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SOCIO-CULTURAL AND ETHNO-LINGUISTIC STUDY OF KOYA LANGUAGE IN
TELANGANA STATE

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the ethno-linguistic study of Koyas, a community residing in various localities throughout Telangana State. The Koyas are of the largest ancient tribal communities, covering parts of Telangana. The Koyas population is 381354 (**Literacy Rate 53.67**), according to a 2011 census. As the study focused on culture and language related to particular community people (Koya) who settled in a particular region (Telangana State), it can be considered as **Sociolinguistic / Ethno-Linguistic** study as a whole. The primary objective of this study is to identify the nature of language in accordance with their social and cultural contexts. Hence, as part of the research, many linguistic aspects were explored in terms of their cultural perspectives. Koya language in relation to socio-cultural characteristics of the Koya community.

Key words: Local Community People. Ethno-Linguistic, Socio-cultural characteristics of the Koya community.

INTRODUCTION

The overall purpose of this study is to explore the linguistic aspects language connected with social and cultural perspectives of the Koya people living in Telangana state. Hence, a comprehensive understanding towards their lifestyle, various traditions, customs and habits is an essential factor in this research. Hence, this chapter attempts to give a brief introduction about some socio-cultural aspects of life and living of Koya people in Telangana.

STRUCTURE OF THE COMMUNITY

A group of Koya people settled at a place is collectively known as '*Gudems*'. *Gudem* generally has leader called 'Patel'. Patel acts as a powerful person to protect the rules and restrictions of their *Gudem (Village)*. The position of Patel is treated as hereditary; hence it is applicable to succeeding generations in the Patel's family. One or two religious men act as advisers to Patel in the matters related to '*Gudem (Village)*'. The advisers are called 'Pujaari (Priest)' and 'Vettodu (Messenger)' these people have the power to take important decisions and implement in '*KoyaGudem*'

The traditional council is locally called 'Kula panchayat' and it consists of the following functionaries who are selected on hereditary line.

Patel	-	Traditional village head
Pujari	-	Priest
Vettodu	-	Messenger

This community council is held under the supervision of The Patel. Some experienced and wise (some special situations) community village elders also act as members of the council. In case of any unwanted or unfair incident occurs, the concerned person or persons approach Patel for justice. Then Patel conducts a council meeting along with council members. The council carries out an enquiry with both parties about the conflict. After a thorough examination, he announces the judgment. Other people in the *Gudem (Village)* are also allowed as spectators; they also sometimes can give some suggestions towards justice. For this kind of meetings, generally, women are not allowed unless they are connected to the issue. The Panchayat meetings are very serious in the matters of law.

SFL Frame work of Language

According to systemic functional linguistic approach, any language has certain dimensions. As described in Halliday and Matthiessen (2004), these dimensions are five: **structure, system, stratification, instantiation** and **metafunctions**. As far as the present research is concerned, the dimension 'stratification' is the essential one to analyse linguistic spectrum of a language. This dimension describes language as an operational network of strata. Based on **context** as the extra-linguistic stratum, this operation occurs among linguistic strata with a principle called 'realization'.

