

VARIETIES OF MALAY AND OTHER CODES USED BY DESCENDANTS OF THE EARLY TELEGU IMMIGRANTS IN SARAWAK

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Abstract

The Telegu community was brought into Sarawak in 1900 by Rajah Charles Brooke as labourers. Today, there are 92 members belonging to three generations of Telegus in Sarawak. Due to the need to communicate with people around them, the first generation who spoke Telegu at home started speaking Bazaar Malay with Malay, Dayak and Chinese neighbours in *Batu Satu*, which was an early Telegu settlement. The Telegu children first stayed in Pendam, a typical Malay village, and later in *Batu Satu*, a typical Hokkien Chinese area. Due to these linguistic environments, they eventually developed Telegu pidgin Malay with words borrowed from Sarawak Malay, Hokkien and English to become their new home language. Today, Bazaar Malay is still spoken by the first generation of Telegus with neighbours in *Batu Satu* and their own pidgin Malay is spoken among the second generation of Telegus. However, the third generation speaks fluent English and Standard Malay in addition to the Sarawak Malay dialect. Data was obtained through audio recording of home conversations, so as to ascertain the varieties of Malay used by the three generations of Telegus today, i.e. Bazaar Malay (G1), Telegu pidgin Malay (G2), Standard Malay (G2 & G3) and Sarawak Malay dialect (G3).

Keywords: Telegu, Sarawak, language pattern, codes

Introduction

Sarawak's early contact with Indians was due largely to trade. Gold found in the areas extending from Bau in Sarawak to Sambas and Montrado in West Kalimantan was an important metal in the ancient world that could have attracted the Indians to Sarawak. Before the arrival of James Brooke in 1839, the only sign of Indian influence was based on archeological evidence. According to Chang (2006) there is sufficient evidence to indicate that the Sarawak River Delta was an important trading centre which was established as early as the 7th century:

Gold ornaments found in an archeological site at Santubong were associated with Hindu ornaments dated from about the 12th century. Besides a statue of the elephant-headed god, the Ganesa, was found in Limbang in 1921 and the second piece was discovered at Bukit Berhala in Samarahan in 1848. The third piece was found in Limbang at the site of its Residency in 1921. At the same site, a Batu Lesong which was a Symbolic Phallus of veneration of the Hindu Pallava in South India was

also discovered at Bukit Berhala. Remains of a stone bull were found near Sempro, below the Bidayuh village of Kampung Benuk/ Segu, 21st Mile Penrissen Road, Kuching in the early 1840s which represented the guardian outside a temple of Siva. In the old days, the pagan Bidayuh disposed the dead by fire. Hence some Bidayuh elders believed that these were the traces of Hindu influence.... (Chang 2006, p. 2)

There are 7,851 Indians in Sarawak today (Statistical Bulletin, Sarawak, 2008). The early South Indians came as tea planters brought in by Charles Brooke in 1900 and they stayed in the Matang area where they planted tea on the slopes of Mount Serapi, also located in Matang. This is proven by the discovery of an ancient Hindu temple on one of the slopes of Mount Serapi in 1971 by Dayak jungle trekkers. Among the early South Indians who came in 1900 were the Tamils from Madras, Malayalees from Kerala and Telegus from Andhra Pradesh. This early wave of South Indians who came were non-Muslims. Tamil Muslims came in 1911 and opened up textile and spice shops in Kuching Bazaar. The Punjabi Sikhs were recruited by Brooke in 1910 and later by the British Colonial Government as policemen. However, the Pakistanis, Sindhis and Bengalis came on their own as cloth merchants and as petty traders of leather goods.

Literature review

According to Holmes, (2000) *pidgin* is a language which has no native speakers. Pidgin develops as a means of communication between people who do not have a common language. So a pidgin is no one's native language. Pidgins seem particularly likely to emerge when two groups with different languages have to communicate in a situation.

