

Social Stratification in South African Telugu (Ste)—A Sociolinguistic Case Study

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1 Introduction

Various historians¹ have documented the socio-economic conditions which compelled the Indians to emigrate from nineteenth century British India. The main focus in such research was on the effects of British rule in India, e.g. the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857². However, Indian migration during the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries was not only the creation of British colonialism in India but also socio-economic conditions in diaspora areas controlled by the British. While the increase in land revenue, the deterioration of the handicraft industry, the waning of crops, the scarcity of raw materials and famine together with the rigid caste system and illiteracy exerted a weighty pushing influence on the decision of Indians to emigrate, many were lured away to satisfy labour market needs of the gradual expanding British capitalist plantation economy in other colonies. This is manifest in that the vast majority of Indians emigrated mainly to other British colonies, one exception being Surinam, then a Dutch colony.

The *Andhras* (as the Telugu-speakers are called) emigrated to Natal to work on the British-owned sugar plantations. The conditions, especially those created by the so-called Company and Crown rules, under which Indian labour was shamelessly exploited in Natal are already documented (Prabhakaran 1992:37-39). However, for the purposes of this article, a few may be mentioned.

The *Andhra* migration began with the export of indentured, contract or *cūlie* (*coolie*) labour in the 1830s. This happened in the wake of the labour—Western capital confrontation concerning slave labour, the resulting labour needs created by the abolition of slavery in 1833—the emancipated former slaves refused to work under the same conditions for the same white employers—and the ever increasing expanding of British industry in the colonies. The labour scarcity threatened the British 'cash-crop' economy, e.g. sugar, rubber and coffee and private enterprise. This situation prompted the British to start recruiting Indian labour (of which the *Andhras* formed a

¹ See Raghunadha Rao (1988); Kondapi (1951); Bhana (1987), etc.

² See Chopra et al (1979) and Sarojini (1986).

part) under an indentured system.

As early as 1854 sugar-cane proved quite lucrative in the colony of Natal. This created an even greater demand for cheap labour. Labour was needed for the day-to-day weeding and fertilising of the sugar-cane fields and harvesting (Prabhakaran 1992:40). On the basis of the successes of the nearby Mauritian plantations—which heavily depended on cheap Indian labour—Natal plantation owners zealously sought to secure Indian labour. They pressurised the British government to procure such labour and the government in turn approached British India. The British Indian government agreed to send indentured labourers. The present day South African Telugu (STe) owes its existence to the importation of indentured *Andhras* from the districts of Srikakulam, Visakhapatnam, Guntur, Krisna, East and West Godavari districts, cittur and other districts of North Arcot of Madras Presidency (cf. Swan 1985 & Bhana 1987). Initially, they were to come and work in Natal for a three year contract period. Later, these contracts were extended to five years (Calpin 1949:6).

Although the British government passed a series of laws to protect the indentured labourers, many Indians became the miserable victims of their indentureship. Many were misled by the deceptive persuasions of recruiters. *Andhras*, along with Tamil-speakers, were either lured by promises of an improved quality of life as indentured labourers or accepted the offer due to personal problems (Prabhakaran 1992:41). When the first steam paddler, the S.S.Truro, docked in Natal on 16 November 1860 carrying 342 passengers, the first batch of *Andhras* arrived in the colony of Natal bringing their Telugu language and cultural norms and values with them.

According to the various documentations of the arrival and dispersion of Indians in Natal in general (Bhana 1987; Kuper 1960) and the *Andhras* in particular (Prabhakaran 1992), the latter were settled along the coastal belt from Port Shepstone on the South Coast to Kearsney on the North Coast. They were contracted to various leading employers such as Blackburn Central Sugar Company, Kearsney Estates, La Lucia and Muckle Neuk Estates, Natal Sugar Company, Natal Government Railways and Tongaat Estates.

When their initial indentureship contracts expired, many *Andhras* stayed on in areas such as Illovo, Esperanza, Umzinto, Congella Barracks, Stella Hill, Sea View, Puntans Hill and Clairwood. With the implementation of the Group Areas Acts (1950-1960), some of the prominent *Andhra* settlements such as Stella Hill, Sea View and Clairwood were uprooted. The *Andhras* were forced to move away from areas they have been inhabiting for nearly one hundred years. One hundred and thirty seven years after their arrival in South Africa, the present-day *Andhras* are mostly scattered all over KwaZulu-Natal with a few thousand living in the provinces of Gauteng and the Western Cape. Although their actual numbers are not documented separately, the *Andhras* are a minority within the minority Indian community in South Africa.

Telugu and the Caste System in South Africa

Swan (1985:281-283) and Bhana (1987:79) demonstrate that the majority of the *Andhras* came from lower caste groups (see table 1) and from uneducated classes. They were recruited for hard manual labour based on their physique rather than on their educational qualifications. Despite the fact that some of the immigrants could read and write Telugu, most did not have any formal education in the Telugu language. With the exception of *Pundit* Varadāchāryulu no other person has immigrated from the *Brāhmin* class until recently. As Naidoo (1986:115) states, 'At no time did the country receive a truly representative cross-section of Indian society ...'.

Table 1- Distribution of Telugu castes³ among Madras passengers -1860-1902 (percentages)

| Castes | Total average | Traditional professions in India |
|-----------------------------|---------------|-------------------------------------|
| <i>balija</i> | 3,3 | a <i>śūdra</i> caste |
| <i>bōya</i> | 0,3 | hunter |
| <i>ceṭṭy</i> | 0,3 | merchant |
| <i>cākalildōbhi</i> | 1,7 | washer man |
| <i>cavarai/gavara</i> | 1,7 | non-vegetarian merchant |
| <i>gentū</i> ⁴ | 1,4 | Telugu-speaker |
| <i>golla</i> | 1,0 | herdsman |
| <i>kamma</i> | 0,9 | agriculturist |
| <i>kāpu</i> | 2,5 | farmer |
| <i>mādiga</i> | 1,4 | cobbler |
| <i>māla</i> | 2,3 | pariah |
| <i>pariah</i> | 14,6 | same as <i>māla</i> |
| <i>reḍḍi</i> | 1,7 | agriculturist |
| <i>telugu</i> ⁵ | | 0,7 Telugu-speaker |
| <i>uppara</i> | 1,3 | a mining caste who are tank diggers |
| unknown (along with Tamils) | 10,7 | |

(Bhana 1987:79)

³ Telugu castes are separated from the Tamil castes. See table 6 for other Indian Telugu castes and their professions.

