

SOUTH INDIAN LANGUAGES IN FIJI: LANGUAGE CONTACT AND ATTRITION

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1. SOUTH INDIANS AND DRAVIDIAN LANGUAGES IN FIJI¹

Nearly half of Fiji's present population are of Indian origin, and most Indo-Fijians are descendants of indentured labourers transported between 1879 and 1916, mainly to work on sugarcane plantations. Of the 60,000 or so indentured labourers who came to Fiji, a little over three quarters were recruited in North India, through the emigration depot in Calcutta. About 15,000, or nearly 25%, came from South India, starting in 1903 when recruitment extended to Madras (Table 1).²

TABLE 1: ORIGINS OF FIJI'S INDENTURED LABOURERS
(Source: Lal 1983:50)

Recruited through	Number	Percentage
Calcutta	45,439	75.02
Madras	15,132	24.98
Total	60,571	100

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² Very small numbers of South Indians came to Fiji before recruitment started from Madras: according to Lal, 0.2% of indentured labourers recruited in the North were of South Indian origin, and there were probably some South Indians among the 600 or so labourers who reindentured from other colonies, especially Natal and Mauritius (Lal 1983:44–54).

Most indentured labourers recruited in South India spoke a Dravidian language as their first language—mainly Tamil, Telugu or Malayalam—while a few others spoke Hindustani or Marathi. It is difficult to identify the language of the migrants, which was not indicated on emigration passes, except in 1903, and their district of origin is not always a reliable guide to identifying their first language (Siegel 1987:145).

2. LANGUAGE SHIFT

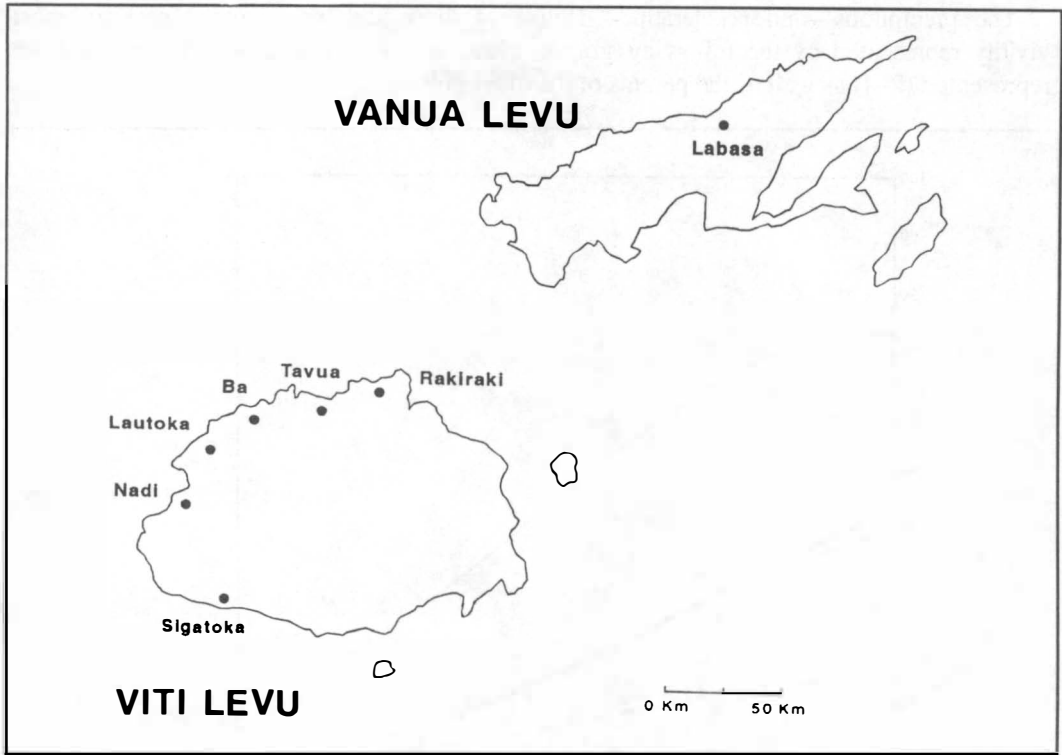
It is also difficult to estimate current numbers of Indo-Fijians of South Indian origin—let alone numbers of speakers of Tamil, Telugu, or Malayalam—since all persons of Indian ancestry are lumped together in the Fiji censuses, which also normally do not contain any information on language. Only in 1956 and 1966 did the census include a question which asked Fiji Indians to indicate the main language spoken by members of their household. Table 2 shows the number of households where a South Indian language was reported as the main language used at home. A comparison of results in the two censuses reveals a decline for all three languages, as shown in the table by the percentage of loss over the 10-year period, calculated by Siegel:

TABLE 2: HOME LANGUAGES OF INDO-FIJIANS (1956 and 1966 censuses)
(Source: Adapted from Siegel 1987:205)

Language	NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS		Percentage of loss
	1956	1966	
Tamil	1,498	999	33.3
Telegu	797	301	64.9
Malayalam	134	47	62
Total	2,429	1,347	44.5

The decline of the Dravidian languages probably started much earlier, however. South Indians have been a minority among Fiji Indians since the beginning, and they started arriving nearly 25 years after the first North Indians. By then, a koinê based on various dialects of Hindi and Hindustani, now known as *Fiji Baat* or Fiji Hindi, had become established as the lingua franca on plantations. Although a number of interpreters worked with Dravidian languages during indenture, there was also an unofficial policy of encouraging Hindi at the expense of other Indian languages (Siegel 1987:162). It is likely then that Dravidian languages underwent a sudden and extensive shrinking of domains and were soon reduced, as Pillai (1971:3) claims, to “domestic languages”.

Dravidian languages in Fiji continue to lose speakers, as is shown by the results of a 1993 survey of nearly 500 Indo-Fijians of South Indian descent in the country’s sugarcane belt, in the West of the main island, Viti Levu, and the North of the second largest island, Vanua Levu (for details, see map and Mugler and Tent, this volume). Table 3 shows the percentage of speakers of Tamil, Telugu and Malayalam in the sample surveyed. The results are displayed according to five age cohorts: three represent the age-groups surveyed among participants themselves: 15–25 years old, 30–45 years old, and over 50; the other two cohorts are the parents and grandparents of the older group in the sample, since questions were included about the knowledge of Dravidian languages of the participants’ forebears.



MAP: AREAS SURVEYED IN 1993

TABLE 3: 1993 SURVEY—PERCENTAGE OF SPEAKERS FOR FIVE AGE COHORTS

Language	Grandparents	Parents	50+ years	30–45 years	15–25 years
Tamil	78.2	73.2	59.5	31	11.7
Telegu	42.4	42.6	25.2	7.7	1.2
Malayalam	13.4	15.2	10.4	2.6	.6

The loss of speakers over the generations is clear. Table 4 shows the percentage of speakers each language has lost between the three age-groups surveyed: between two generations, the older and the middle-aged groups, then the middle-aged and the younger group, and over three generations, between the older and younger groups:

TABLE 4: 1993 SURVEY—PERCENTAGE OF LOSS BETWEEN THREE AGE-GROUPS

Language	Between 50+ & 30–45	Between 30–45 & 15–25	Between 50+ & 15–25
Tamil	48	62	80
Telegu	69	84	95
Malayalam	75	76	94

The precipitous—and accelerating—decline of Dravidian languages is perhaps most vividly represented by the following graph, where the three age-groups interviewed are represented (2–4) as well as the parents of the older group (1).