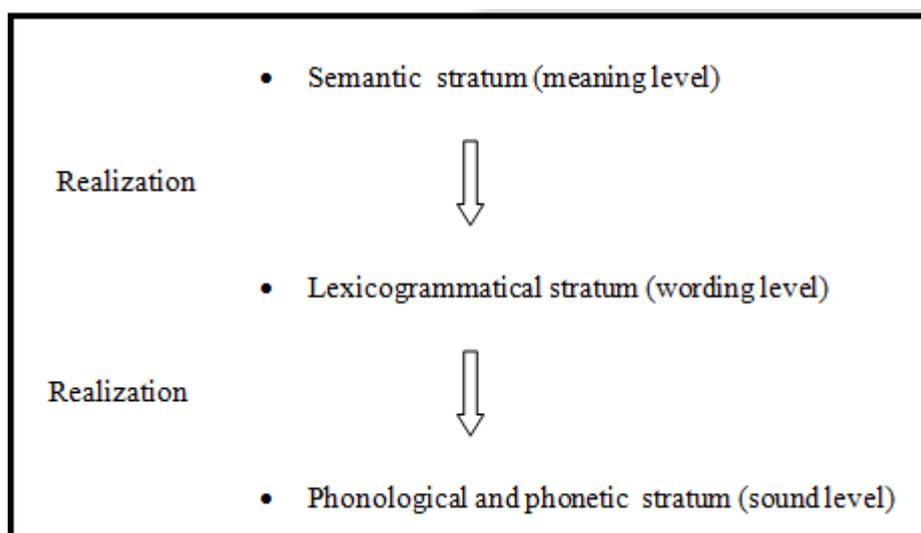


Fig.2.1 Stratification and Realization

Realization is the process of changing the information from meaning level of expression level. For example, a social situation creates a context of situation for communication, i.e. what to speak? , how to speak? whom to speak? etc. This context of situation shapes the meaning of the speaker (speech functions such as statement/ question/ request / command etc). The meaning level information is realized in wordings (clauses such as declarative/ interrogative/ imperative etc). The arraignment of wording level is realized in utterances in sound system (phonological, segmental and supra-segmental features). The principle of realization operates the meaning making network by connecting every stratum interrelated.

Through the process of realization, meaning reaches expression level. Depending on various situational contexts such as social context and cultural context etc, these strata can be explored for linguistic operation in a language. Thus taking socio-cultural aspects as **context**, Sociolinguistic and Ethno-Linguistic aspects can be

observed. Under context, the linguistic operation can be broadly divided into content plane and expression plane. The diagram below shows the stratification structure of language operation.

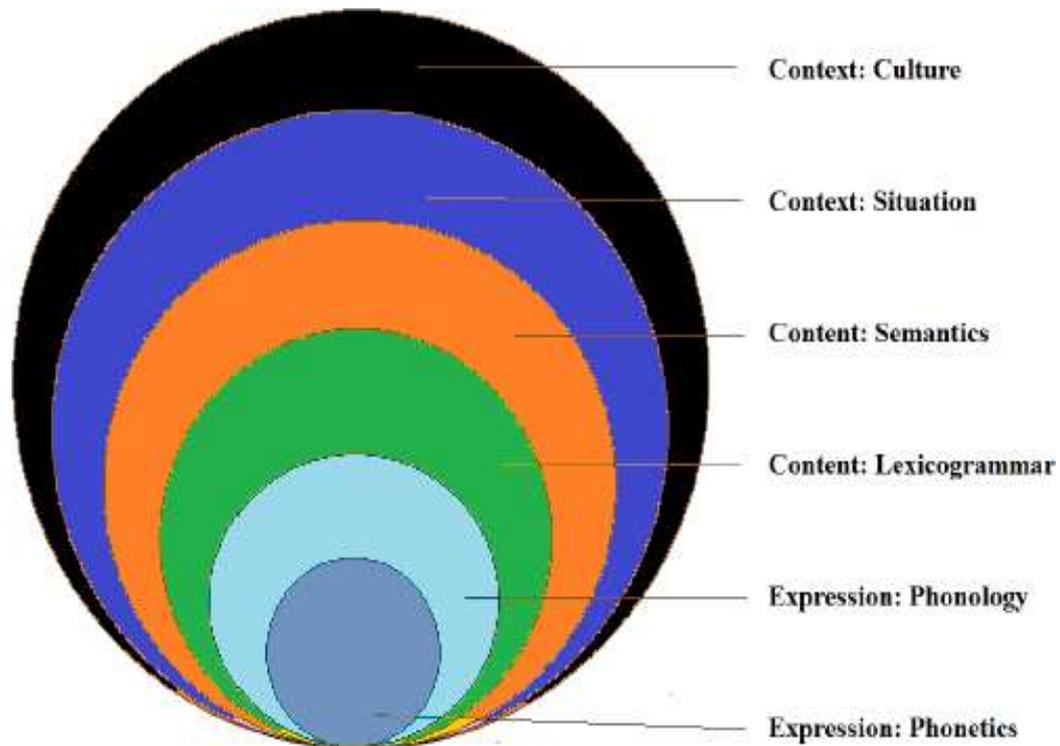


Fig. 2.2 Language stratification as shown in Halliday and Matthiessen (2004), pg. 25

SEMANTIC STRATUM

In accordance with Halliday and Matthiessen (2004), the basic functions of meaning at semantic stratum of a language are statements, questions and commands & offers. The following are examples:

English Semantic Stratum

- She will take food. (Statement)
- Will she take food? (Question)
- You take food (Command/ Offer)

Lexico -Grammatical Stratum

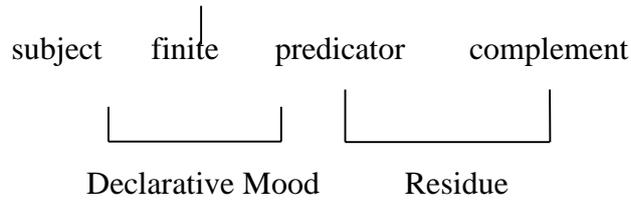
Lexico-Grammatical stratum deals with words, their grammatical information and their structural organization. The speech functions of meaning at the semantic stratum are realized in wordings in this stratum through MOOD of the clauses. Clauses generally have specific structure. In English mood element is followed by residue¹²; mood element is ordering of subject and finite. The type of order in English determines the type of clause.

- Subject +Finite----- Declarative Clause
- Finite +Subject----- Interrogative Clause¹³
- Subject (optional)+Residue ----- Imperative Clause

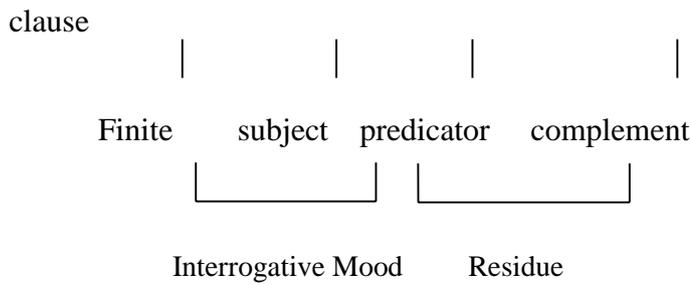
The following are some examples of realizations of speech functions in English.

English lexico grammatical Stratum

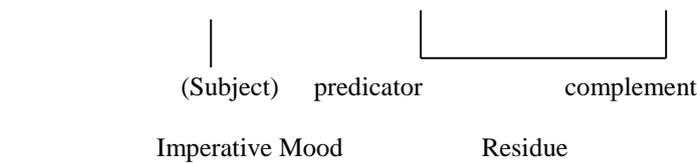
- she will take food Declarative clause



- will she cook food? Interrogative clause



- (you) take food Imperative clause



PHONOLOGICAL STRATUM

According to SFL theory, the basic information unit at the level of semantic stratum is a statement/question / command, the basic grammatical structure is a clause at Lexico-Grammatical stratum and the very realization at phonological stratum is called tone unit / tone group. Being equivalent in this realization is treated as general phenomenon across languages. Apart from this, tone system is an important factor to distinguish among meanings of expressions. The tone realizations are given in the following table.

ENGLISH PHONOLOGICAL STRATUM

Language Function	Realization in Tone	Example
Statements	Falling tone	//She will take food//
Wh- Questions	Falling tone	//what will she take//
Yes/no type Questions	Rising tone	//Will she take food//
Commands	Falling tone	//Take food//

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

During the period 1816-1880 Rev. John Cain made some anthropological observation about the Koya people and published articles in the Journal Indian Antiquity (Cain, 1876 -1879). He wrote about bride - stealing, Sorcery, and plan daring which are present among Koyas in those days. He also studied the names of some villages around Bhadrachalam and concerned this place name with the language *of RAMAYAN EPIC*.

In the period 1962-63 Tyler studied the Kinship terminology in Koya .His ethnographic field work was contested around Peddannelaballi of Bhadrachalam Taluk. He dissertation of Stanford university on Koya kinship (Tyler 1964) . He also published a number of articles -during with Koya Kinship terminology.

Subrahmanyam P. S. A Descriptive Grammar of Gondi. Annamalainagar, Annamalai University, 1968.

K.Rama Rao (1979) submitted on M.Phil dissertation on ' Phonology and Morphology of Koya language ' to Osmania University the focus this dissertation is Phonology, Morphology of nouns and verbs in Koya.

