

Using Many Kannada Languages in a Classroom: Illustrated with a Context of Yadgir Kannada

Geetha M.

Introduction

All languages that are alive have undergone changes, produced variations and continue to do so; languages react and respond to cultural and societal changes. While there are some rules under which a language family exists, it continues to exhibit variations within that framework. There is constant exchange and movement of words and forms of languages between communities resulting in either a completely new language or a variation of it. Variations depend on the interactions, occupations, cultural practises, influences and movement of the community. Also the migration any place has experienced. I do not claim that these changes happen so quickly or drastically that one might not be able to capture the sense and rules of the language. They may have taken place over decades or even centuries, but it is important to acknowledge that spoken language is not stagnant or monolingual in nature. According to Agnihotri (2007), 'census-takers in India find themselves confronted with array of language names when they ask people what language or languages they speak'.

The growth and status of a language is dependent on the spread, political power and the socio-economic status of its speaking community and the influence of other languages, etc. This gives rise to the terms such as language and dialects. Haugen (1966) writes, 'language and dialects are ambiguous terms'. A careful peek into the history of an official language in parts of India would make it clear that the status

of a language may not remain stagnant forever. Changes in the use of Parsi, Urdu, and Hindi as court languages are some such examples. It is equally important to note that such changes were influenced by changes in dynasty, notion of national integrity, etc.

In current times, it is useful to see how the status and growth of a language is influenced by education. For the purpose of this paper, I will not discuss the influence of mediums such as entertainment, news media, socio-cultural and political processes, etc. on language. One of the key goals of education is "to produce literate individuals". Literacy is a means to most other learning since reading and writing skills underlie most learning in- and out-of schools. Also, these skills become integral for critical engagement with the world. These literate individuals in turn become agents who influence language use in the present global market economy. Repetition of such a cycle of validation may result in valuing or devaluing a kind of language usage. It is of interest to see how languages are validated, depending on whether or not they find space in this literacy medium.

Classroom Observation

The following are the observations from a class of Learning Improvement Programme in Yadgir. The focus of the programme was on listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. One of the key principles of the programme was to be sensitive to the child's word and world, and to allow space for them in the classroom.

Illustration 1

A set of sounds and their symbols in Kannada were introduced in the class. Students were prompted to give examples of words containing that sound. Students gave examples from both local vocabulary and from the list of words encountered in the textbook. Students also came up with vocabulary used in colloquial language which is generally avoided in textbooks; the word list was endless (Jackendoff, 1993). The teacher wrote all the words on the board and students copied them down in their notebooks. This process validated the child's world and word to an extent and made language learning a more meaningful process (Freire, 1972).

Illustration 2

One of the students said the word "aalanchi". Only two students in the class knew the meaning of this word despite the fact that all students came from the same village. The teacher asked for the meaning of the word. The child explained that the word is used to pluck a certain kind of fruit from the tree. The teacher then wrote the word on the board. This example illustrates how language can change even within a close proximity, based on the practises of the community.

Illustration 3

Children gave examples of the words "tamTe" and "TamTe", both meaning a musical instrument similar to a drum made out of animal skin. Similarly "DoLLu" and "Doolu" refer to some musical instruments. The pronunciation varied depending on the community. The teacher was confused and wrote the words in the standard form by referring to the text book.

Illustration 4

Students were allowed to write words from their local language. They were also encouraged to

write sentences. When conflicts around what was acceptable and what was not arose, to resolve the conflict the teacher prompted the children to write in the textbook language. For instance, a child attempted to write "Grandmother is taking flowers". The child had written "avva hoov", meaning "grandmother - flowers", and asked the teacher how to write "oytaaLe" "taking". The teacher was confused about the correct way of writing it, because it can be pronounced both as "oytaaLe" or "voytaaLe". The teacher was a little unsure of how to guide the child; she tried and later ignored the problem (not sure if my presence also impacted). However, the way in which it is written in the text book is "ajji hoovannu tegedukonDu hoodaLul", i.e. "Grandmother has taken the flowers and gone".

The above examples illustrate how attempts were made to validate the children's words and the conflicts that arose as a result of these attempts. I will now try to understand the variations in Kannada language with a focus on Yadgir Kannada.

Kannada Languages

The Kannada language is largely divided into four types after the official regional divisions of Karnataka. The four types are Kalaburgi, Dharwad, Karavali and Mysore Kannada. However in the following paragraphs, we will see that attempts to name the languages are endless and sometimes futile yet difficult to put into any one larger bucket.