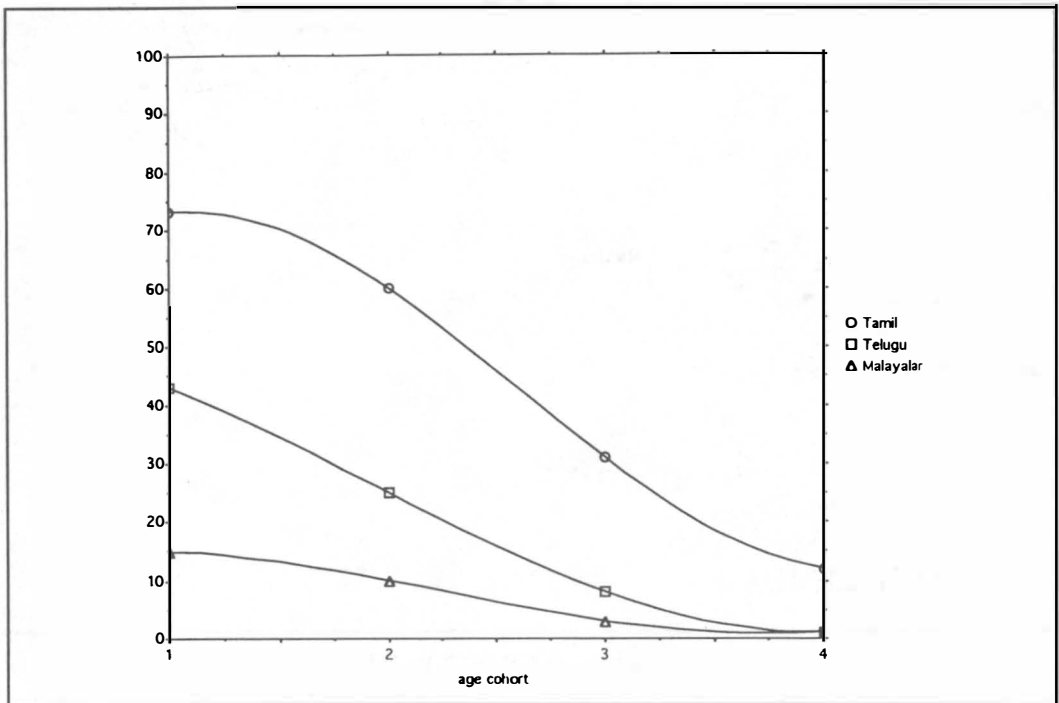


FIGURE: REPORTED KNOWLEDGE OF A DRAVIDIAN LANGUAGE BY FOUR AGE COHORTS

All the survey figures above are based on the participants' responses to a general question on whether they know one or several Dravidian languages. A question about whether the language of their ancestors is spoken at home yields even lower figures, while answers to specific questions about language use at home with various interlocutors indicate that there is very little use of Dravidian languages (Table 5). These figures show that use of a Dravidian language is correlated not only with the age of the speaker, but also that of the interlocutor: Dravidian languages are more likely to be used at home with parents than with a spouse or siblings, and least likely when addressing children.

TABLE 5: PERCENTAGE OF LANGUAGE USED WHEN SPEAKING WITH...

Language	Parents	Spouse	Siblings	Relatives	Friends	Children
a Dravidian language	14	8	8	6	3	2
Fiji Hindi	78	67	89	94	96	75
English	.8	.6	1	.6	1.5	2

Table 5 also shows the overwhelming preponderance of Fiji Hindi among descendants of South Indians. Even in this most intimate domain—home—the use of possible competing languages (i.e. Dravidian languages and English) is extremely limited. The high figures for

Fiji Hindi represent a number of different factors: some of the informants do not know any Dravidian language at all, some have limited competence or just a passive knowledge, while others who may have sufficient competence are the only members of the household to speak the language of their forebears. The shift from Dravidian languages to Fiji Hindi is almost complete then, and Fiji Hindi has become the first language of nearly all descendants of South Indians. Not only is it the first language of those who know no Dravidian language at all, but for most of those who still do have some knowledge of one, Fiji Hindi is in almost every case the language they feel most competent in and use most frequently.

3. THE STRUCTURE OF DRAVIDIAN LANGUAGES IN FIJI

Given the steady loss of speakers of Dravidian languages, several questions arise: Do the varieties spoken in Fiji exhibit any structural phenomena of attrition? What is the impact on these varieties of the languages they have been in contact with in Fiji, particularly the dominant language of the community, Fiji Hindi? Can we legitimately call these varieties Fiji Tamil, Fiji Telugu, Fiji Malayalam?