The Telegu communality in Kuching has a close and dense network and they stay within easy contact with one another in *Batu Satu*, a settlement located in Kuching, Sarawak. The social network concept introduced by Milroy (1980) is a way to group people together in order to study linguistic behaviour. The social network concept employs the concept of a field to show the pattern of relationships between people. A social network is visualised as a set of nodes joined by lines. These nodes being individuals and the lines represent the links or connection between them. An example is illustrated in Figure 1 (see David, 2005:154)

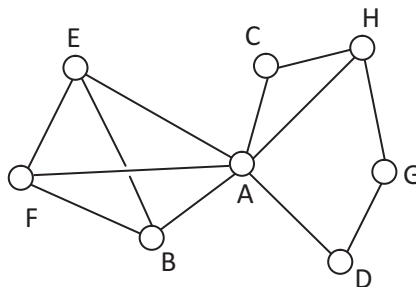


Figure 1: An example of social network.

'A' is directly related to 'B', 'C', 'D', 'E', 'F', 'G' and 'H' however, 'D' is only related to 'A' and 'G', whilst 'B' is related to 'A', 'E' and 'F', so on, so forth. What the illustration shows is an example of how social networks form the web of transactions which make up the intimate texture of daily life and as such involve individuals in rights and obligations towards each other. If members of an individual's network are also in touch with each other that network has a high density. Multiplex networks means there is more than one transactional basis for the social relationships in the network. The same individuals can be linked by kinship, employment etc. (Downes, 1987).

If the members of an individual's network are also in touch with each other independently, that network has high density multiplex networks. This means there is more than one transactional basis for the social relationships in the network. The same individuals can be linked by kinship, employment etc., and it is precisely through this networking system that language are maintained (or shifted). According to Milroy (1980) the strength of social network serves as a norm enforcement mechanism for language maintenance.

In social network analysis, language is treated as a tool for network maintenance. Milroy (1988) citing a study of language maintenance in the United Kingdom presents an argument of the usefulness of social network theory for predicting language maintenance or shift. Milroy argues that if a community has strong and dense networks chances of language maintenance are stronger. In studies of the Malaysian Sindhi (David, 2003); Punjabi (David, Naji and Sheena, 2003); Bengali (Mukherjee, 2003); Malayalees (Govindasamy and Nambiar, 2002); Portuguese in Malacca (David and Faridah, 1999) – all communities who have strong and multiplex networks, shift has occurred. This is because the use of the new language, English, has not resulted in the breaking of such ties and the communities still retain close networks and maintain other ethnic and cultural norms (see David, 1998 on how the Malaysian Sindhis have maintained their ethnic and cultural norms of discourse in the English they use). This finding alerts us of the dangers of accepting results in the West and assuming that the same will apply in multilingual settings like Malaysia.

Sociolinguistic analysis of language choice in interactional contexts rests upon Fishman's notion of "who uses what language with whom and for what purposes" (as cited in Sridhar, 1996, p.51). Fishman provides a framework with which to analyse the linguistic choices available to multilingual speakers and their reasons for choosing one code from among the several that are available to them. Myers-Scotton (1993) extends the framework with a study of what bilingual speakers gain by conducting a conversation in two languages, that is, through codeswitching.

Although Myers-Scotton refers to codeswitching as a term used to "identify alternations of linguistic varieties within the same conversations" (1993), later it is defined slightly more technically as 'the selection by bilinguals or multilinguals of forms from an embedded language (or languages) in utterances of a matrix language during the same conversation' (op.cit:4). This definition is more fully developed in the Matrix Language Frame (MLF) model, where the matrix language (ML) refers to the main language and the embedded language (EL) the secondary one.

The MLF model was devised to explain the grammatical constraints in intra-sentential codeswitching. With the intra-sentential codeswitching, grammatical constraints directly affect the behaviour of two, or more participating languages.

