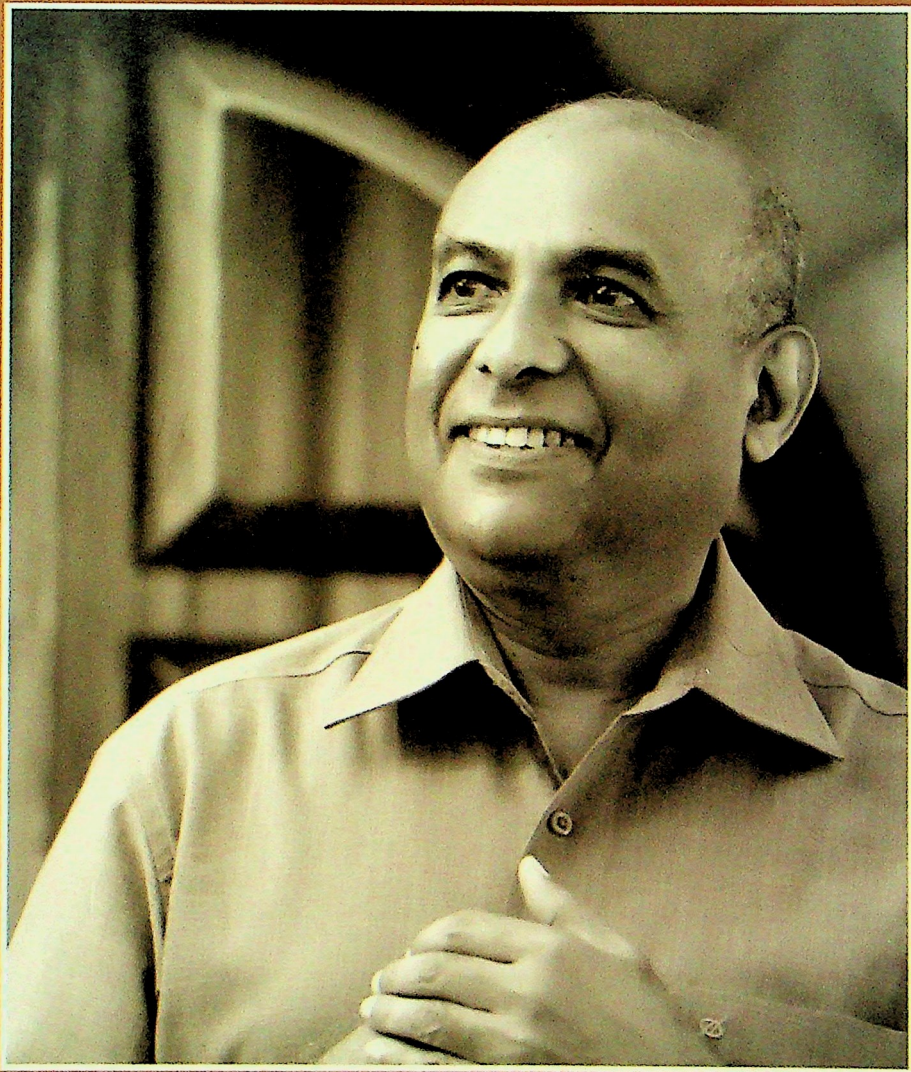# වාගීශා
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WĀGĪSHĀ

Felicitation Volume

Dedicated to

Professor Ashoka C. Premaratne

Department of Linguistics

University of Kelaniya

Kelaniya

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WĀGISHĀ

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Problems of Teaching Spoken Variety Forms in Diglossic Language

Subathini Ramesh

Abstract

දෙමළ භාෂාව ද්විරූපතාව සහිත භාෂාවකි. භාෂණයේ හා ලේඛනයේ ශබ්දිම හා වාක්කෝෂීය ආදී විවිධ අංශවල එහි විසමතා දක්නා ලැබෙයි. භාෂණ දෙමළ ඉගැන්වීමේ දී ශබ්දිම හා කෝෂීය වශයෙන් මතු වන දුෂ්කරතා මේ ලිපියේ සාකච්ඡා කෙරෙයි.

