

Language Attitudes, Code Mixing and Social Variables: Evidence from bilingual speakers of Hyderabad

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Abstract

This paper deals with the attitudes of the educated Telugu and English bilinguals of Hyderabad towards their mother tongue Telugu, global lingua franca English and the code mixed variety emerged out of the usage of the languages, popularly known as ‘Tenglish’ with reference to sixty one informants. A method of questionnaire incorporating the demographic profile of the informants and their usage of language has been adopted to find out a correlation between social variables such as age, gender, medium of instruction

at primary and secondary level, the informants' language preference, language usage and attitudes towards these two languages under consideration. The statistical package used for this study is R console. Individual t- tests are conducted to obtain the probability values (p-values). In addition, Optimality theoretic constraints (Prince and Smolensky 1993) are adopted to discuss the data related to sound change across generations.

Key words: Tenglish, Attitude, Optimality theory

1. Introduction:

'Attitudes', in the study of language, play a significant role in giving due recognition to a particular language. Baker (1992) claims that the status and significance of a language in society and within an individual instigates largely from adopted or learnt attitudes. So attitudes are crucial in language growth or decay, restoration or destruction. Attitudes seem to add a lot towards an understanding of samples of linguistic variation, especially during language contact. They are worth studying because they form part of the communicative competence of the members of a speech community. Kachru (1983) says "In India, English is the only language with an all-India circulation; it offered itself as neutral link language across diversity". In the present day Indian scenario, English is predominantly the language of wider communication. Its use has been increasingly persistent, which was not foreseen by the framers of the Indian constitution. The Indian constitution recognizes 22 National languages, with Hindi being the official language and English the link language with a decree that English be replaced by Hindi in a period of 15 years. Due to obvious reasons, English has prospered very much in the post-independence era. India, with its unique context of language contact, has resulted in various acculturated functional languages: for example, Hinglish (Hindi & English), Manglish (Malayalam & English) and Tenglish (Telugu & English) etc. The code-mixed variety between Telugu and English is called 'Tenglish' and is extensively used in Hyderabad, the capital city of the state of Telangana and also the chosen location for the present study. In the multilingual hierarchy of Hyderabad, English ranks highest in terms of its practical utility as it provides higher mobility to its users. The current study aims at identifying the domains of use of the Telugu and English among two age-groups in Telugu speech community, significantly ascertain the attitudes of Telugu speaking people towards their mother tongue and English as well. This study also determines the attitudes of Telugu speaking people towards code-switching between Telugu and English and intends to draw insights regarding the status and the future of the Telugu language with some light on the sound change in Telugu due to the influence of English. This research revolves around the following questions:

- i) Do social variables such as age, gender, educational back ground have an impact on the usage of Telugu and English and also on the code-switching between the two?

- ii) Do the language attitudes towards English and Telugu differ with regard to the age-groups?
- iii) Will there be any statistically significant difference between the attitudes of youngsters and older generation towards their mother tongue, English and code-switching between the two?
- iv) Are the language attitudes towards English and Telugu gender-specific?
- v) Will there be any noteworthy variation between male and female attitudes towards Telugu, English and the code-switching between the two?

2. Methodology and approach used in the paper:

The paper is based on certain assumptions: social variables such as age, gender, family and educational background do affect the language preference. Age is considered to be the most significant variable. It is expected that the older generations prefer to use standard Telugu form. Older people are likely to have strong positive feelings towards Telugu compared to younger generation. Young generation may prefer to use Telugu in limited spheres of life and English in major domains for the sake of prestige and solidarity. Women are expected to show positive attitudes towards English and they also tend to switch from Telugu to English more frequently than men. There may be a significant sound change in the phonetic inventory of Telugu. For instance, Telugu voiceless retroflex fricative /ʂ/ seems to be influenced by English voiceless post-alveolar fricative /ʃ/. Younger people may not be aware of the distinction between the two. The direct approach method is adopted which involves questionnaire and interview method. The informants are 61 Telugu speaking people taken from two age groups, 31 informants are from the 18-24 age group and 30 are from the above 40 age group. Out of 31 younger generations 16 are males and 15 are females. Out of 30 older generations, 15 are males and 15 are females. The study is mainly based on questionnaires to elicit data based on four independent variables: age, gender, and medium of instruction at the primary and secondary levels. The statistical package used for the authenticity of the data is R programming. The t. tests and chi square tests are conducted for each and every statement under each category based on independent variables. The p- value is set for < 0.05 and any result ranging below 0.05 indicated a high significance in the relation of the variables. OT constraints are taken into consideration to discuss the sound change principles.