In an attempt to answer these questions, the 1993 survey was followed by another stage of research, in which two kinds of data were recorded. Firstly, a series of semi-structured interviews were conducted with some of the older people who had been administered the survey questionnaire. These interviews contained questions about the geographical origins in India of the participants' ancestors, their own language use as they were growing up, and questions gauging their attitudes towards the Dravidian language of their ancestors and towards current maintenance efforts. In a separate exercise, samples of conversations in Tamil, Telugu and Malayalam were recorded between an older person and a relative or neighbour, some featuring participants previously interviewed while others were of older descendants of South Indians known to the interviewers.³

Over 40 samples have been recorded so far, at least a dozen for each of the three languages. Although the older age-group (over 50) was targeted, many conversations recorded include relatives or neighbours from different age-groups, so that participants' ages range from 10 to 78. Sample length goes from 5 to over 30 minutes, and the total time of recorded data is a little over six hours. While this is not sufficient for any generalisations about each variety of language as a whole, it is enough to give an indication of structural trends and of what avenues of inquiry are worth pursuing.

The recorded samples were analysed over a period of three months in late 1994 at the Central Institute of Indian Languages in Mysore, India, in cooperation with three Dravidian specialists: Sam Mohan Lal for Tamil, V. Saratchandran Nair for Malayalam, and G. Vijayasarithi for Telugu.⁴ What follows is a sketch of findings to date.

Firstly, the Tamil, Telugu and Malayalam spoken by our Fiji informants are each clearly identifiable as overseas varieties, distinct from any variety spoken in India. Secondly, and not unexpectedly, one of the characteristics of all three Fiji varieties is the retention of

³ The interviewers were part of the team who had administered questionnaires during the survey: ten senior linguistics students at the University of the South Pacific and one colleague from the Department of Literature and Language (see fn.1).

⁴ For details see Mugler and Mohan Lal (1995), Mugler and Nair (1995), and Mugler and Vijayasarithi (1996).

archaisms, and of dialectal or other features which allow for identification of the background of informants: North Arcot, Trichur, Rayalaseema, Malayali Muslim, etc. Such clues are found at the phonological, syntactic, lexical and semantic levels. Most interesting from the point of view of language contact is the influence of Fiji Hindi, now the dominant language of the community.

3.1 LANGUAGE CONTACT

3.1.1 LEXICO-SEMANTICS

The Tamil, Telugu and Malayalam spoken in Fiji have borrowed a number of words from the languages they have been in contact with in their new sociocultural environment, namely Fiji Hindi, English and Fijian, in that order of numerical importance.

The most common borrowing from Hindi is *accha* 'okay/fine', which has become a pan-Indian feature in the languages of India, and is commonly used in all three Dravidian languages present in Fiji. In some Tamil informants' speech *accha* alternates with Tamil *sēri* while in that of others it replaces it.⁵

Identifying borrowings from Fiji Hindi is not always straightforward since Dravidian languages in India themselves have borrowed liberally from Hindi and from Sanskrit. Some words may have once been used in, say, the Tamil of India, such as *bāsā* 'language', which has long been archaic in India and therefore, in the Tamil of Fiji, is more likely to have been borrowed from Fiji Hindi. The origin of other borrowings is less ambiguous, such as *lēkin* 'but', *bimāri* 'sickness', *barābar* 'sufficient', *rasta* 'road' in the Telugu data but absent from the Telugu of India, or Tamil *kēti* 'farm' *kalas* 'finished', *karab* 'bad', all unknown in Indian Tamil, as is *band* 'closed/stopped', in *vikkalu band āy paōccu* 'the hiccoughs stopped'.

Fiji Hindi borrowings are adapted to the phonology of the borrower language, so that the initial [k] in Tamil *kēti*, *kalas* and *karab*, for example, is deaspirated. Similarly, *ekdam* 'absolutely', a word unknown in the Malayalam of India, is realised as [ʔekdam], with the obligatory on-glide of Malayalam. On the other hand, many nouns are 'Dravidianised' with the suffix *-m*, as are Sanskrit and Hindi borrowings in the Dravidian languages of India. Thus we find, for instance, *dēram* 'duration' in the Telugu of Fiji.