⁴ *Gentū* (*Gentoo*) is not a caste. The Telugu-speakers were referred to as *Gentoos* by the Dutch.

⁵ This could be the *Telaga* caste (oil-monger).

In the state of Andhra Pradesh, India, the *gavara*, *kamma*, *reddi* and *kāpu* castes are considered as middle class castes. The remaining castes are considered lower castes.

Due to the confusion concerning the English terms or foreign culture of understanding, the meaning of the terms *varāṇa* and *jāti*, 'caste' is not always understood correctly. This has led to many different views. Mesthrie (1990:336-337) quotes Dutt's (1931:3) summary concerning caste as follows:

Without attempting to make a comprehensive definition it may be stated that the most apparent features of the present day caste system are that members of the different castes can not have matrimonial connections with any but persons of their own caste; that there are restrictions, though not so rigid as in the matter of marriage, about a member of the caste eating and drinking with that of a different caste; that in many cases there are fixed occupations for different castes; that there is some hierarchical gradation among the castes, the most recognized position being that of the *Brāhmins* at the top; that birth alone decides a man's connection with his caste for life, unless expelled for violation of his caste rules, and that transition from one caste to another, high or low is not possible. The prestige of the *Brāhman* caste is the corner-stone of the whole organization.

Mesthrie (1990:337) lists the most frequently accepted attributes of castes as endogamy⁶, occupational specialisation⁷, hierarchy⁸, commensality and hereditary membership. Dutt correctly points out that marriage is strictly confined to members of one's own caste group; strict rules are followed concerning eating and drinking with other caste groups. It is the writer's personal experience that the Indian Telugu community rigidly follows the rules and prescriptions of the caste of one's birth. Despite one's individual ability or merit acquired through education, or socio-economic status attained through economic activity, this cannot be changed. A sub-group within a caste may try and

⁶ Until 1970's endogamy (marrying within the same caste or the tribe) was strictly followed by most of the Indians in South Africa. Endogamy is still rigidly followed by most of the Telugu castes in the modern Andhra Pradesh, India.

⁷ The caste system in India has a traditional occupational specialisation such as a *bōya* must hunt, the *cākali* must be a washer man, the *mādiga* must be a cobbler and so on. However, this traditional occupational specialisation is not rigidly followed even in India in the present-day situation and was long forgotten by the Indian South Africans.

⁸ The Indian castes system has a fourfold classification in which the *Brāhmins* occupy the top position, *Kshatriyas* (warriors) next, followed by *Vaishyas* (merchants) and finally *Shudras* (working class). There are also the *Harijans* (untouchables) who occupy the bottom of the caste system.

attain higher socio-economic status. Even here, however, it will still belong to the same hierarchy (cf. Sivarama Murty 1980).

Based on available ship lists at the University of Durban-Westville Documentation Centre, it was mainly the Telugu dialects of Eastern, Central and Southern India which found their way to South Africa. Various socio-economic factors such as inter-marriage, Tamil numerical majority, the virtual absence of a separate *Andhra* identity and religio-cultural reasons (the shared Dravidian heritage which influenced the creation of common religio-cultural practices among the *Andhras* and the Tamils) created the conditions whereby Tamil, being a dominant 'in-group' (Indian) language to Telugu in South Africa, substantially influenced Telugu (Prabhakaran 1994a:68). Many immigrant Telugu speakers became bilingual in Telugu-Tamil. In the process of the *Andhra* assimilation with the Tamils, later generations became either fluent or passive or semi-fluent bilinguals in both languages.

Due to this assimilation, the *Andhras* lost their separate identity. It gradually led to the erosion of their ethnic mother tongue (EMT). In addition, English exerted its influence on the *Andhras*. Due to its status as a *lingua franca*, it superseded Telugu and prompted them to learn English. Most shifted their EMT towards English. A small group of loyal *Andhras*, encouraged by the arrival of Sir Kurma Reddy, Second Agent-General (1929) and Sri Srinivasa Sastry (the Indian High Commissioner in South Africa, 1929-32) founded the *Andhra Maha Sabha* of South Africa and are at present trying their utmost to nurture and retain the Telugu language.

Particularly since the mid-1950s, caste does not have the same function in the Indian South African situation. Kuper (1955) observes that by the middle of the twentieth century, the Indian population of South Africa did not maintain the rigid caste system anymore. After the first few decades in South Africa, it did not play an overtly important role anymore. Currently, it is not maintained and does not exert any influence on their socio-political life. However, many present-day Telugus remember their original caste backgrounds. Even so, as they are primarily from the upwardly mobile⁹ in South Africa, the caste system does not have a rigid hold on their lives as in India. In interviews, while discussing their caste backgrounds, the *Andhras* did not register any fear or guilt about it. Although still aware of their caste background, they are not caste-conscious any more. This is conversant with Mesthrie's (1992:7) statement that, in general, caste-consciousness was reduced within one or two generations of the Indian emigration. It was not relevant to their daily life or in the struggle for their survival in an alien environment. A small group of people within the South African community, however, (e.g. the *Gavara kōmaṭīs*, the non-vegetarian merchant caste) still refer to

⁹ The upward mobility of the Telugus in their caste system is discussed in the following sub-heading.

themselves as *Gavaras* and maintain their distinct caste identity even in behavioural pattern and religio-cultural activities (cf. Prabhakaran 1995).