3. Main Findings of the study:

a) Age and language usage

In the survey it has been found that both the younger and older age group informants speak mostly Telugu and Tenglish in family and community domains. However, English is given more significance in the official domains. Telugu is predominantly used as a medium of communication by the respondents while they talk to their parents and siblings. However, the language shifts to Tenglish and English with classmates. Again with domestic helpers

the used language is Telugu. With locals and passersby again there was mixed response. According to the chi square tests, it is found that people in these groups have no statistically significant differences in the use of language.

Table 1

Subjects preferred language use with different interlocutors:

Interlocutors	Total	Telugu	%	English	%	Both	%	NA	%
Father	61	39	64	-	-	16	26	6	10
Mother	61	49	80	-	-	9	14	3	5
Siblings	61	36	59	-	-	24	39	1	2
Friends	61	26	43	2	3	33	54	0	0
Classmates	61	7	11	21	34	33	54	0	0
Neighbours	61	49	80	2	3	9	14	0	0
Domestic helpers	61	56	91	-	-	5	8	0	0
Locals/passers by	61	30	49	-	-	30	49	1	2
Teachers/Boss	61	1	2	47	77	13	21	1	2
Officials/administrators	61	2	3	44	72	14	22	1	2

In the family domain, it seems there is a mixed response towards language use. With parents, siblings and friends, the use of mixed language is more frequent compared to mother tongue Telugu. With classmates, the shift is from Telugu to English and then to mixed language. It seems the use of both English and Telugu is higher among friends and classmates when compared to other interlocutors. Again with domestic helpers Telugu received the highest responses; perhaps this may be because of the low literacy rate among domestic workers. With locals and passersby again there were mixed responses. However in the official domain, English is given more importance. According to the chi square tests, it is found that people in these groups have no statistically significant differences in the use of language. The p values of all the chi square tests are higher than the significant value 0.05.

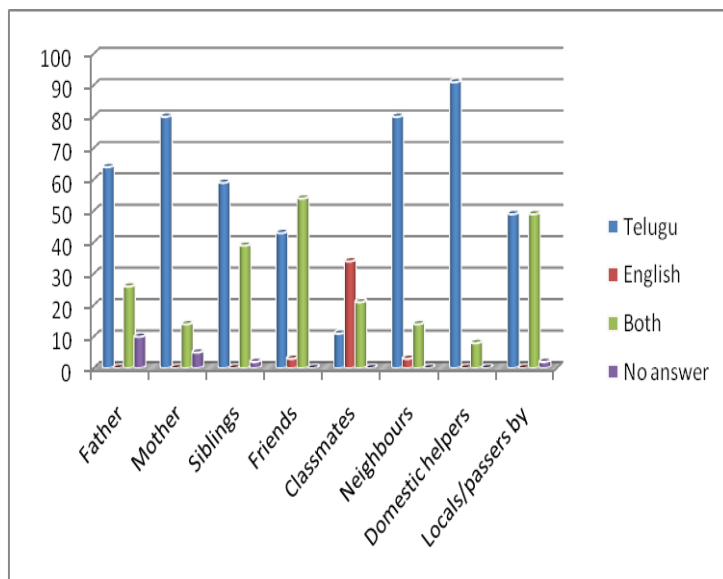


Figure 1: Subjects preferred language use in family and community domain.

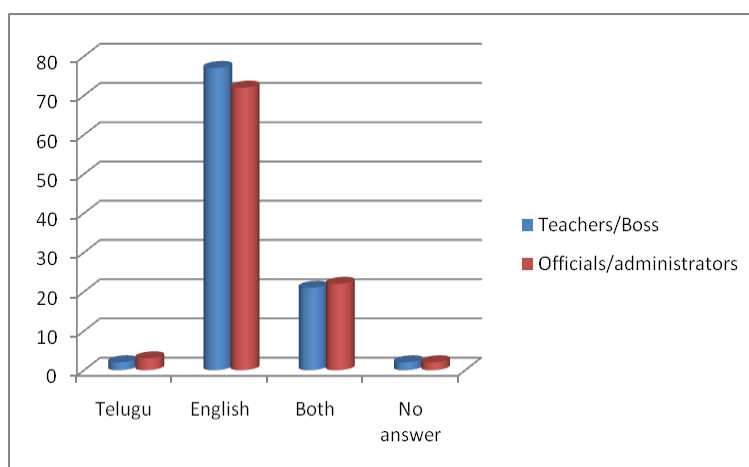


Figure 2: Subjects preferred language use in official domain

Both younger and old generation groups continued to speak mixed language in family and community domains. As a contrast to this in the official domain, English is given more significance. An interesting thing here is younger group are using less mixed language as compared to older group in the official domain. It may be because of the educational background where most of the youngsters studied in English medium schools compared to older generation.