Myers- Scotton proposed that, within any stretch of intra-sentential codeswitching, one language can be seen as the main or matrix language into which items from other language varieties are embedded. It is the matrix language that then supplies the grammar for the utterance. Roksana Bebe Abdullah (2002) makes use of the MLF model to analyse conversations among three generations of Singaporean Malays. The matrix language for the first and second generation was Malay but for the third generation it was English. Even though the embedded language for the second generation was English, the matrix language which was Bahasa Melayu provides the syntactic frame of the utterance.

A total of 22 conversations by three generations of Telegus were analysed based on the categories provided by Myers-Scotton in her Matrix Language Frame Model (1993) but with modifications. While in Scotton's Matrix Language Frame Model, the dominant language (i.e. the matrix language hereafter ML) determines the word order and supplies all the functional categories in the code-switched sentences, in this study the matrix language is determined by the frequency of utterances in the dominant language. The other languages only contribute lexical elements and fit them into appropriate slots in the structure with ML characteristics. Myers Scotton (1993) calls the other language besides the matrix languages in the sentence as the Embedded Language Island (EL), where a chunk of words from the embedded language appear in the codeswitching (CS) and code mixing (CM). In other words, the Embedded Language (EL) also participates in the CS/CM, but has a reduced role. It is "fixed in a surrounding mass, in this case the matrix language" (Myers-Scotton, 1993: 47).

Myer's Scotton's model above is best used when analysing language in bilingual settings. David's (1996) study of language shift among the Sindhis in Malaysia and Roksana Bebe Abdullah's (2000) on language choice and shift among the Malays in Singapore indicated clearly that in a polyglossic environment two embedded language are common in individual utterances. In a multilingual context, it is therefore possible to have a number of embedded codes interacting and mixing. In this study there are at four languages used by different generations.

The setting

The study is located in the closely knit Telegu community at 1st Mile Tun Abang Haji Openg Road, adjacent to Sarawak General Hospital in Kuching. It is the only Telegu settlement found in Sarawak. This study focuses on the descendants of the early Telegus some of whom still live together in the settlement called *Batu Satu*. There are 3 families consisting of three generations who still stay in four units of big semi-wooden semi-rick houses. Although, most of the younger generation and their parents have moved away from the settlement, *Batu Satu* is still the point of convergence for all the Telegu descendants who meet regularly and have a close network. There are more than 92 Telegu people in Sarawak at the time this study was conducted. .

The Telegus under investigation

According to an elderly Telegu informant Sandagu Sarapa, 79 years of age, the early Telegus in Sarawak came from a village in Mysore, Bangalore in India. Besides being

recruited by the Second Rajah of Sarawak Charles Brooke to work in the tea plantations on Mount Serapi, 40 early Telegu immigrants were also employed to rear goats and cows at Mile 12, Kuching- Serian Road, and worked in the fruit orchards in Sibulaut. When their contract ended all of them returned to India except for two families. Of these two, only the Sarapa family chose to remain in Sarawak until the present day, while the other family moved to Peninsular Malaysia. In fact, the Sarapa families are the only early descendants of the Telegu community who still live Sarawak. Data for this study was collected from descendants of this early immigrant family.

Sarapa (1895-1979) first worked as a general worker for the Brooke family for two years and lived with his family in the barracks allocated for general workers. He was appointed as a supervisor in the tea plantation in Matang for a brief period before moving to Sekama, another area in Kuching, where he was employed to rear cows by the Brooke Government. He worked and stayed there with his wife and thirteen children for over twenty years. When the Animal Husbandry Department moved to Mile 11, Kuching Serian Road (where it is still located) Sarapa and his family moved there. However, during the Japanese Occupation in 1941-44, the cattle farm together with the family were relocated by the Japanese Administration to Tegurak in Bau District. When the Japanese surrendered in 1944, the family moved back again to Sekama and stayed on government land near the Catholic Mission of St Peter’s Padungan.