Introduction

Language is taught or learned for different purposes by different people in different fashions and by different processes. One should keep in mind that a child generally learns his / her mother tongue informally but he / she has to learn the second language deliberately. More over, one has to learn a language either as a first language or second language. The methods adopted for learning or teaching a language as first language will vary from learning or teaching the same language as second language. It is not completely true to say that language learning is a simple mechanism in which the learner learns a language by his own deliberation. There are varied processes involved in the process of learning. Many factors may facilitate or hampher one attempts to learn a language. The fact that one has already learned a language, says his mother tongue, as a first language is an important factor to be taken into consideration while scheming for imparting a second language. This paper intends to focus the difficulties of teaching spoken variety forms of Tamil. The difficulty is compounded for the preparation of materials when the language is diglossic one. Tamil comes under this category of diglossic languages.

Diglossia has been defined as a pattern in which in a single culture, there exists two highly divergent varieties of the same language: a 'low' variety comprising the primary dialect or dialects of the language and a 'high' superimposed variety. In Tamil the literary dialect represents the higher variety and the spoken dialect- the standard spoken variety - represents the low variety. The situation of having two different varieties creates problems in teaching Tamil as a second language, to learners who aim at achieving abilities in the four language skills, namely listening, speaking, reading and writing (Nadaraja Pillai : 1986). The learners face problems while acquiring a diglossic

language at all levels of language, viz., phonetic, phonemic, graphemic, morphophonemic, morphological, lexical, syntactic and semantic levels. For example, at the script level a letter may be assigned to one sound value in the language and the same letter may have a different value in informal pronunciations.

Tamil language is diglossic in nature and one will find differences in the spoken and written variety form of Tamil at various linguistic levels. That is the reason why learners of Tamil as second language, face problems while conversing with native speakers. To avoid that difficulty, such learners should be taught the spoken variety form for intelligibility. The spoken variety form plays a prominent role in oral communication and primary importance should be given to the teaching of the spoken variety form of any language.

Concentration has only been on teaching literary Tamil with stress on formal grammatical structures based on traditional grammar. Real communication, in which the spoken word is primary, has not been taken care of. One should be able to teach not only the standard written form, but also the spoken form of it. This would bring about maximum intelligibility at the level of communication. The written variety form of a language is systematized through the standardization of process of the language. But spoken variety forms are dynamic; hence we cannot have any definite pattern of this variety. Changes may occur at the spoken level according to requirements at every stage. The written variety form develops from the spoken forms and gets standardized. The written form is a referent to the differences in the spoken and written varieties of the language. The difference between the spoken and written variety form should be reduced if a language is to develop quickly.

As far as Jaffna Tamil is connected, there is a broad variation between the written and spoken usage of it. Teachers and learners of Tamil as a second language face a large number of problems because of this. Generally it is the spoken variety form that brings about changes in a language primarily introduced in drama, novels and short stories. To increase the efficiency of the spoken, changes which occur in spoken variety form are incorporated in the written form of the language. If the spoken language is raised to the level of the written variety differences between the two will get minimized.

In the history of Tamil language there is an evidence of the impact of the spoken language. (2002:18)

Classic	Std spoken form	
avarku	*avanukku*	'to him'
avatku	*avaLukku*	'to her'
avarkku	*avarukku*	'to them'
marattirkku	*marattukku*	'to the tree'
takka	*takunta*	'suitable'

Hence a teacher should bear in mind simultaneously teach both these forms to develop the proper awareness in the learners.

Given below are a few words in their standard written form and their corresponding colloquial / dialectal form. The instance changes taking place in spoken Tamil, and these changes can be analyzed by the linguists in several ways.

Standard written form	Colloquial / Dialectal form	
ceykiraan	ceyraan	'he does'
pookinraan	pooraan	'he goes'
avarkal	avamkal,	
	avayaL/avay	'they/he or she' (hon.)
ankee	amkaalay	'there'

This paper discusses problems faced while teaching spoken Tamil. There are two types of language learning, viz. mother tongue learning and second language learning. In the case of mother tongue learning importance is given more to the learning, reading and writing of it. In the case of second language learning, there are two kinds of learning: self learning and learning with the aid of others. In self learning the learners acquire language skills through hearing it spoken and expressing themselves in speech. But while teaching language skills, four types of skills are targeted by the teacher.