2 Indian Telugu (ITe) and STe

In India, Telugu (one of the major Dravidian languages) is spoken in Andhra Pradesh which lies in the south of the central part of the Indian peninsula. This region has about 90 million Telugu speakers. Sanskrit scholars of ancient times named the speakers of Telugu *Andhras*. Telugu itself, has a two-pronged development, one from the native Dravidian languages and the other from Sanskrit.

The origins of Telugu dates back to the second century BCE and has a long literary history going back to the eleventh century CE. Currently, Telugu is the only Dravidian language in India which shares its linguistic borders with five others: two are from the Dravidian group of languages (Tamil and Kannada) and three from the Indo-Aryan languages (Hindi, Marathi and Oriya. Due to foreign invasions it was sporadically exposed to various other languages and cultures throughout the centuries. This brought about many linguistic changes and in time made it very assimilative in nature.

The present state of Andhra Pradesh, India, consists of twenty-four districts with four main Telugu dialects: the Northern, Southern, Eastern and Central dialects (cf. Prabhakaran 1996:119). However, since Telugu society in India is divided into a sizeable number of castes and sub-castes, many more may be discerned. *Brāhmin* speech contains such prosodic features as aspiration, retroflexion and sibilance, intact, as borrowed or re-borrowed from Sanskrit. Other caste speakers, who were traditionally not exposed to Sanskrit, substituted these prosodic features with those indigenous to the Telugu language. An individual educated in Telugu may then have two types of pronunciation: one that he/she has acquired because of education, i.e. pronouncing as per the spelling, and the other which is normal in his/her colloquial speech.

There exist many caste and even more sub-caste dialects in Andhra Pradesh. Since they lack some morphological and phonological features of Sanskritised Telugu, Telugu linguists usually do not regard them as standard dialects. In India, the formal educated speech of the Central region has become the norm for standard Telugu (cf. Krishnamurti 1974).

Outside Andhra Pradesh Telugu is spoken in various states of the Indian sub-continent as well as in other countries such as Mauritius, Malaysia, Singapore, Burma, Thailand and more recently in the European countries, the United States of America, Canada, Australia and South Africa among others.

The Telugu language in South Africa is a separate dialect which developed on its own through contacts with South African languages such as English, Zulu, Fanagalo,

South African Tamil and Bhojpuri/Hindi. Due to the socio-economic and political sanctions imposed by India and various other countries on South Africa during the apartheid years, STe speakers are not aware of the linguistic changes that have occurred in modern Telugu in India or elsewhere. Furthermore there was no immigration of any kind of Telugu language speakers from India after the indenture system ended in 1911 (except for a handful of priests and teachers who were imported before 1945). All these factors virtually meant that South African Telugu had no linguistic contacts with India.

On the question 'How far does the STe resemble the original Telugu dialects that were brought into the country?' (Prabhakaran 1996:118-127) it can be demonstrated that STe is an amalgamation of various dialects which came with the immigrants. In time, it developed as a new dialect due to its contacts with other languages in South Africa.

3 Upward and Downward Social Mobilities—The *Andhra* Situation in South Africa

Over the one hundred and thirty seven years of its presence in South Africa, the socio-economic development of the STe speaking community determined the fate of Telugu. During the long process of its evolution, any society usually evolves to the good. With an increase in the quality of education and improved living conditions comes behavioural pattern change and upward social mobility. 'Progress' is rarely retrogressive. The sociolinguistic study conducted by Sivarama Murty in the district of Śrīkākuḷam, Andhra Pradesh, India, on the social mobility of the *Telagas* and *Velamas* (see table 6) shows upward and downward mobility respectively. His study illustrates how lower caste *Andhras* (in this instance the *Telagas*) achieve social progressiveness due to education, literacy and economic development. On the contrary, mainly economic factors produced retrogression among the *Velamas*. In the Indian South African context, change has been mainly progressive. Retrogression, however, can also be identified (mainly among immigrants—see sub-section 6).

By the 1940s a new generation of educated *Andhras* (and other Indians) called the 'new elites' were emerging. They were very aware of their caste hierarchy within the Indian community. These new elite *Andhras* clearly demonstrated an upward social mobility and as Maharaj (1992:4) comments,

were differentiated from their underclass roots in terms of their superior positions in the occupational hierarchy, made possible by their advanced educational qualifications.

During this process of evolutionary upward mobility, the lower caste *Andhras*

tried to imitate the upper middle caste *Andhras* by changing their names, surnames and life styles (see the following sub-sections for more details). At this stage there was no correlation between their original castes and their occupations. A lower caste person from C13 or C14, for example, became an official priest in a Hindu temple and performed prayers and presided at weddings, basically functioning as a *Brāhman*. The rigid caste hierarchy became blurred. These changes led to the attrition of many caste terminologies, occurrence of semantic changes and finally contributed to the upward mobility of the Telugu (Indian) community in general (Mesthrie 1990:339-344; Prabhakaran 1994b, 1995b & 1996).

Sivarama Murty (1980:380) demonstrates that it is possible that

an upward mobility in a certain caste people contributes for the development of contextually varied alternations in a linguistic system in the immediate generation due to literacy and the other contributing variables like prestige and power.

Downward mobility, however, does not exert an influence on a vernacular in the immediate generation. It mainly affects future generations. The writer hypothesizes that this statement of Sivarama Murty is applicable to the ITe situation and differs in the STe situation. Especially two sociolinguistic aspects of STe *viz.* the social stratification revealed in the language and the way in which upward social mobility in the South African *Andhra* community affects language change in STe, substantiates this hypothesis. In the next sections, this hypothesis will be argued for in the contexts of upward mobility and the social stratification of STe with information gathered in field-work.

4 Methodology

Following Mesthrie (1991, 1992), the fieldwork comprised two main activities.