In some cases the phonological shape or the particular meaning of a borrowing indicates its Fiji Hindi origin. The word *dyānam*, from Sanskrit, means 'knowledge' in the following sentence from the Tamil data:

- (1) *Tamiḷle dyānam varudulla avugaḷukku.*
They do not get knowledge in Tamil.

In Indian Tamil the form is *nānam* and the meaning 'meditation'. Here, the initial cluster *dy-* of Hindi, along with the word's meaning, indicates that the word is more likely to have been borrowed from Fiji Hindi—and nativised with the usual Dravidian nominal suffix *-m*, than to have undergone a semantic shift from Indian Tamil.

Similarly, in the Malayalam data, *sīkṣa*, also found in the Malayalam of India, here has the primary Hindi sense of 'education' rather than the primary Malayalam sense of 'punishment':

⁵ One informant who normally alternates between the two words uses both concurrently on one occasion, as a phrase realised with a single intonation contour, *accha sēri*.

(2) *Accanammamāṇ nalla mātiri śikṣa koṭuttu.*

Our parents gave us a good education.

This usage is also commonly found in the speech of second language learners of Malayalam whose first language is Hindi (Nair 1986:294, 1994:81).

The influence of Fiji Hindi on lexico-semantics can be illustrated with a few idioms from the Telugu data:

(3)	<i>vivahasamskaram</i>	marriage ceremony
	<i>dhanyavādamulu iccunānu</i>	to give thanks
	<i>ksāma ceyyāni</i>	to pardon
	<i>bajanampādatāru</i>	to sing <i>bhajans</i>

The meaning of *samskara* in the Telugu of India is restricted to 'funeral rites', while here in *vivahasamskaram* (lit. 'marriage rites') the word is used in the more general Hindi sense of 'rite, ritual, ceremony'. Similarly, in *dhanyavādamulu iccunānu* '[I remain,] having given thanks', the verb *telupū* (lit. 'to tell') which would be used in the Indian Telugu idiom, is replaced by *icci* (lit. 'to give') a calque of Fiji Hindi *dhanyavad dena*. Another calque is *ksāma ceyyāndi* (lit. 'to do/make pardon') where the verbaliser *incu* of Telugu—*ksāmindadi* 'to pardon'—is replaced with the very productive verb *karna* 'to do', as in Fiji Hindi *sāma* (or *māf*) *karna*. The Fiji Telugu form is also morphologically simpler than the Indian Telugu idiom. In *bajanam pādatāru* (lit. 'they (always) sing *bhajans*') Indian Telugu would have *cēstāru* 'do', since *bhajans* in Andhra involve dancing, while when singing is involved, *kirtana* is used, rather than *bajana*. Finally, *sep* 'tell' (cf. Standard Telugu *ceppu*) appears instead of *tsaduvu* 'read' in the context of reciting mantras, a usage probably influenced by Fiji Hindi, where both *psṛhe* 'to read' and *bole* 'to tell' can occur in this idiom.

A number of words have been borrowed from English. In Malayalam we find, among others, *class*, *meeting*, *high school*, *English*; in Tamil *fast*, *mistake*, *fees*; in Telugu *doorstep*, *town area*, *medical*, *family*; and in all three, *doctor*, *government*, *master*, *hospital*, *committee*. All words of English origin present in the data also exist in Fiji Hindi and it is likely that most were borrowed through Fiji Hindi, now the dominant language of the community, rather than directly from English.⁶ The word *school*, for example, which has also been borrowed by Tamil in India as [skul], is realised in the Fiji Tamil data as [iskul], with the obligatory prothetic vowel which precedes the consonant cluster [sk] in Fiji Hindi. Fiji Hindi *girmīt* 'indenture', originally from English 'agreement', refers specifically to the experience of the immigrant labourers and is unknown in India. The Dravidianising *-m* ending is occasionally extended to nouns borrowed from English, as in Fiji Telugu *designam* 'design'.