Among the four skills, the teacher faces problems while teaching the spoken language to one, learning it as a second language. As there are no course materials available readymade, tailored to the needs of learners possessing different levels of language competence, teachers of it have to bear in mind the following linguistic features viz. the phonological, morphological, syntactical, semantically and lexical (vocabulary) of the language features.

Phonological features

As there is no correlation between the phonemes and graphemes of a language, phonology can only be in the abstract. However there are twenty one segmental phonemes in the Literary Tamil and nineteen segmental phonemes in the Spoken Tamil, the difference in number being only two. Both varieties have the same type of quantitative opposition. Qualitatively both varieties differ in the allophonic compositions of the phonemes.

Literary Tamil and Spoken Tamil, bèoth are differed number wise in the consonantal phonemes. Literary Tamil has sixteen and Spoken Tamil has fourteen consonantal phonemes. Thus Literary Tamil has two phonemes more than the Spoken Tamil. The major points of difference are in the nasal and lateral systems of the two varieties- palatal voiced nasal *ñ* and retroflex lateralized voiced approximant *ḻ* are exclusive to literary Tamil. The absence of these two phonemes in spoken Tamil is significant. *ñ* is a phoneme in the literary Tamil, where as it is an allophone in the Spoken Tamil. The phoneme *ḻ* is absent in the Spoken Tamil. Even in reading a word or a sentence

in literary variety *l* is articulated as a retroflex consonant and not as a lateralized voiced approximant.

e.g :- *pa ñ jam*   *pancam*   'starve'

    ko ñjam   *koncam*   'few'

    pal̲am   *paLam*   'fruit'

    mal̲ay   *maLay*   'rain'

Morphological features

While teaching the pronunciation of a word, the difference(s) between the written and spoken variety forms must be stressed. In most of the languages, there are differences in the written and spoken form of one and the same word. Usage should play the main role in teaching any spoken language as the spoken language is contextual. Therefore when the spoken Tamil is the object of the teacher, the written counterparts of the spoken word(s) must be the basic course material. The pronunciation of the spoken word should be realized based on such teaching material without comparing it with the script from of it.

A few examples of written words in Tamil that are pronounced differently in the spoken context are;

Written form	Spoken context	
appootu	*appo*	'then'
ippootu	*ippo*	'now'
eppotu	*eppo*	'when'
avaL	*ava*	'she' (honorific)

Forms with feminine honorific suffix – *a* are found only in the spoken variety. The honorific suffix differs in the literary and spoken varieties. In literary Tamil *-ar* is the honorific suffix in the singular but it is common for both masculine and feminine, but in Spoken Tamil *-ar* is masculine honorific and –*a* is feminine honorific suffix. The feminine suffix *-a* is peculiar to the Jaffna dialect. The epicene plural suffix also differs in both varieties. Epicene plural suffix of non-neuter in Literary Tamil is –*kaL* and in spoken Tamil *ay~aL*. The epicene plural suffix *-kaL* includes both masculine and feminine.

        avarkaL   'they' (non-neuter).

In Spoken context –*ay* optionally followed by –*aL*

    avay

    uvayaL   }   'they' (non-neuter).

    avayaL

These are some gender suffixes differ in both the varieties. It is difficult to teach the students to differentiate these types of spoken forms.

In other words, number formation in both literary and spoken context varies to each other. The plural is formed with different suffixes in both varieties. *-r* is an exclusive plural suffix in the literary variety. It does not occur in the spoken variety to indicate plural. *–r* occurs as singular honorific in both varieties. The spoken variety has two plural suffixes that are exclusive to it. They are – *avay* and *–aL*. Sometimes these occur combined as – *avayaL* to indicate plural.

The common plural suffixes differ in their distribution in both varieties. For instance, *avan* 'he' will not take *kaL* for plural in the literary variety. But in the spoken variety *avan* 'he' takes *kaL > avamkaL* (he-they). The literary variety does not form plurals for personal names where as the spoken variety does form.

> e.g : *civanaatan + avay* *civanaatanavay*
>
> Mr.Sivanathan + plural suffix Mr.Sivanathan's family.

Some of the kinship terms take *kaL* to form plural in the literary variety; the spoken variety does not take it, but instead it takes *maar* or *avay*.