4.1 Questionnaire-based Interviews Eliciting Words and Sentences in Translation from English

Words known to have undergone change and reported to be diagnostic of Indian Telugu caste dialects, both regional and social were focused on. In addition, information was obtained from religio-cultural domains in which STe is mostly used today (cf. Prabhakaran 1993; 1994 & 1995). Following Labov (1972), information was also elicited from formal, informal, casual and STe speeches recorded on various occasions between 1989-1996 by the researcher and her research assistants. The quick questionnaire was administered to 80 chosen fluent (both ITe and STe speakers), semi-fluent and passive STe speakers of various generations.

4.2 Interviews

Interviews were conducted in the provinces of KwaZulu-Natal, Gauteng and Eastern Cape (especially in the former homeland, Transkei). These were useful in obtaining information on caste dialectic retention and change. The interviews were conducted with the help of two research assistants and some informal assistants (fluent STe speakers) who volunteered to help.

4.3 Interpretation

Since all raw data must be interpreted, and when not available, compared to existing studies, a hermeneutical approach was used which included available data documented on caste dialects of ITe and research conducted among various Telugu dialects and class/caste variants in India.

5 Age, Sex, Generation and Caste Awareness of Interviewees

Details about the formal informants and the interviewees are presented in tables 2 through 5.

Table 2—Age of the sample

| Below 20 | 21-30 | 31-40 | 41-50 | 51-60 | 60+ | Total |
|----------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-----|-------|
| 6 | 10 | 14 | 15 | 15 | 20 | 80 |

Table 3—Sex of the sample

| Male | Female | Total |
|------|--------|-------|
| 37 | 43 | 80 |

Table 4—Generation of the sample

| G 1 | G 2 | G 3 | G 4 | G 5 | Total |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-------|
| 10 | 8 | 25 | 27 | 10 | 80 |

Key to generation :

- G 1 = Immigrants to South Africa from India (Andhra Pradesh).
- G 2 = First generation born in South Africa whose parents were born in India.
- G 3 = Second generation born in South Africa whose parents were born in South Africa.
- G 4 & G 5 = Third and fourth generations born in South Africa whose grandparents and great grandparents were born in South Africa.

Table 5—Caste awareness of the sample

| | |
|-----------------------------------|----|
| Aware of the caste background | 18 |
| Not aware of the caste background | 62 |
| Total | 80 |

6 Social Stratification in STe

Various sociologists have worked on the problem of social stratification (Sahlins 1958; Kirchhoff 1955 and others). In the recent past, linguists have contemplated the role of 'social dialects' in linguistic change. Sociolinguists such as Labov (1966; 1970), Gumperz (1958), Klass (1980), Pandit (1972) and Bright and Ramanujan (1964) have put forward their hypotheses on the role of social dialects in linguistic change. In this paper I briefly evaluate the hypothesis advanced by Bright and Ramanujan (1964).

Bright and Ramanujan (1964:471) have proposed a hypothesis to account for the dynamics of linguistic change. This hypothesis is concerned with the role of 'caste dialects' in linguistic change. An earlier version of this hypothesis is as follows:

In general, the *Brāhmin* dialect seems to show great innovation on the more conscious levels of linguistic change—those of borrowing and semantic extension—while the non-*Brāhmin* dialect shows greater innovation in the less conscious type of change—those involving phonemic and morphological replacements (Bright & Ramanujan 1964:471).

Bright's hypothesis has another part which explains the bi-directionality of linguistic change in *Brahmin* and non-*Brahmin* dialects in term of the literary factor (Bright & Ramanujan 1964:478).

Until recently (cf. Mesthrie 1990, 1991 and 1992), little attention was paid to the social stratification present in the various South African languages (both indigenous and immigrant). This is especially true of the study of South African Indian languages. If the conspicuous presence of social stratification in Indian languages in South Africa and the caste influence on language are considered, this is surely a situation researchers will have to address.

Although ITe has attracted the attention of various sociolinguists (Donappa 1974; Krishnamurti 1974; Radhakrishna 1983; Sankara Mohan Rao 1983; Sivarama Murty 1979 and Venkateswara Sastry 1994 among others) trivial attention was given to the social stratification. Sivarama Murty (1979 & 1980) and Venkateswara Sastry (1994) try to illustrate some of the main sociolinguistic variables in ITe. In this section my main aim is to present some sociolinguistic features which clearly mark the social dialects of the present-day STe speakers.

Following Sivarama Murty (1979:92f), the author provides a random caste breakdown of a small village in *Śrīkākuḷam* district (in modern Andhra Pradesh, India). Representatives of most of these (except *Brāhmaṇ*) castes appear to have emigrated to South Africa (cf. Swan 1985:231 and Bhana 1987:79).

Table 6—Telugu castes and division in modern Andhra Pradesh (C1- C14¹⁰)

| No | Caste | Traditional occupation |
|-----|------------------------|------------------------------|
| C1 | <i>brāhmaṇ</i> | (priest and pure vegetarian) |
| C2 | <i>kalimi kōmaṭi</i> | (vegetarian merchant) |
| C3 | <i>gavara kōmaṭi</i> | (non-vegetarian merchant) |
| C4 | <i>telaga</i> | (a variety of <i>Naidu</i>) |
| C5 | <i>kāpu</i> | (a variety of <i>Naidu</i>) |
| C6 | <i>velama</i> | (a variety of <i>Naidu</i>) |
| C7 | <i>śarābu</i> | (gold-smith) |
| C8 | <i>vadrāṅgi</i> | (carpenter) |
| C9 | <i>talakali/telaga</i> | (oil-monger) |
| C10 | <i>ponḍara</i> | (vegetable vendor) |
| C11 | <i>ēta</i> | (basket maker) |
| C12 | <i>mangali</i> | (barber) |
| C13 | <i>cākali</i> | (washer man) |
| C14 | <i>māla</i> | (harijans) |

Sivarama Murty (1979:96-98) classifies these 14 caste groups into four classes based on their social stratification as follows : Class 1 (C1-C4 and C7), Class 2 (C5-C6), Class 3 (C8-C10) and Class 4 (C11-C14). Being aware of the ITe caste system and linguistic variables, the writer follows the same class division from C1 to C14.