Very few Fijian borrowings appear, and this may simply be due to the limited nature of the data. In Telugu, for instance, we find *koro* 'Fijian village', *kaibiti* (< Fijian *kaiviti*) 'Fijian', here 'Fijian language'. All these also exist in Fiji Hindi, as does *naqona* 'kava', which appears in its Fiji Hindi form (< *na yaqona* 'the kava') rather than the original Fijian

⁶ Many of these borrowings from English are also found in the speech of educated speakers of Tamil, Telugu and Malayalam in India nowadays. This is a fairly recent phenomenon however, and in the Fiji data they occur in everyone's speech, regardless of level of education.

yaqona⁷ As in the case of borrowings from English, Fijian words are likely to have come into the Dravidian languages of Fiji via Fiji Hindi, the dominant language of the informants.

3.1.2 PHONOLOGY

The influence of Fiji Hindi may extend, beyond lexico-semantics, to certain aspects of phonology, in particular syllable structure, although the evidence is sometimes ambiguous. Here are a few examples from the Tamil data, contrasted with the corresponding forms in the Tamil of India:

(4)	<i>nāl piḷḷaihaḷ</i>	<i>nālu piḷḷaihaḷ</i>	'four children'
	<i>mul muyareci</i>	<i>mulu muyareci</i>	'complete effort'
	<i>nal mādiri</i>	<i>nallā mādiri</i>	'good manner'
	<i>pāṭ pāḍa</i>	<i>pāṭṭu pāḍa</i>	'sing a song'
	<i>mūṇ pēru</i>	<i>mūṇu pēru</i>	'three people'

In each case the word-final, unstressed, vowel of Indian Tamil is deleted, resulting in a consonant cluster across word boundaries. Unstressed vowel deletion also occurs internally, as in *evḷavu* for *evvaḷavu* 'how much', *selvu* for *seluvu* 'cost', or the reduplicated forms *cincinna* for *cinnacinna* 'very small', *kaskasa* for *kasakasa* 'something fishy', *koñckoñca* for *koñcokoñcō* 'just a little bit'. This pattern of vowel deletion also exists in the Northern dialects of Tamil in India, especially with [u], which in unstressed position is normally realised as unrounded but often is instead lost altogether. But it is also typical of the Tamil spoken by first language speakers of Hindi, and it is difficult to attribute this feature unambiguously to retention or to the influence of Fiji Hindi.

The same pattern of unstressed vowel deletion leading to consonant clusters is found in the Telugu data:⁸

(5)	<i>dagra</i>	for	<i>daggara</i>	'at, near'
	<i>bōḍnam</i>		<i>bōjanam</i>	'food'
	<i>bidlu</i>		<i>biḍḍalu</i>	'children'
	<i>manku</i>		<i>manaku</i>	1PL.INC.DAT 'to us'
	<i>wāḍki</i>		<i>wāḍiki</i>	3SG.DAT 'to him'
	<i>walki</i>		<i>waḷḷaki</i>	3PL.DAT 'to them'

In contrast to Tamil, this feature is not known to exist in any dialect of Telugu in India. However, it also is found in the speech of Telugu learners whose first language is Hindi.

⁷ Kava, a traditional drink used for ceremonial and social purposes, is made from the root of *Piper methysticum*.

⁸ Abbreviations used in this paper are as follows:

DAT	dative	PERF	perfect
INC	inclusive	PL	plural
INF	infinitive	SG	singular
NEG	negative	VP	verb phrase
PART	participle		

3.2 LANGUAGE ATTRITION

At the morphosyntactic level, a number of structures are characterised by loss of marking or great variation in how certain distinctions are marked, which points to the possibility of attrition.

3.2.1 SIMPLIFICATION OF SANDHI

The sandhi rules that apply in the Indian varieties of the three Dravidian languages are often not observed, so that a case marker is added directly to the bare stem of the noun. In the Tamil data, for instance, we find *saṅgamle* 'in the Sangam', rather than *saṅgattale*, from which the sandhi increment *-tt-* is absent. Other examples, contrasted with the Indian forms, are:

- | | | | |
|-----|-----------------------|----------------------------|-----------------|
| (6) | <i>būlōgamle</i> | <i>buloḡattile</i> | 'in the world' |
| | <i>sāyaṅḡalamendu</i> | <i>sāyaṅḡalattilirindu</i> | 'since evening' |

Similarly, we have *kaṣṭam paḍa māṭṭāṅga* 'they won't face any difficulty', rather than *kaṣṭappaḍa māṭṭāga*, in which Indian Tamil drops the final *-m* and geminates the initial *-p* of the next word. This is clearly a case of morphological simplification.