> e.g. *annaa +maar ~ anna +avay* elder brothers
>
> *akkaa +maar ~ akka +avay* elder sisters

In literary Tamil, the demonstrative pronouns *avar, ivar, uvar* and the interrogative pronoun *evar* are common for both masculine and feminine (singular) whereas these are only masculine in the spoken variety. Their corresponding feminine singular forms are *ava, iva, uva* and *eva*. The plural forms *avarkaL, ivarkaL, uvarkaL* and the interrogative *evarkaL* in literary Tamil are epicene plural and these do not occur in the spoken variety. Their corresponding forms in the spoken variety are: *avay, ivay, uvay,* and *evay*. These forms occur in the literary Tamil but they are neuter (non-human) plural. Their corresponding neuter (non-human) forms in the spoken Tamil are *atukaL, itukaL, utukaL* and *etukaL*. Another major difference in demonstrative and interrogative pronouns between the literary variety and the spoken variety is that Spoken Tamil has corresponding masculine and feminine plurals for *avan, ivan, uvan* and *evan* and on the other hand for *avaL, ivaL, uvaL,* and *evaL*. They are *avamkaL, ivamkaL, uvamkaL,* and *evamkaL* and *avaLavay, ivaLavay, uvaLavay* and *evaLavay*. Literary Tamil does not have masculine plural forms or feminine plural forms but it has only epicene plural forms or feminine plural forms.

The form *ivar* and *ivay* may create learning problems to students at the time when they go to learn formal or written Tamil in schools. In spoken Tamil the form *ivar* carries the meaning of 'human masculine' whereas in written Tamil it means 'human noun' common to masculine and feminine. The word *avay* in spoken Tamil means 'human plural' where as the same form in written Tamil

carries the meaning of 'non human plural'. Material producers as well as the teachers have to take care of such instances and the Tamil text books produced as it is known is not taking care of such trivial problems.

Syntactical features

At the syntactic level the problem will arise to both the teacher and the learner because written forms have a definite pattern or structure based on grammar structure, while the spoken form has a definite structure pattern, which is grounded in usage.

Written variety

tampi ennay nanraaka aTittaan.

"younger brother had beaten me well"

Spoken variety

(a). *tampi ennay nallaay aTiccuppooTTaan.*
(b). *ennay tampi nallaay aTicciTTaan.*
(c). *tampi nallaay ennay aTiccuppooTTaan.*
(d). *nallaay ennay tampi aTicciTTaan.*

In this context written and spoken forms differ with regard to certain structures but they agree to with regard to certain others.

The structure of the written form is SOV pattern in Tamil. But this pattern is not the norm in speech and this pattern is varied as OSV, OVS and SVO which bewilder the learners of it as a second language as it is natural for them to consider both speech and writing to be uniform.

The pronominal termination in Tamil also raises some problems. There is a marked change in the gender- number distribution between spoken and written Tamil. There are five genders in written Tamil such as masculine singular, feminine singular, epicene plural, neuter singular and neuter plural. But in spoken Tamil there are six genders viz. masculine singular, masculine plural, feminine singular, feminine plural, neuter singular and neuter plural. This is reflected at the level of concordance.

Spoken variety
e.g:

Masc. sg.	*avan vantaan < avan vantaan*	'he came'
Masc. pl.	*avamkaL vantaamkaL < avarkaL vantaarkaL*	
	avanavay vantaanavay	'they came'
Fem.sg.	*ava vantaa <avaL vantaaL*	'she came'

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Fem.pl.	*avaLavay vantaaLavay < avarkaL vantaarkaL*	'they came'
Neut.sg.	*atu vantatu < atu vantatu*	'it came'
Neut.pl.	*atukaL vantatukaL < avai vantana*	'they (neut.) came'

These are some referential pronouns in spoken variety.

e.g:

yaar	'who'	*yaaroo*	'some one'
enna	'what'	*ennamoo*	
		ennavoo	'something'
etu	'which'	*etuvoo*	'something'
		eetoo	

Following examples of case anaphoric forms of spoken variety are very difficult to teach the second language learners.

oruvar – ay	*oruvaray*
one person – accusative case	one person
oruvar – ukku	*oruvarukku*
one person – dative case	one person
oruvar – ooTay	*oruvarooTay*
one person – sociative case	one person

The given examples illustrate clefting in Tamil.

puujaa-taan	*neerru*	*vantatu*
puja-emph	yesterday	come.
neerru	*vantatu*	*puujaataan*
yesterday	come	puja-empha.
vantatu	*nerru*	*puujaataan*
came	yesterday	puja-empha

As these differences in linguistic features make communication in spoken Tamil intelligible, there is a need to teach these differences to learners of it as second language.