The social stratification perceived in STe will be discussed under three categories viz. 1) address terms used by the speech community; 2) linguistic variables; and 3) other social variables noticed.

6.1 Address terms used

Address terms used by this speech community can be once again divided into three

¹⁰ To facilitate easy reference, the following abbreviations are used in the text: C = Caste; HC = High Caste; MC = Middle Caste; LC = Low Caste; G1-G5 = Generations 1-5.

categories: 1) kinship terms; 2) third person pronouns (male and female); and 3) polite/impolite suffixes added to certain words.

6.1.1 Kinship terms used

In many Indian languages kinship terms are used among the members not only within the family and the caste but also concerning members of other castes as well. ITe is not an exception to this norm. Sivarama Murty (1979:93) observed this among ITe speakers of a small village in the modern Andhra Pradesh state, India. He noted this across C2 to C8 and states that use of kinship terms across other castes is not common with C1 and is less frequent in C9-C14, the lower class. His findings also illustrate that C5 (*Kāpus*) use kinship terms more frequently than any other community because they address the other four (C1-C4) communities with kinship terms. The reverse is very rare. In the ITe social system, the immediate lower group (especially of the middle caste) tries to develop its relations with the immediate upper group. However, the upper groups do not like to develop such relations with lower caste. Thus the trend in ITe is upward mobility rather than downward.

The following are the kinship terms used among the ITe communities. The order indicates the relative frequency of the items used. 1) *māma* uncle; 2) *amma* mother; 3) *ayya* father; 4) *nānna* father; 5) *akka* elder sister; 6) *tammuḍu* younger brother; 7) *anna* elder brother; 8) *bāva* brother-in-law; 9) *vadina* sister-in-law; 10) *peddamma* mother's elder sister; 11) *pinnamma* mother's younger sister; 12) *cinnāyana* father's younger brother; 13) *pedanānna* father's elder brother; 14) *peddayya* father's elder brother; 15) *tāta* grandfather (both maternal and paternal); 16) *ayyamma* father's mother; 17) *ammamma* mother's mother. It is imperative to state in this context that *Brāhmans*, the upper caste, never address any other community with kinship terms. This is reserved for members of their own caste.

Mesthrie's work (1990:345-348) demonstrates that although the domain of kinship terms is 'susceptible to influence from the dominant language' (English in KwaZulu-Natal), the South African Bhojpuri (SABh) retained most of its original kinship terms over the years. Similarly, many of the above mentioned kinship terms survived in STe, however, their usage is limited only within the family and not across the other castes. During interviews, almost 90% of the interviewees stated that they are aware of most of these kinship terms and use them only within their home and in close family domains.

During her stay in South Africa the author has observed a few of the STe speakers of *Kamma*, *Kāpu* and *Gavara* castes addressing the *Brāhmaṇ* caste immigrants with kinship terms such as *anna*, *tammudu*, *akka* and *amma* (displaying upward mo-

bility). It is necessary to note in this context that they do not use the same terms with the local born STe speakers who are not their relatives. These findings substantiate Sivarama Murty's notion that lower caste Telugus address upper caste Telugus with kinship terms in order to improve their social situation. However, it is interesting to note that within a few years of their immigration, some of the *Brāhmaṇ* caste ITe speakers have changed and are addressing the STe speakers (although aware of the latter's lower caste status) as *anna*, *vadina*, *māma* and *amma*. This type of downward mobility is not possible in the ITe social situation. This is unique to the STe situation. Some of the present-day *Brāhmaṇ* immigrants to South Africa are trying to develop their relations with the STe speakers and display a downward mobility, which is unusual among the ITe community.

6.1.2 Third person pronouns used

In the Telugu language, third person pronouns are mainly used as reference terms. When a Telugu speaker (addresser) refers to others or reports about other persons (both male and female), he/she uses these pronouns. ITe has different degrees of politeness and impoliteness. This is present in the reciprocal determination of the use of certain pronouns and the caste/social stratification of the addresser. For example, the ITe speakers use terms expressing high degrees of politeness, viz. (w)*vāru*, *āyana* and *atanu* (to refer to male only) to higher and middle caste Telugu speakers. They use *vāḍu/vāḍu* for lower caste people (see table 7). The middle caste ITe speakers use the terms *āyana*, *atanu* and *atagāḍu* for the higher, middle and lower caste groups respectively. However, lower caste refers to the middle and higher caste people as *atanu*, and use *vāḍu* to the equal caste people.

Table 7—Third person pronouns (referring to male persons)

| Class | Terms used |
|---------|---|
| Class 1 | <i>vāru</i> , <i>āyana</i> , <i>atanu</i> |
| Class 2 | <i>āyana</i> , <i>atanu</i> |
| Class 3 | <i>āyana</i> , <i>atanu</i> , <i>atagānu</i> (<i>ḍu</i>) |
| Class 4 | <i>atagānu</i> , <i>vāḍu/vāḍu</i> |
| STe | <i>atanu</i> , <i>vāḍu/vāḍu</i> (commonly) <i>āyana</i> (by present immigrants only) |

The pronouns used to refer to females exhibit social stratification in ITe too. The terms used by and for the higher caste Telugus to refer to female in the third person are: *āv(w)iḍa* (very polite), *āme* (polite) and *adi* (impolite and intimate) (see table 8).

Table 8—Third person pronouns (referring to female)

| Class | Terms used |
|---------|--|
| Class 1 | <i>āviḍa</i> |
| Class 2 | <i>āviḍa, āme</i> |
| Class 3 | <i>āme, adi</i> |
| Class 4 | <i>adi</i> |
| STe | <i>āme, adi</i> (always) <i>ā ammōy</i> (derogatively) |

Due to the choice of kinship terms and/or the third person pronouns used by an addresser, it is evident that an ITe referent can identify the caste status of the addresser. However, it is imperative to mention that educated middle and lower caste people tend to use higher caste terms in formal and careful speech.