3.2.2 NUMBER MARKING

In the Tamil data the plural marker *kaḷ* is generalised to all count nouns, including collectives: in *makkaḷka* 'children', for example, *makkaḷ* is treated as monomorphemic rather than already marked for plural, and is therefore suffixed with *kaḷ*.

Similarly in the Malayalam data, the plural *kār* is overgeneralised in *bāsākkār* 'languages', *malayālakkār kuṭṭikal* 'Malayali children', *malayālakkārakkum telunggukkārakkum* 'for Malayali and Telugu [people]'. This last example is morphologically less complex than the Indian Malayalam form *malayālīkaḷkkumtelungarḷkkum*. But this overgeneralisation is also found among second language learners of Malayalam (Nair 1986:288). On the other hand, in *mūnna penkuṭṭi*, *mūnna ainkuṭṭi* (lit. 'three girl, three boy') the plural marker is absent—another simplification since, with the presence of a number, the nominal plural marker is redundant.

Another Malayalam plural marker, *mār*, normally used only with kinship terms, is extended by analogy, as in *keṛaḷanmārellam naḍakkaṇam* 'Keralites should follow'.

The Telugu data is particularly rich with respect to variation in number marking. Collective markers for human nouns are often omitted after numerals, as in Telugu *magapillōlu nālugu*, 'four boys' or *nāku tommidi pilakāyalantā kaligæ*, 'I had nine children'. The Standard Telugu collective markers are *guru* with numbers 3–7 and *mandi* with 8 and above, while the Rayalaseema dialects—features of which are abundant in the data—have *mandi* for 3 and above. The second example, besides missing any collective marker, has clear Rayalaseema features: *pilakāyalantā* rather than Standard *pillalu* for 'children' and, at the end of *kaligæ*, the absence of *-ru* concord, an optional marker in Rayalaseema. But the same speaker produces later the phrase *antā tommidimandi* 'all nine', this time with the collective marker. In Fiji Telugu the collective marker may have become optional, and may be in the process of being lost. Neither Tamil nor Kannada—both of which have influenced the Rayalaseema dialects—have this marker, which is also absent from Fiji Hindi. While

there is no loss of distinction since the information carried by the marker is redundant, the loss of this collective does result in morphological simplification.

There is a great deal of variation in the use of number concord markers. This is particularly extreme in the speech of two Telugu informants, who often use a plural noun with a singular concord marker on the verb, or suffix a nominal number marker to a verb:

- (7) *Janam lēdu.*
 people.PL EXIST.NEG.SG (for *lēru*, plural)
 There are no people. (lit. There is no people.)
- (8) *Aidu pillōlu unḍādi.*
 five child.PL EXIST.SG (for *undaru*, plural)
 There are five people here. (lit. Five children is here.)

In the same informant's speech, *andaru unḍādi* (lit. 'all people is...') with the singular verb ending *-di* with a plural subject, alternates with *andaru unḍālu*, with the plural nominal ending *-lu* suffixed to the verb, rather than the plural verbal ending *-ru*.

While the use of singular rather than plural concord markers may be explained by an influence of the invariability of such constructions in Fiji Hindi (as well as of Kannada and Tamil on some varieties of Telugu in India), the use of nominal rather than verbal markers cannot, and the extreme variation can probably best be explained as a sign of an incipient breakdown of the morphological system in the marking of concord.

A similar confusion between noun and verb endings is found in *wāḍki erukunu* 'he only knows', which has the pronoun in the dative and a verb (with the concord *-nu*), whereas Indian Telugu can have either *wāḍu erugunu*, with the pronoun in the nominative and a verb, or *wāḍiki eruka*, with the pronoun in the dative and a noun.