Sarapa and his family then moved to Pendam in Simunjan District, a Malay dominated area, where he bought a big piece of land, planted paddy and opened a sundry shop. The children married and accompanied their spouses to other parts of Sarawak. Two of the daughters married Tamil brothers who owned a big piece of land next to the Sarawak General Hospital. Upon the death of one of their husbands, one of the daughters invited her siblings and parents to move to Kuching and they stayed together in *Batu Satu*. . Although, members of the younger generation have moved out of *Batu Satu* to their own homes which are also in Kuching, all of them still return to this early Telegu settlement in order to visit their relatives. Today there exist 3 generations of Telegus I Sarawak. The influence of the sociocultural environment, other languages and exogamous marriages among the Telegus have caused language shift from Telegu to different varieties of Malay and English.

Profile of subjects

Table 1: Population size

Generation	Male	Female	Total
First (60 years old and above)	4	5	9
Second (35 years old-59)	20	25	45
Third (Below 35)	18	20	38
	42	50	92

Of Sarapa’s 13 children only 9 are still alive and in this study are classified as first generation belonging to the age group of 60 and above (see Table 1). Of these, only the youngest son married a Telegu woman from India. The other 8 children

married Tamils, Malyalees, Malay, Chinese or Dayaks. Their offspring are able to speak Telegu and Malay, English, Standard Malay, Sarawak Malay, and Hokkien. The third generation children are able to speak English, Standard Malay and Sarawak Malay.

The 92 subjects meet regularly whenever they gather at *Batu Satu* for leisure activities or at each other's homes. Those who still stay in *Batu Satu* consist of 5 elderly (first generation), 11 in the second generation and 12 in the third generation. Some of the descendants who are not staying in this settlement come to *Batu Satu* every day to leave their children with their grandparents. Yet there are also others who have their meals in *Batu Satu* daily. A few of those in the second generation are involved in direct selling and keep in contact with one another even more regularly.

Members of the younger generation mostly attend the same government schools such as St Joseph's (boys), St Teresa's (girls) and Green Road (co-ed) schools. The first generation elderly ladies keep in touch with each other almost frequently through phone calls or social visits. As 9 of the second generation are school teachers, they share a lot of things in common and often meet during seminars and school activities besides meeting at community functions in *Batu Satu*. All of the first generation males have retired and meet regularly at the junction of *Batu Satu* where there is a bench for them to sit and chat in the evenings. At times members of the younger generation join them and listen to their stories.

Table 2: Occupation of subjects

Job Description	G1	G2	G3
Executives			4
Civil servants		4	6
Teacher/Lecturer		9	4
Technical/clerical staff/ storekeeper		20	3
Homemaker	3	4	0
Manual(Odd job) worker	5	5	0
Small business	1	3	2
Student			13
Below school age			6
Total	9	45	38

The early Telegus were generally poor and worked at odd jobs such as maintaining road and drainage systems. One of them still operates a small food business. Only two females in the first generation once worked as janitors in government offices whereas the rest stayed at home. The second generation of Telegus has a better socio-economic status and all with the exception of 4 are housewives. The other women are teachers/lecturers and clerks. The males are employed as civil servants, teachers/lectures, storekeepers, technicians and also operate cloth and food businesses. The third generation are employed as executives, civil servants but mostly are still in schools, colleges or tertiary institutions. Younger members of the third generation are financially better-off as compared to their parents and

grandparents. The Telegus of Sarawak today belong to the middle and higher- middle income category group.

Methodology

A total of 5 hours of recordings of 22 conversations were made at different intervals in *Batu Satu*. Using Myers Scotton’s (1993) Matrix language Frame Model, this study seeks to examine the shifting patterns of language use across three generations of Telegus. Data was obtained through audio tapping of home conversations in order to gauge the extent of different codes used by the three generations of Telegus. In face-to-face interviews, the reasons for the use of the various codes and the attitude of the younger generation towards these codes were also determined.

Findings

The general findings of language use in the Telegu home domain disclose the following codes:

- **Telegu** -spoken sparingly among the elderly Telegus.
- **Telegu pidgin Malay** – developed from Telegu and Hokkien and Malay by the first and second generations.
- **Standard Malay** -Bahasa Melayu, the national language which is generally used by educated Telegus.
- **Hokkien** –a variety of Chinese dialect spoken in Kuching and is acquired by second generation Telegus through contact with Chinese staying around *Batu Satu* and school.
- **English** -generally used by the younger Telegus who have received English education and is spoken at home with siblings, cousins and other educated Telegus.