The tables (tables 7 and 8) and the interpretation of the information clearly demonstrate that STe speakers exhibit social stratification in the use of third person pronouns and display both upward mobility and social stratification in the use of certain kinship terms.

6.1.3 Addressing—polite/impolite suffixes added (masculine)

Social stratification is also evident in the choice of use of other addressing suffixes added according to caste. Table 9 is self explanatory and illustrates the polite/impolite terms used by different caste groups of ITe and STe speakers. It is pertinent in this context to note that while using these suffixes, the ITe speaker is very cautious. The reason is that the use of a lower suffix for a high caste person is offensive. Inversely, to use a higher (very polite) suffix for a lower caste person indicates sarcasm. Due to a lack of caste consciousness amongst themselves, the STe native speaker does not observe such caution. This use of the wrong suffixes, often offends immigrant ITe speakers.

Table 9—Addressing—polite/impolite terms used (masculine):

| Castes | Class | terms used | Comments |
|-----------------|-----------|---|--|
| <i>Brāhmaṇ</i> | class 1 | <i>ēmaṇḍi</i> | most polite form |
| <i>Kāpu</i> | class 2 | <i>ēmaṇḍi</i> , <i>ēmōy</i> | most polite, just polite |
| <i>Telakali</i> | class 3 | <i>ēmāyyā</i> , <i>ēmōy</i> | slightly polite |
| <i>Mangali</i> | class 4 | <i>bābu</i> , <i>ayya</i> , <i>rā</i> | polite, slightly polite impolite |
| STe | (usually) | <i>ēmāyyā</i> , <i>aṇḍi</i> & <i>rā</i> | slightly polite polite impolite and intimate |

Although it is evident from the above table that the STe is closer to LC reflex in its general linguistic variables, it still reflects some features of HC variety in addressing others as *-ayya* & *-aṇḍi* (almost every one uses these terms). However, the STe speakers use *-aṇḍi* only to address the Telugu teachers or the Telugu lecturer (at UDW). They use the term *ammā* very frequently to address any woman or young girl. Many uneducated Telugu (as well as Tamil) speakers literally translate this term *amma* (mother) into ‘mummy’ and use it to address any woman of Indian background. Lastly, it is pertinent to note that not all the *Gavara*, *Kamma* and *Kāpu* caste people of STe exhibit the salient features of their caste illustrated above.

6.2 Linguistic features—social stratification

6.2.1 General linguistic features

Table 10 provides information regarding the general linguistic features observed in different caste groups of ITe and STe speakers of different generations. The features 1-4 are phonological features whereas the remaining two are morphological and general features respectively.

Table 10—General Linguistic variables in Telugu

| | ITe | | | STe | |
|---------------------------------------|-----|----|----|-----|-------|
| | C1 | C2 | C3 | C4 | G1-G5 |
| Retroflex <i>l, s, ŋ</i> are phonemes | + | - | - | - | -/+ |
| Aspirated stops are available | + | - | - | - | - |
| <i>ŋ</i> is a phoneme | - | + | + | + | + |
| Initial <i>vā</i> becomes <i>ō</i> | - | + | + | + | -/+ |
| Past suffix 'marker - <i>in</i> ' | - | + | + | + | + |
| Use of <i>mīru</i> for 2nd p. sing. | + | + | + | - | -/+ |

(cf. Sivarama Murty 1979 : 94-96)

This table displays both the social stratification and upward mobility of the STe community. It is mainly due to education, literacy and contact with Tamil. In ITe the retroflex *l, s, ŋ* are phoneme only in class 1 (castes 1-4) and absent in other classes. The presence of two out of three (*/l/* and */ŋ/*) of the retroflex are found in STe speech contexts. Many of the present-day G3-G5 STe speakers who are bilingual and fluent in STe and South African Tamil (SAT) retain and maintain these retroflex due to Tamil domination on STe (cf. Prabhakaran 1994b). This retention of retroflex is a good example for upward mobility in STe.

The use of *mīru* for second person singular demonstrates an upward mobility due to education and literacy. Only the STe speakers who are educated in the Telugu language maintain this feature. Other STe speakers from G2-G5 do not display this feature in their speech context (both formal or informal). The remaining features (2-5) in the above table demonstrates social stratification and MC and LC varieties.

Social stratification is reflected in the Telugu villages in Andhra Pradesh, India, in many other linguistic variables. Venkateswara Sastry (1994) demonstrated some of them present in different castes of modern Andhra Pradesh. Following Venkateswara Sastry (1994:315-319), STe can be compared with some of those linguistic variables as reflected in the Indian Telugu castes.

The table below clearly demonstrates that although STe speakers originally hailed from lower middle castes, they display both high and middle caste linguistic features and social stratification. Some of these features display upward mobility. For example, word initial stress and regular vowel harmony, two usual linguistic variables witnessed in HC and which are totally absent in MC and LC are frequently witnessed in STe. Similarly, presence of the fricative */ʃ/* which is totally absent in lower caste speech patterns is occasionally present in STe (cf. Prabhakaran 1994a & 1994b). However, the presence of hyper forms, irregular vowel harmony, makes STe closer to MC and LC varieties.