In order to obtain the use of Telugu and English the informants were given nine activities and were asked to indicate their frequency of use of two languages for all the activities on five point scales. The scale is converted into digits for practical analysis. 1 was given to all the time, 2 was given to sometimes, 3 was given to frequently, 4 was given to rarely and 5

was given to never. T- Tests are conducted for each and every activity based on four dependent variables in order to determine whether there is any statistically significant difference. With age as first variable five statistically significant differences of the use of Telugu were obtained according to the t -tests with regard to reading newspapers, reading novels and magazines, reading academic books, watch television programs and movies and listening to spiritual lectures.

Table 2: Use of Telugu according to age

Activities	All the time(A)		Sometimes(S)		Frequently(F)		Rarely(R)		Never(N)			
	<25	>40	<25	>40	<25	>40	<25	>40	<25	>40	P value	SS
Read newspapers	8	10	10	8	5	9	3	1	5	1	0.04462*	Yes
Read novels and magazines	1	5	10	12	3	8	10	4	7	1	0.0003655*	Yes
Read academic books	-	3	3	9	5	5	4	5	17	8	0.0507*	yes
Watch television programmes and movies	6	5	8	7	15	13	-	5	2	-	0.05753*	Yes
Listening to spiritual lectures	4	7	7	5	2	12	7	4	11	1	0.0003604*	Yes

P value=<0.05

First the t- test done for reading newspapers, gives a p- value 0.04462, which is less than 0.05 with mean differences between two groups 2.741935 and 2.100000 respectively. This means the older generation reads Telugu newspapers more compared to younger generation. The second highly significant difference is found with reading novels and magazines in Telugu with p- value 0.0003655, which is very less than 0.05 with mean differences between two groups 3.612903 and 2.600000 respectively. That means there is a strong disagreement between older generation and young generation as the 18-24 age group subjects reported that they read novels and magazines in Telugu very rarely.

Table 3: Use of English according to age:

	All the time		Sometimes		Frequently		Rarely		Never		Result	
	<25	>40	<25	>40	<25	>40	<25	>40	<25	>40	P.value	SS
Watch films advertisements	10	3	11	12	9	6	1	5		3	0.001056*	Yes
Listening songs	6	-	11	8	5	1	5	11	3	7	0.0003786*	Yes
Listening to spiritual lectures	3	2	5	8	-	5	7	9	16	4	0.03024*	Yes

The t tests showed highly significant p-value (0.001056) with regard to watching films and advertisements. This suggests the youngsters' interest in watching English movies frequently, when compared to old people. The t tests showed highly significant p-value (0.001056) with regard to watching films and advertisements. This suggests the youngsters' interest in watching English movies frequently, when compared to old people. With regard to listening to English songs the old age group has a statistically significantly higher mean score (3.857143) than youngsters (2.800000) with p value 0.0003786. Most of the younger generation indicated that they are interested in English songs, the older generation did not show any interest. It seems it is a clear indication for change in language preference between two age groups.

b) Gender and Language Use: Both men and women express very parallel patterns of language use. There is only one statistically significant difference pertaining to use of language with mother. The p value is 0.02484, which is significant. It is because 93% (29 out of 31 males) said that they spoke to their mother in Telugu, whereas 66 % (20 out of 30) females said that they use Telugu. For other interlocutors the chi square tests did not show any significant differences between males and females. In the family domain, Telugu is the preferred language by males, compared to females. With friends males preferred language is Telugu (50%) compared to females (36%). But more females preferred mixed language (56%) compared to males (50%). The common language that both males and females used to speak with neighbors and domestic helpers was mostly Telugu. In the official domain, English was given more emphasis by both the genders almost equally. Meanwhile, 74% males and 80% females used English with bosses and teacher, and 61% males and 83% females preferred English with officials and administrators.

The t-test shows that there are no statistically significant differences between males and females regarding the use of Telugu and English for different tasks.

c) Medium of instruction at primary and secondary level and t test results

At primary level great disparity was found between English and Telugu medium subjects regarding activities like reading novels and magazines (p-value 0.004009), reading academic books (p-value 0.009173), listening songs (p-value 0.0005819) and internet chatting (p-value 0.0009299). At the secondary level the p – values for various activities like watch television programmes and movies, watch films and advertisements, listening songs and internet chatting revealed a high degree of divergence between English and Telugu medium informants.

4. Emergence of Tenglish and the responses of the informants:

With the above analysis it is clear that the informants are convenient in using mixed language. This mixing of two or more languages by bilinguals or multilingual during a discourse, without changing the interlocutor or topic is referred to as code mixing. Generally bilinguals mix codes if they need a word or structure to express their thoughts. It is because some emotions can be better conveyed in one language than another. Sometimes it will be difficult for the speaker to retrieve a suitable word from his language. Then he switches or mixes languages. This mixing or switching may happen at word level, phrase level or sentence level.