The following table shows the code/s used by elderly Telegus (First Generation) in the home domain.

Table 3: Language used by First Generation

No	Respondents	Number of utterances in Telegu only	Number of utterances using more Telegu less pidgin Malay	Total number of utterances
1	Male 78 years old	245	2	247
2	Male 74	312	3	315
3	Male 70	262	4	266
4	Female 82	222	1	223
5	Female 76	214	2	216
6	Female 84	264	2	266

Telegu is the matrix language use among the first generation (60 years and above) when they come into contact with one another. There is no displacement of the heritage language when elderly Telegus converse with one another. As they tend to visit one another, the recordings in the home domain show that the hereditary language is maintained especially when they do not have to accommodate to the second or third generations (see Example 1). The main respondent, Sandagu Sarapa (79 years old) also said that Telegu was the only language spoken with her parents when they were alive. Below are examples from the transcriptions to show the dominant use of Telegu among the First generation.

Example 1

<p>Sandagu: Meeru yatak ki pota ru? (<i>Where are you going?</i>)</p> <p>Katrin: Nanu angiri ke potanu. (<i>I'm going to the sundry shop.</i>) Beemu tisko tanu.. Beemu ledu intila. Anamu shay lak' (<i>Buy rice. No more rice at home. Want to cook rice.</i>) Anamu shay si, sharu shay lak. Un du ronco pu (<i>After rice, cook vegetables. Wait for a while.</i>)</p>
<p>Sandagu: Meeru sanco pu? (<i>Will you be late?</i>)</p> <p>Katrin: Ledo. Ronco pe. (<i>No. Just a while</i>) Nowu intla kaska nen ostanu. (<i>Wait for me to reach home</i>)</p>
<p>Sandagu: Intila janal un dara? (<i>Is there any one at home?</i>)</p> <p>Katrin: Bidlu ledu intila. Nenu roncopu. (<i>No children inside. I will be a while.</i>)</p> <p>Balema: Wan ostan di. Batlu etannu. Gali jorga osten di. (<i>It is going to rain.. Take clothes in. The wind is strong</i>)</p> <p>Papama: Akasmu nalega muskondi. Naki tally du. (<i>Black sky. I didn't know</i>)</p> <p>Balema: Batulu en le du. nan pindi. Nena wana (<i>The shirts are not dry yet. Yesterday it rained</i>)</p> <p>Papama: Repu enda ostan di. (<i>Tomorrow it will be sunny.</i>)</p>
<p>Sandagu: Meeru bagundara? (<i>Are you alright?</i>)</p> <p>Makoi: Kalu nepi. (<i>Leg is painful</i>)</p> <p>Sandagu: Meeru ochi aspitri pein dara? Mondu kali ki? Meeru ochi dacter sus te wa? (<i>Did you go to the hospital? Your leg hurts? Did you see a doctor?</i>)</p> <p>Makoi: Podene Dacter mun di cha. (<i>This morning I saw the doctor.</i>)</p>

However, there are instances of **Malay code-switches** used by some members of the first generation but the matrix language is still Telegu (see Example 2). It is clear that even among the elderly and despite the close and dense networks of the community the heritage language needed to be “aided” by the dominant Malay language.