Table 11—Other linguistic variables according to castes

| No Features | HC | M/LC | STe |
|--|----|------|-----|
| 1 Word-initial stress | + | - | + - |
| 2 Vowel harmony (regular) | + | - | + - |
| 3 Vowel harmony (irregular) | - | + | - + |
| 4 Internal <i>sandhi</i> (by deletion of unstressed syllable)- | + | + - | |
| 5 <i>Sandhi</i> (regular) | + | - | - |
| 6 Hyper forms | - | + | + |
| 7 Emphatic stress (prolonged at the time of constant release) | - | + | + |
| 8 Presence of fricative /f/ | + | + - | + - |
| 9 Presence of /æ:/ | + | + - | - |
| 10 Presence of /w/ in word-initial and medial position | + | - | - |
| 11 <i>h/hp</i> distinction | + | + - | + - |

Any sociolinguist with an awareness of Indian Telugu caste systems would easily differentiate between the high and low caste Telugu speakers. This is precisely because of the many phonemes, aspirations, retroflexion and sibilance, intact, as borrowed from the Sanskrit language. The middle and lower caste would not use them in their formal and informal speech. However, educated people in Telugu try to maintain two pronunciations in their speech. The one type of pronunciation is that acquired due to education, i.e. pronunciation as per spelling requirements in careful speech. The other type is normal in his/her colloquial speech. Table 12 and 13 illustrate some of the phonetic differences between the HC, MC and LC Telugu speakers and compares such difference within the STe context.

Table 12— Phonetic difference between high and low caste Telugu speakers

| | High Caste | Middle and Low castes | STe | Gloss |
|------|--------------|--------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| /bh/ | [bhayam(ṽ)] | [bayaw̃] | [bayaw̃] | fear |
| /kh/ | [khu:ni] | [ku:ni]/ [campu] | [campu] [saccipo:vu] | murder |
| /kh/ | [mukham(ṽ)] | [mukaw̃] | [mugaw̃] | face/mouth |
| /dh/ | [ba:dha] | [ba:da] | [ba:da] [katta] | pain |
| /gh/ | [ghaṇṭasāla] | [gaṇṭasa:la] | [gaṇṭasa:la] | famous Telugu singer |
| /gh/ | [me:gham(ṽ)] | [me:gaṽ]/ [mabbu] | [mabbu]/ [mbbu] | clouds |
| /dh/ | [dhanam(ṽ)] | [danaṽ] | [danaṽ]/ [ru:kʌ] | wealth/ money |

Table 13—Other phonetic differences and caste variables

| Phoneme | Grapheme | Upper caste | Other castes | STe |
|----------|-----------|-------------|--------------|-----|
| <i>m</i> | <i>ma</i> | + | + | + |
| <i>n</i> | <i>na</i> | + | + | + |
| <i>ṇ</i> | <i>ṇa</i> | + | - | + - |
| <i>l</i> | <i>la</i> | + | + | + |
| <i>ɭ</i> | <i>ɭa</i> | + | - | + - |
| <i>w</i> | <i>wa</i> | + | - | - |
| <i>u</i> | <i>u</i> | + | - | + - |

6.2.2 Caste differentiation in Telugu lexis

Another area where social stratification (of class or caste) is evidenced in the Indian languages is in the use of lexical items. Various linguists (Misra 1980; Mesthrie 1990; Venkateswara Sastry 1994; Labov 1966 among others) have claimed that use of certain lexis demonstrates the class/caste status of the speaker even though the speakers claim high caste status. Following Mesthrie (1990:340), certain Telugu lexis used by various castes of ITe speakers and may be compared with STe.

Table 14— Caste differentiation reflected in the use of Telugu lexis

| <i>Brāhmin</i> caste (orthographic form) | Middle and lower ¹¹ castes | STe | Gloss |
|---|---------------------------------------|---|------------------|
| <i>a:bdikam</i> | <i>taddina/dina</i> | <i>dina</i> | death ceremony |
| <i>bho:janam</i> | <i>annam/ku:ḍu</i> | <i>ku:ḍu</i> (mostly) <i>annaw</i> (rarely) | food |
| <i>jalam</i> | <i>mañcini:ḷḷu/ ni:ḷḷu</i> | <i>ni:ḷḷu</i> (mostly) <i>ni:ḷḷu</i> (rarely) | water |
| <i>bo:dhiñcu</i> | <i>ne:rpu</i> | <i>ne:rpu</i> | teach |
| <i>sampu:rṇam</i> | <i>pu:rtiga:/ anta:</i> | <i>anta:</i> | completely |
| <i>dustuḍu</i> | <i>ceḍḍavāḍu</i> | <i>dongo:ḍu</i> | mischievous |
| <i>swapnam</i> | <i>kala</i> | <i>kala</i> | dream |
| <i>prasannam</i> | <i>santōṣam</i> | <i>santōṣam</i> | happy/happiness |
| <i>putruḍu</i> | <i>koḍuku</i> | <i>koḍku</i> | son |
| <i>poutruḍu</i> | <i>manavaḍu</i> | <i>manvaḍu</i> | grandson |
| <i>dhu:ḷi</i> | <i>dummu</i> | <i>dummu</i> | dust |
| <i>dhanam</i> | <i>ḍabbu/ru:ka</i> | <i>ru:ka</i> | money/ wealth |
| <i>kalya:ṇam</i> | <i>viva:ham/ pelli</i> | <i>PELLI</i> (mostly) <i>PELLI</i> (rarely) | marriage/wedding |
| <i>durgandham</i> | <i>va:sana</i> | <i>gabbu</i> | bad smell |
| <i>upaca:ram</i> | <i>se:va</i> | <i>se:va</i> | service |
| <i>vidhawa</i> | <i>vidava/muṇḍa</i> | <i>muṇḍa/ bo:ḍi</i> | widow |

This table clearly demonstrates the social stratification in STe against upward social mobility.

6.3 Other social variables according to the castes

In the ITe caste system, the caste and social stratification are also reflected in the *ini pāru* (surnames) and names of the Telugu. Most of the Telugu castes have certain suffixes attached to surnames and names (see table 15). These serve to indicate caste

¹¹ The second lexis in the column are of the LC varieties.

status. In modern civilised and urbanised Telugu contexts, this practice is gradually disappearing. Many, too, have Sanskritised names (which may conceal the original caste system) and use these more often than their Telugu ones. Although similar circumstances are evident in STe situations, it is interesting that many of the present-day South African Telugu speakers still have names (with or without the knowledge of the caste background or significance attached to their caste) which demonstrate social stratification and their caste background.