K.Ramarao (1985) submitted Ph.D on Syntax of Koya language to Osmania University. The focus of this thesis is on the sentence structure of Simple, Complex and Compound sentences in Koya.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

As we have observed in the background literature, the research works conducted on Koya community so far are concerned with the fields such as culture, literature and language; the present ethno linguistic study stands as the first work in Telangana in the stream of linguistics. This research and its information will be useful to the other related fields of study such as anthropology and history. As Koya community in Telangana shares some cultural aspects with local neighboring communities, this work can also be useful to some interdisciplinary studies such as sociological and cultural studies.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- Understanding the general linguistic features of Koya language.
- Explanation of cultural aspects reflected in their language
- Identification of Koya specificities in connection with their culture

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Since the study is of interdisciplinary nature, both culture and language are to be observed in research perspective. Hence this section focuses on the methodological procedure followed in this study.

AIM OF THE RESEARCH

The main aim of the present research is to analyses linguistic aspects of the Koya language in relation to socio-cultural characteristics of the Koya community.

ETHNO-LINGUISTIC DOMAINS OF KOYA

Ethno-Linguistic domain is generally a culture-associated content of a language. According to the theoretical notion of *systemic functional linguistics*, the content plane of a language contains semantics and lexico-grammar; and according to language stratification as described in Halliday (2004), meaningful entities of semantic stratum are realized in wordings of lexico-grammatical stratum. Hence the culturally associated semantic entities which are realized as ethnic lexical items can be considered as Ethno-Linguistic entities. These entities are broadly divided under domains of their functional areas. Understanding these domains in terms of culture of the community is useful in understanding their perception of the world and its reflection through their language and communication. In this research, the following areas are majorly identified as Ethno linguistic domains.

KINSHIP TERMS

As in the views of anthropological observations, kinship is the system of relationships which appear among human beings of every society. People in a relationship usually share cultural, biological and/or historical connections. The bonds among relatives are systematic classifications which are reflected in the communicative and behavioral patterns of individuals. Being culture specific, the rules and restrictions in a kinship system are generally different from that of other kinship systems. The kinship terms below can be commonly identified in Koya culture.

It is an inevitable fact that certain sociological aspects, i. e. age, gender, education, caste, class etc are generally associated with kinship terminology. Kinship relations in the Koya language can be classified also into groups. For instance, mother's elder sister and mother's younger sister are treated under the same classificatory relationship of a mother to the addresser. We can observe the following kinship terms.

1. Mother –yavva
2. Mother's elder sister–peiriyavva
3. Mother's younger sister – sinnayavva

On observation we can understand that the commonality of the above examples is the word 'yavva' (mother). In order for the identification of the person in terms of age, the word 'yavva' is prefixed with 'periya'(elder) and 'sinna'(younger). The following are the kinship terms which express the type of bonding and relationship in Koya family structure and culture.

Mother	yavva
Mother's Elder Sister	peiriyavva
Mother's Younger Sister	sinnayavva
Father	ayyal
Mother's father	ta:tal
Mother's younger brother	ma:mal
Mother's sister	sinayava
Mother' Mother	ka:ko
Elder Brother	da:dal
Younger Brother	tammal / tammunD
Fothers. Mother	amma
Father's father	da:da
Fathers' Younger brother	ba:bal / sinnayyal
Fathers' elder sister	mei:napo:yei
Father's Elder brother	peiddannal
Younger sister's husband	ei:runD
Elder Sister's Husband	po:da:D
Son	marri
daughter	maya:D

Daughter's Daughter	manumara:l
Daughter's son	manama:l
Daughter-in-law	koDiya:D
Son – in - law	anDei
Husband	mutpal

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

- The area of the present research deals with ethno-linguistic exploration of Koya language in Telangana, the dissertation is started with an introductory chapter to provide ethnic cultural information of Koya who settled in Telangana State.
- When culture is the central notion of a study, it is undoubtedly associated with its historical background because, the set of events, which are collectively known as culture of a community,
- This type of study demands knowledge of both cultural and linguistic aspects, as it is an interdisciplinary research. Hence, after having an outline of the culture of Koya community.
- The use of vocabulary and its choice are culturally designed.
- There are many nouns in Koya language, which show morphological difference between masculine and feminine gender. This formal difference is especially related to suffixation. Regarding plurality, words generally attract a Morpho-Phonemic addition of 'ku' to reflect as a plural form of a word.

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