This hybridized form of ‘Tenglish’ has become an essential component of an educated bilingual in informal domains. The English words are assimilated into Telugu language so conveniently that many times it becomes difficult to get a right substitute for English words. This is particularly true not only with youngsters but also with elders. But officially, people do not want to use this code mixed variety.

Despite the negative attitudes, code mixing fills particular linguistic needs and is a careful source of communication. Register identification, style identification, elucidation and interpretation and neutralization are main functions of code switching as a communicative strategy.

The informants reported that they preferred to use mixed language in informal situations, while communicating with friends, parents because it would be very convenient for them to express their ideas. When asked to give spontaneous translations for selected statement youngsters used mixed language when compared to elders. Youngsters could not get the Telugu equivalents for English words like ‘doubt’, ‘bill’. ‘Collage’, ‘doctor’, ‘income tax’ etc. Very conveniently they mixed Telugu and English words in a sentence without changing the structure of the language. This bilingual nature of the subjects allowed them to display bilingual competence with regard to two languages.

A few examples for this code mixed variety were

- I) idi na-ku chala inconvenient.
 it (is) me-DAT very inconvenient
 ‘It is very inconvenient for me’.

II) ii concept-ni na-ku explain cheyi.
 This concept-ACC me-to explain do-PRES-PNG
 “(Do) explain this concept to me”.

III) nenu aa proposal-ni reject ches- a-nu.
 I -Nom that proposal-ACC reject do-PAST-PNG
 “I rejected that proposal”.

Correct translation was given by elders, whereas youngsters could not get equivalent Telugu words. They were at ease to use English freely. The reason could be the medium of instruction and the environment at home and outside.

At the same time all the informants expressed that mother tongue should be given importance and it's because of English, standard Telugu usage is deteriorating. This is contradictory because there was a significant change in the language preference of youngsters and elders. As per the statistics youngsters preferred to use either English or mixed language. Elder group still indicated that they were much interested in reading Telugu literature. But slowly and silently English language was intruding into the arena of Telugu language. It was clear from the statistics that many youngsters were passionate towards English, at the cost of ignoring their own respective language. They considered English language was important for securing good jobs thus serving the instrumental purpose of English. The rich and vast Telugu literature will remain almost unread if youngsters were overwhelmed by English alone. This may be a threat to Telugu language in future.

5. Language usage and sound change:

This survey brings home certain features associated with Telugu speech sounds too. Some sounds which have been associated with Telugu phonemic inventory are being substituted by other sounds, and this can be assigned to the increasing popularity of English among the younger generation.

- Palatal aspirated affricate sounds in Telugu words drop their aspiration counterpart in the speech of youngsters:
 tʃhanakja - tʃanakja ‘chanakya’
 dzhandā - dzanda ‘flag’
- Retroflex ɭ is substituted by alveolar l
 kaɭɭu - kallu ‘eyes’
- Retroflex /ʂ/ is substituted by alveolar /s/
 ʂapam - sapam ‘curse’
 ʂaṅkaram - saṅkaram ‘Lord Shiva’
 ʂanibaram – sanibaram ‘Saturday’
- Trill /ɽ/ is substituted by flap /ɾ/
 guɽɽam - gurram ‘horse’

The causes of these sound shifts can be attributed to the influence of English which does not have retroflex in phonemic inventory, minimalization of effort or articulatory reduction and perceptual difficulties as well. This shift attested in the Telugu language across generations is better represented in the framework of constraint rankings within Optimality theoretical module as stated below.

The constraints taken in to consideration to show the ranking resulting in two different grammars are :

- Ident (anterior): Features in the inputs and outputs should agree in terms of anteriority.
- *Retroflex (continuant): Ban the retroflex sounds which are continuant in nature.

Table: 4 Constraints displaying the distribution of alveolar and retroflex sibilants

/ʃ /	Ident (anterior)	*Retroflex (continuant)
→ /ʃ/		*
/s/	*	

Here the constraints are Ident (anterior) >> *retroflex (continuant). But in case of the youngsters' speech the reverse ranking of the constraints has been observed: *retroflex (continuant) >> Ident (anterior).

Hence a proposition can be deduced: sound change is not only a phonetic change but also a change in the ranking of the grammatical constraints.

In a nutshell, this paper brings home the point that because of the widespread influence and interference of English, Telugu lexicons and sound system seem to suffer the fate of deterioration and results in code mixed variety, Tenglish. The young generation tends to switch to English at various levels of discourse which has bearings upon the lexicon and sound system of the Telugu language.

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