Table 15—Telugu caste name endings

| No. | Castes | Names generally end in |
|-----|----------------------|---|
| 1. | <i>brāhmaṇ</i> | <i>rāvu, mūrti, śāstri</i> |
| 2. | <i>kalimi kōmaṭi</i> | <i>rāvu, mūrti, ayya</i> |
| 3. | <i>gavara kōmaṭi</i> | <i>rāvu, murti, ayya</i> |
| 4. | <i>telaga</i> | <i>dora, rāvu, mūrti, ayya, anna</i> |
| 5. | <i>kāpu</i> | <i>nāiḍu, mūrty, ayya, anna</i> |
| 6. | <i>velama</i> | <i>nāiḍu, rāvu, ayya</i> |
| 7. | <i>śarābu</i> | <i>ācāri, murty</i> |
| 8. | <i>vaḍraṅgi</i> | <i>baṭṭaḍu, ācāri</i> |
| 9. | <i>telakali</i> | <i>ayya</i> |
| 10. | <i>ponḍara</i> | <i>ayya</i> |
| 11. | <i>ēta</i> | <i>ōḍu, gāḍu</i> |
| 12. | <i>mangali</i> | <i>ōḍu, gāḍu</i> |
| 13. | <i>cākali</i> | <i>ōḍu, gāḍu</i> |
| 14. | <i>māla/mādiga</i> | <i>ōḍu, gāḍu</i> |
| | STe names | <i>nāiḍu/nāiḍō, ārcāri, ayya, anna, ōḍu, gāḍu</i> |

From the information obtained during interviews there is especially one good example of a Telugu family name (the original immigrant name was taken from the ship lists and was confirmed by the immigrant's grandson during an interview) which clearly demonstrates the social stratification and upward mobility of the Telugu castes in South Africa. The original immigrant was called *appigāḍu* who hailed from the *mādiga* caste (see the table above). His son was named *latchanna* (reflecting the upward mobility of their caste towards either *telaga* or *kāpu* (i.e. from C14 to C1 or C2). The grandson of the immigrant (the present-day STe speaker) is named *varadarāju* (again indicating upward mobility towards the *rāju* (*Kshatriya*) caste (not present in the table above) which is a Sanskritised religious name.

grandfather son grandson
appigāḍu —————> *latchanna* —————> *varadarāju*

The present-day *varadarāju*'s son's name is *shailendra* (great grandson to the immigrant *appigāḍu*). Thus, generation by generation, upward mobility in the caste of the present-day STe speakers are still taking place.

7 Summary and Conclusion

It is an accepted fact that language exhibits variation based on geographical and regional differences. The Indian linguists and grammarians have recognised this as early as the third century B.C.E. Social variation includes all kinds of differences in speech correlating with socio-economic class, caste, occupation and age. In ITe the social stratification is evident due to the availability of different caste, sub-castes and regional dialectical differences. Although the STe speakers have long ago forgotten the caste system which their forefathers brought to the country and which the ITe speakers still follow rigidly, social stratification based on caste is still evident in their speech. The foregoing sub-sections demonstrate that to certain degrees and in some cases, it is still present. It also demonstrates upward social mobility. It has been argued that such stratification in STe is present in phonology, morphology and in the use of certain lexis. The results, then, support Sivarama Murty's (1980:380) research.

A few concluding comments concerning the downward mobility of the present-day immigrant ITe speakers in South Africa may be made.

Since the early 1980s, ITe speakers of various castes have immigrated to South Africa. They settled in the four former homelands and became citizens or residents of the Republic of South Africa after the constitution of the new democratic South Africa. These immigrants are all highly qualified 'technocrats' or 'professionals' and speak ITe as their home language. They came from HC and MC Telugu societies with one or two families from LC. Most of them arrived with young children (between the ages 2 and 6) and some families had children since then. In these communities, the language shift towards English (cf. Prabhakaran 1995b) is taking place very fast and even monolingual immigrants (G1 or G2) are becoming bilingual (Telugu and English) and multilingual (Telugu, English and Afrikaans). Eleven children (five from HC and six from MC) from these families were included in the research. The following gradual linguistic changes in their speech patterns were documented.

- 1 The three retroflex consonants *s, ḷ, ṇ*, do not occur freely and the difference between *s, ṣ, ś* is vague.
- 2 Polite and address terms for masculine and feminine are gradually disappearing.

- 3 Aspiration is rarely found and almost absent in casual and informal speech; hyper corrections are evident in formal speech.
- 4 Kinship terms are restricted only to family members. This is significant, since none of the families included in the study have any relatives in South Africa.
- 5 Loss of caste terminologies among many other lexis is taking place.

These findings show variations in the present generation. In some of the immigrant families, ITe is not spoken at home anymore. This profoundly influences the speech and caste consciousness of the present younger (G1 or G2) generations. The reason for the downward mobility could be due to a lack of socio-economic status and power for immigrant ITe speakers in relation to the STe speaking society. The ITe speakers do not enjoy any prestige due to their caste status or due to their educational qualifications. Thus, a downward mobility in the immigrant generation ITe speaker or in their immediate next generation born in South Africa is inevitable. These findings contrast Sivarama Murty's hypothesis and demonstrates that the STe situation is unique and different from the ITe situation. In the ITe situation, the downward mobility of HC speech variety and an upward mobility of a LC towards a HC¹² are not possible. This is an important finding and needs further research. This may focus on a similar socio-linguistic study of the influence of social stratification and caste influences on Indian languages in India and those in South Africa.

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The author wishes to thank the University of Durban-Westville for financial assistance towards this research. The author is also grateful to the Centre for Scientific Development for their assistance for her previous research on STe, because a substantial amount of data from that research has been used in this article. Opinions expressed in this article and conclusions arrived at are those of the author and are not necessarily to be attributed to the Centre for Science Development.

12 As an example—one of the interviewees informed the writer that his father, an immigrant during the first decade of the century, was a 'shit-bucket carrier' and later became a priest in a Hindu temple.

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