Example 2

Joseph: <u>Lorang ada tengok</u> intilopla nyatabidak. (You saw a baby inside.)
Anthony: Yuundi cucu? Hotega kanindi bidak. (Whose grandchild? A new born child)
Peter Mun du kaluki pitindara? (Did you put ointment on your leg?)
John: Shalu. Siang tadi. (Already. This morning.)
Joseph: Repo yatapotau? Harap hari bagus. (Where to tomorrow? Hope the weather is fine.)
Peter: Belum tahu lagi. (Don’t know yet.)
Female: Yemmi nu tak tauu? (What do you want to drink?)
Male: Yem mundi? Kasih saja apa ada. (What do you have? Just offer what is available.)
Male: Koda kaula naki. Hujan kuat. (Give me an umbrella. Heavy rain)
Female: AyooWanna hostandi inga. (.... Raining again)

Key: **Bold:** Malay

Second Generation

Pidgin Malay is the dominant pattern of language for the second generation (age range between 35-59 years). They are educated at least up to higher secondary level and six have completed tertiary education. Most of them are government employees and work as school teachers/lecturers , clerks, technicians and government officers. They attended English medium schools and are able to speak English, Sarawak Malay, Bahasa Melayu and Hokkien (a Chinese dialect). They learnt English and Malay at school, and picked up Hokkien and Sarawak Malay which are *lingua francas* in Kuching. They created a pidgin variety of Telegu Malay which combined all these languages. To create closer rapport among themselves, the second generation still use pidgin Malay – a mixture of more Bazaar Malay less Telegu, English and Hokkien (see Example 3).

Example 3

<p><u>Pidgin Malay only</u></p> <p>Patrick: Mana lorang tengok wayang itu? (Where did you watch the movie?)</p> <p>Morris : Eh... Cineplex. Lu belum tengok lagi kah? (<i>You haven't watched it?</i>)</p> <p>Patrick: Belum. Tunggu, nanti besok lusa lah (<i>Not yet. Maybe next few days</i>)</p>
<p><u>More Pidgin Malay less Hokkien</u></p> <p>Jeffrey: Wa kak e kong liau. Sudah dia kasih tau sama lu? Susah boh, macam ni gilak. (<i>I've already told him. Did he inform you? It's so difficult like this</i>)</p> <p>Simon: Aboi. Lu kak e kong hamik? Dia tiak kasih tau saya pun. Kenapa dorang bikin macam itu punya. Kesian saya tengok lu. (<i>Not yet. What did you tell him? He didn't tell me. Why did they do that? I feel sorry for you.</i>)</p>
<p><u>More pidgin Malay less Telegu.</u></p> <p>Celestine: Makan sampai habis. Orang belakang <u>anamo</u> tidak ada lagi. (<i>Eat everything. Those after you have no <u>rice</u> to eat</i>)</p> <p>Johnny : Orang belakang? Yemrah idi? Siapa lagi? (<i>Other people? What's this? Who else?</i>)</p>

Key: Bold: Malay Bold Italics: Hokkien. Underlined: Telegu

Third Generation

The language used by the third generation is different from the first and second generations and there are more utterances in English.

No	Respondents	Number of utterances in English only	Utterances using more English less pidgin Malay	Total number of utterances
1	Male 17 years old	303	3	306
2	Male 13 years old	233	2	235
3	Male 24 years old	316	1	317
4	Female 22 years old	242	3	245
5	Female 27 years old	266	4	270
6	Female 23 years old	354	2	356
7.	Male 21 years old	284	1	285
8.	Female 15 years old	198	1	199
9.	Male 20 years old	272	2	294
10	Female 21 years old	262	1	263

Table 3: Language used by Third Generation

They are mostly below 30 years of age and have a better socio-economic status as compared to their parents and grandparents. They are better educated and speak English as their first language. However in some families the pidgin Malay language is still used especially when the mother is a Telegu is not well educated. The Third generation describes Telegu pidgin Malay as “funny and strange and would chose standard Malay rather than pidgin Malay. The transcripts also reveal that Hokkien is no longer used. The dominant language used is English with standard Malay and Sarawak Malay (see Example 4).