Based on the geographical location-coastal areas, bordering lands, Western Ghats which have influenced communication possibilities / limitation- spoken Kannada varies (Savadatti, 2014). Moreover, the existence of the mountain ranges of the Nilgiris, Kodachadri, Brahmagiri, Kuduremukh, and Bababudangiri have limited the communication between these regions and allowed for rich variations in Kannada in its

immediate neighbouring area before industrialization. In addition to this there is a strong influence of Konkani, Tulu and Malayalam in coastal Karnataka; of Marathi in Belgaum division; and of Marathi and Telugu in the north-eastern parts of Karnataka. A few dialects based on the differences that arise from these influences are:

Coastal and Western Ghats - Karaavali Kannada, Malenad Kannada, Kasargod Kannada, etc.

South Karnataka - Mysore Kannada, Mandya Kannada, Davanagere Kannada, Kodagu Kannada, Kolar Kannada, etc.

North Karnataka - Bellary Kannada, Raichur Kannada, Bidar Kannada, Bijapur Kannada, Belagaum Kannada, Akkalakot Kannada, Aadavani Kannada, etc.

Based on economic, religious, caste, education and other socio-political aspects, many dialects of Kannada may be found. The Kannada spoken by the Brahmin community is considered as the language of the educated and is sacred or right form; however, that has variations too. In the Hassan region, the Sanketi Kannada spoken by the Sanketi Brahmins and the Kannada spoken by other Brahmins are very different from each other. Similarly, the Kannada spoken by the farming community Vokkaligas and the farming community of Kurubas in the southern are different from each other too. Many such caste-based variations of the language are named after the community in which they are spoken. For example-Soliga Kannada, Diiwara Kannada, Badaga Kannada, Banta Kannada, Muslim Kannada, Kodava Kannada, Haalakki Kannada, Koota Kannada, Korava / Koracha Kannada, Gowda Kannada, etc. However, all these variations remains only in the oral form, literature has not given space for such rich diversity and variation. This richness seems to be strained by the process of standardization.

In civilized society, standardization is a process which one cannot escape, but it is also crucially important to see how close this is to oral language, to ensure that it allows for other variations to find place. Standardization is a socio-political process involving the legitimization and institutionalization of a language variety as a feature of sanctioning of that variety as socially preferable (Williams, 1992). A language has more power than any of its dialects. It is the powerful dialect but it has become so because of non-linguistic factors. Unfortunately, those who think you can standardize and fix a language for all time are often quite influential. They often also find ready access to the media. People in power are therefore perceived as speaking normally. Any speech that is different from that constructed norm is called to be different or of a lower order. A similar strain happened in case of Kannada.

For the sake of this report, my research is limited to the history of standardization of Kannada from post-independence. After the state reorganization act in 1956, states were formed on the basis of linguistic boundaries. Mysore had a powerful dynasty ruling most of the regions of Karnataka. Nizamuddin were ruling the north-eastern parts of Karnataka speaking various dialects of Kannada; Hindi and Urdu, were later forced to join the state. The Mysore court was adorned by Brahmin and Veerashaiva writers and composers. The Kannada written by them was heavily influenced by Sanskrit and English. Linguists in Kannada critique that the use of Sanskrit and the retention of aspirational sounds which are not used vocally is evidence of the effort of retaining Sanskrit (Narayan, 2000). A form of Kannada spoken by Mysore Brahmin then became the administrative language and also the language for state education. I will be referring to it as "textbook Kannada" in this paper.

Kannada Spoken in Yadgir Region

Yadgir is a new district carved out of Gulbarga in northern Karnataka. It is also one of the most backward districts in Karnataka both economically and educationally. The Kannada spoken in Yadgir is Kalburgi Kannada, which is broadly divided into Chincholi, Alanda, Yadgir and Shahpur (names of the Taluqs) variations. This is a very broad framework based on regional division; the languages spoken by the communities vary in many ways. As my classroom observations are derived from a part of Yadgir, I will discuss a few generic and broad variations between standard text book Kannada and Kalburgi Kannada. In the following variations, the first form represents textbook Kannada and the latter represents Kalburgi Kannada. The differences in their grammar rules include:

- (1) Words (mostly nouns and verbs) end with *i* sound instead of *e*.
maLe – *maLi* 'rain'
shaale – *shaali* 'school'
onTe – *onTi* 'camel'
mane – *mani* 'house'
aane – *aani* 'elephant'
emme – *emmi* 'buffallo'
- (2) Special use of sounds *ya* and *va* can be observed in this region.
ee - *ya*
meele – *myaali* 'up'
beeDa – *byaaDa* 'don't want'
beeTe – *byaati* 'Hunt'
beele – *byaaLi* 'Fence'
oo - *va*
gooDe – *gwaaDi* 'Wall'
tooTa – *twaata* 'Farm'
dose – *dwaasi* 'Dosa'
- (3) Words end with *ri* with a plural/respectable sense.
banni - *barri* 'come'
hoogi - *hoogri* 'go'
nintkoLLi - *nindari* 'wait/stand'
kutkaLLi ? *kunDri* 'sit'

In case of a complete verb form, the words end with *haana* (for male), *haaLa* (female), *haara* (Plural form). Complete directing nouns end with *kalli*, *killi*, *kava*, *kiva*, *kadu*, *kidu*

The presence of these forms in the speech clearly points to the language being Kalburgi Kannada.

