike with the Vaupes Indians, language is not used as a factor in determining marriage partners for Tulu speakers. As mentioned earlier, marriage between Tulu and Kannada speakers is not uncommon provided the marriage partners belong to the same caste subgroup. A taboo against intermarriage based on language can therefore be ruled out as one of the reasons why Tulu speakers in South Kannara maintain Tulu and Kannada separately.

Barth (1969) refers to badges of identity as 'diacritica.' The more different categories of people interact, and the longer the period of interaction, the more they become similar, being differentiated only by a few clear diacritica. In the case of Tulu and Kannada, the Tulu language is the only salient marker of group identity. Since there are no racial, ethnic or cultural differences between Tulu and Kannada speakers, language becomes the only identifier of group membership. While some Tulu-speaking communities like the Bunts follow a matriarchal family structure and worship, besides the Hindu gods in the temples, local animistic spirits, the Tulu-speaking community is a part of the mainstream culture of the region. There is little to distinguish a Tulu speaker from a Kannada speaker aside from language. The Tulu language is thus the only marker available to the Tulu speaker to distinguish himself or herself from the larger population of Kannada speakers. Maintaining the language becomes the only means to maintain group identity.

In summary, the following factors can contribute to our understanding as to how and why the Tulu language is maintained in South Kannara:

(9) Factors contributing to or hindering language maintenance of Tulu

Factors contributing to language maintenance in South Kannara	Factors hindering language maintenance in South Kannara
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The language is the only salient marker of group identity • There is borrowing between Tulu and Kannada, but no codeswitching. • Marriage outside the community is rare 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The numerical strength of Tulu speakers is very small in relation to the speakers of the majority language in the area. • There are no religious, ethnic or economic reasons for maintaining the Tulu language • There is extensive migration to urban areas • The mainstream media and all public signage is in Kannada • There is no diglossia • Tulu does not have a script • Government policies have, over the years, succeeded in excluding minority languages like Tulu from the educational, economic, social, and political mainstream.

7. Conclusions

For Tulu speakers in South Kannara, their language is the only salient indicator of group membership. By not codeswitching between Tulu and Kannada, they maintain their language as an important marker of group identity. Since they are committed to maintaining their group identity, they choose not to codeswitch between Tulu and Kannada. The lack of codeswitching between Tulu and Kannada in South Kannara is aiding maintenance of the Tulu language in the region.

The role of codeswitching in language maintenance and shift can be seen in Mumbai where group and/or community identity has become diffused and less salient. The Tulu language no longer functions as a symbol of group membership in Mumbai. Codeswitching between Tulu and other languages is common and language shift from Tulu to other languages is taking place.

This study demonstrates that if the role of language as a symbol of group membership is far greater than the need for social identity negotiations, there is likely to be no codeswitching, and language maintenance is a possibility. If, on the other hand, the concept of a coherent group loses its significance, the language that is associated with the group loses its social and symbolic value, making language shift likely.

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