Example 4

<p>Angela: Annie, where’s Ma? I thought I saw her a moment ago</p> <p>Annie: <i>Sik tahu</i>. Don’t know. She must have gone next door to chit chat with her good friend.</p> <p>Angela: Where’s my blue skirt?</p> <p>Annie: Mana kamek tahu. Tunggu Ma pulang bah. Own socks also cannot search. (<i>How would I know? Wait for Ma to come home.....</i>)</p>
<p>Victor: Don’t eat the whole cheese cake by yourself. Leave some for me So hungry, like a horse! Rangkak juak.</p> <p>Terence: An angry man is a hungry man. I’m both right now. You better go for confession this evening. Sukatikumpun</p>
<p>Vanes: There is no school next week. Kame ada plan Got plans <i>lah!</i></p> <p>Boy: Says who? I have exams next week. Benci lah selalu saja ada tests. Holidays are after next week.</p> <p>Vanes: What to do, your college is for slow learners. My college is <i>the</i> college that starts the semester early and ends early.</p>

Key: Bold: Malay Bold Italics: Sarawak Malay

Discussion

The obvious shift across three generations has occurred from Telegu (G1) to pidgin Malay (G2) and English, Standard Malay and Sarawak Malay (G3). Mixed marriages are common among Indians in Sarawak, with the indigenous and across Indian linguistic groups A number of second and third generations of Sarawak Indians have married Dayaks, Chinese, Indians from different linguistic groups (Dealwis, 2009). This is one of the reasons for the shifting patterns of language use that exist in the

Telegu home domain. Today it is common to hear the second generation of Telegus shifting to English even among themselves and with younger members of the community. Thus, the second generation has now accommodated to the language of the third generation not only when speaking to them but also with second generation family members. Like the Catholic Malyalees of Malaysia, (David and Nambiar, 2001), exogamous marriages in minority Indian communities in Malaysia causes language shift. Since the Telegu community in Sarawak is small and all are basically related to one another biologically, there is no choice for them except to marry out of the ethnic group. The first generation married Tamils and younger members of the community have also contacted exogamous marriages not only with Tamils but also with other communities in Kuching.

Batu Satu is located in a Hokkien Chinese area, and the residents use Hokkien and Bazaar Malay to communicate with one another. Due to their small numbers, the Telegu language eventually succumbed to pressures and created a Telegu variety of pidgin Malay which they use due to their lack of proficiency of their ancestral language. Hence the second generation eventually becomes more comfortable with pidgin Malay and displaced Telegu language in the home domain. Furthermore, in the second generation, it is obvious that the Telegu mothers determine the language choice at home. Their spouses are not Telegus and English becomes the new home language. The language choices of the parents from exogamous marriages influence the choice of language used by the children in the home domain. This important role of mothers in determining language used at home is similar to the role of Bengali women in determining Bengali language maintenance or shift in Malaysia (Mukherjee, 2003). In the case of the Sarawak Telegus, it is the educated women and men who are responsible for the language shift from pidgin Malay to English.

The second and third generations are better educated and able to speak not only English. But also Standard Malay and Sarawak Malay. They realise the economic value of learning these two languages (English and Standard Malay) and ensure that they are able to communicate well in official domains. Since there are no other Telegu families in Sarawak, there has not been much interest to learn Telegu. Furthermore, the younger generation regard learning the Sarawak Malay dialect as more useful in interethnic communication rather than learning Telegu. Most of the Telegus do not feel connected to India or the ancestral language. English has now replaced pidgin Malay and the Telegus feel proud of the fact that they now speak an international language as their new home language. In fact, the young generation regard English as their first language and use it in all domains. Members of the educated second generation also said that they are often ridiculed nowadays by other ethnic groups for speaking a Telegu pidgin Malay which is not standard Malay. Thus, they too avoid using the code which they have created when talking among themselves in public places.

Conclusion

This paper describes the shifting patterns of language use by the Telegus of Sarawak. They have abandoned their ancestral language and English has become the home language today. What the Telegus in Sarawak are experiencing today is similar to many minority Indian groups in Peninsular Malaysia where English has become the new home language. Gradually with better education, the younger community

members realise the economic value of mastering Standard Malay, English as well as the local Sarawak Malay dialect. Above all, the high incidence of mixed marriages has contributed to all these shifting patterns of language use across generations.

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Note

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