Semantical features

Problems may arise at the semantic level while they deal with the standard or common dialect and the regional and social dialects, where single word has different meanings. The word *kari* for example is referred to as 'mutton' in one region, and as 'sauce' in another region, but in common Tamil it refers to 'vegetables'.

Written form of Indian Tamil	Jaffna spoken form
tiTTutal	*eecutal* ~ *peesutal* 'to scold'
peesutal	*kataittal* 'to talk'
kosu	*nuLampu* 'mosquito'

Lexical items differ in both dialects due to their contextual and idiomatic use too. This may be exemplified by citing a conversation that actually looks place once between two persons from various regions.

A similar example of an instruction in Shanmugampillai's Spoken Tamil that gives a different sense for a speaker of JT (Jaffna Tamil) at least on the first instance of hearing it as follows:

yeen reediyoove metuvaay vaykkirre? konjō tuukki vayyi. naańge kɛkevɛnda?

For an Indian, it means "why do you tune the radio so low? Turn up the volume. Shouldn't we hear?" On the other hand if a Jaffna Tamil were to express the sense intended by the IT (Indian Tamil) speaker, he would generally say it as follows:

enna? reeTiyoovay metuvaay pooRRaay. koncam pilattup pooTu. naankaL keekka veeNTaam?

The social meetings or values attribute to certain usages are different from their normal meaning or grammatical meanings. Words used to denote aspects like the division of day represent an analysis of the universe as grasped in different cultures. The word *kaalamai* 'morning' for example is referred to as *viTiyappuram*, 'dawn', *karukkal* 'an hour before dawn', and *iLaneeram* 'from 9a.m to 11a.m'. The meaning differs from time to time, but in common Tamil, it refers to morning. (Suseendirarajah; 1999) As such there are many words in the vocabulary of the language while it comes to usage; they must be listed by the teacher and the learners should be acquainted with these different meanings of the same word.

Vocabulary

Variations have been observed in these two varieties to centre at all levels of language but more heavily on the lexical level. One need not hesitate to attribute a greater percentage of unintelligibility of spoken variety forms to written variety forms more to the lexical differences than to the phonological and grammatical. Dissimilarity had however continued to exist and dissimilar changes have continued to develop in the vocabulary of both varieties of Tamil. One of the strong reasons for this is the fact that vocabulary is the most vulnerable part of language, subject to various kinds of linguistic and extra – linguistic influences.

Some lexical items are not at all used in the spoken context. The word *kuvi* 'heap' for example in used only in the written variety form is '*kumi*' some more lexical items are as follows.

aay	*puTumku*	'pluck'

These occur in the spoken language with regional and social variations.

There are some synonymous forms, some of which are only written while others are only spoken. For example

Written:	*kurukkaL*	*vantaar*	'clergy came' (sg.)
	kurukkaLmaar	*vantaarkaL.*	'clergy came' (pl.)
Spoken:	*kurukkaL*	*vantavar*	
	kurukkaL	*vantaar*	'clergy came' (sg.)
	kurukkaLmaar	*vantavay*	
	kurukkaLmaaravay	*vantavay, vantinam*	
	kurumaar	*vantavay, vantinam*	'clergy came' (pl.)
	kurukkaLmaar	*vantinam*	
	kurukkaLavay	*vantavay, vantinam*	

These may constitute an acute learning problem if the spoken variety forms differ from written variety forms. Therefore the teacher should have the knowledge of both varieties in a language.

Conclusion

We wish to stress that variation in the spoken variety form of the Tamil language has been considered in a Tamil language teaching curriculum. The language used in the vast area by almost all has been neglected and language teachers dismiss them of no significance. A grave error of judgment is made here. This area needs special emphasis to meet the growing communicative requirements of the population who use it. Hence the problems focused may help make a small beginning towards that objective.

Key words: spoken variety, diglossia, vocabulary, semantic feature, interrgative

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