In the following illustrations the former word/form is standard Kannada while the latter word/form is from the Kalburgi region.

- (4) In many cases, following replacements of consonant sounds may be found.
n - L unnu - uLLu 'eat'
n - l munjaane - munjaale 'early morning'
s - ch sanji - chanji 'evening'
r - d urdu - uddu 'fry'
- (5) *deeru/deru* is used for plural masculine form
aNNandiru - *aNNadeeru*, 'elder brothers'
tammandiru - *tammadeeru* 'younger brothers'
- (6) In case of the plural form of objects use of *gooLu/goLu* is instead of *gaLu*
kurigaLu - *kurigooLu*, 'sheep'(plural)
manegaLu - *manigoLu* 'houses'
- (7) Use of *sh* sound is not found in this region
ashTu - *aTTu* 'that much'
kashTu - *kaaTu* 'that's all'
ishTu - *iTTU* 'this much'
- (8) In case of 5th inflectional suffix as in Kannada grammar *inda* ? *linda* form is used
maneinda - *manilinda* 'from house'
Peeteinda - *bajaarlinda* 'from market'
kaaDinda - *kaaDlinda* 'from forest'
- (9) 4th inflectional suffix - instead of *ge*? *g*, *gi*, *k* is used
manganige tinisida - *baalyaag tinsida* (Baaluu = monkey local dialect)

holavannu bittabeeku - valak bitbeeku
'harvest the field'

magaLannu kaLuhisu - magaLig khaLsu
'send the daughter'

(10) Similarly instead of 7th inflectional suffix
(alli) ? (aaga / oLaga) is used

kaalinalli - kaalaaga 'using your leg'

maneyalli - maniyaaga 'in the house'

(11) Most of the nouns starting with *ha* are
replaced by *a*, *va*, *o* sound

*haal*u – *aal*u 'milk'

*ha*NNu – *a*NNu 'fruit'

*ho*La – *vo*la 'field'

*ho*TTe – *va*TTi 'stomach'

*hu*NNime – *u*NNime 'full moon'

hebbu - *ebbu* 'suffix for 'big'

*ho*Dada – *o*Dda 'hit'

There many such differences in the grammar rules too far apart from the huge differences in vocabulary, however, only the standard Kannada grammar is taught to be correct in school (Chalapati, R., 2012). Keeping such differences in mind, I continued to observe and reflect on the classroom language.

Conclusion

Instances from classroom observation and the awareness of language variations throw light on the need and also the possibility of bringing in the children's word in the classroom. It also re-emphasises that there is strong need for independence and localization in curriculum development and classroom transactions (NCF, 2005). The teacher's preparation and his / her knowledge about linguistics to facilitate such variations in the written form at the elementary level will be very useful. When all these practises are implemented, the question of how teaching should be facilitated gets into larger a discussion

and debate. This in turn leads to new pedagogies that support and facilitate a child's language in the classroom. Simultaneously, there must be efforts on the part of the writers and other institutions to produce more work in regional variations.

References

- Agnihotri, R. K. (2007). Towards a pedagogical paradigm rooted in multilinguality. *International Multilingual Research Journal*, 1(2), 79-88.
- Chalapati, R. (2012). *Tanti meelina nadige*. Bangalore: Sakhi Prakashana.
- NCF (2005). *Position paper on language teaching*. New Delhi: NCERT
- Freire, P. (1972). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. London: Penguin Books.
- Haugen, E. (1966). Dialect, language, nation. *American Anthropologist*, 68(4), 922-935.
- Jackendoff, R. (1993). *Patterns in the mind: Language and Human Nature*. New York: Harvester.
- Narayan, K. V. (2000). *Kannada jagattu, ardha shatamaana*. Hampi: Vidyananya Press.
- Savadatti, S. (2014). Kannada bhaasheya prabeedhagalu mattu upabhaashegalu. In *Kannada bhaasha swaroopagalu*. Hampi: Vidyananya Press.
- Williams, G. (1992). *Sociolinguistics: A sociological critique*. London: Routledge.

Geetha M is a student of MA Elementary Education at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai. Her interests include language and literacy acquisition at elementary level and the social dynamics involved in such an effort.

gekgeetha@gmail.com