3.2.3 CASES

In all three Fiji varieties there is a great deal of variation in case endings and deviation from the Indian varieties. In the Tamil data, one case is entirely missing (the genitive marker for nouns, which is replaced by the dative or the accusative), the accusative is omitted in some environments, and there is extreme variation in the use of the dative, which appears where Indian Tamil would have the genitive, the accusative, the locative or even the nominative.

In Malayalam, we find some genitives, locatives and accusatives missing, the accusative often overgeneralised to non-humans, the sociative omitted with communicative verbs, and the dative sometimes used instead of the accusative, the locative and the ablative. In Telugu the most regular differences between the Fiji data and the Telugu of India are the use of the dative for the instrumental/sociative, the sociative for the ablative, and the nominative for the genitive. A few examples in each of the three languages will illustrate this extreme variation in case marking:

(a) Tamil

(a₁) Dative for genitive

- (9) *Kaavuukku pēre eḍukkuṛē.*
 I take the name of God.

The genitive *-uṭaya* does not appear at all in the data and is often replaced by the dative, as it is here in *kaḍavuḷukku* instead of *kaḍavuḷuṭaya*. While the use of the dative for genitive is said to be found in some dialects of Indian Tamil, such as in the Kanyakumari area, Mohan Lal (pers. comm.) argues that the realisation of the two case markers is in fact different, with [ikku] for the dative and [ikka] for the genitive.

(a₂) Zero for accusative

- (10) *Oru payyē n pākṛē.*
I'm looking after a boy.

The noun in direct object position is [+ human] and therefore has an obligatory accusative ending in Indian Tamil. The zero marking here may be an overgeneralisation of the optional marking of [- human] direct objects.

(a₃) Dative for locative

- (11) *Ide patti tān manasukku eppavum neneccu koṇḍu irukkiadu.*
In our minds, we always think about this [going to India].

Here Indian Tamil would have the locative *manasule* rather than the dative *manasukku*.

(b) Malayalam

(b₁) Zero for locative

- (12) *Fiji vannu.*
I came to Fiji.

But the same speaker does use the locative ending later in a similar environment:

- (13) *Fijiyil balare malayāḷakkārūṇḍa.*
In Fiji there are many Malayali.

The locative is also missing in:

- (14) *Kerala nial pōyi.*
You went to Kerala?
- (15) *Ippo muslim skūlāna niñṇala paḍippikuṇṇata.*
Now it's the Muslim school you're teaching in.

(b₂) Accusative with non-human objects

- (16) *Ente makkaḷ tanṇe bhāśāye paṛayān.*
My children would speak the language.

The accusative *bhāśāye* is used where Indian Malayalam would have *bhāśā*. Here the accusative of [+ human] direct objects is overgeneralised—a feature found in the speech of L₂ speakers of Malayalam (Nair 1986:302). This is a mirror image of the overgeneralisation of the optional zero marking of [- human] direct objects in Tamil (see above).

(b₃) Zero for sociative with communication verbs

- (17) *Iṭrayum paṛaṇṇu nān santōśam.*
(lit. I told this much with happiness.)

The expected sociative would be *santōśātōde*.

(b₄) Dative for locative

- (18) *Enṛe accan kannikkōṭṭaninna fijikke vannu.*
My father came from Cannicut to Fiji.

Generally, the use of one case for another is commonly found among second language speakers of Malayalam (Nair 1986:293, 298, 302–303).

(c) Telugu

(c₁) Dative for sociative

The dative *-ki* is used instead of the instrumental/sociative *-to* in this phrase:

- (19) *Dēwuḍiki prātana cēs.*
pray to God

(c₂) Sociative for ablative

- (20) *Ītuwaṇṭi pīnugatō gūḍa ḍabbu tīstaru.*
Even from a dead body they make money.

Here Indian Telugu would have, instead of the sociative *pīnugatō*, the ablative *pīnuganunci* (or the postposition *mīda* 'on'). On the other hand the sociative *-tō* alternates with the postposition *kūḍā* in *famli kūḍā*, then *famlitō* 'with the family'.

(c₃) Nominative for genitive

In *ī illu wāllu* 'the people of this house', the nominative *illu* 'house' is used rather than the expected genitive of Indian Telugu *inṭi*. This simplification could well be influenced by the corresponding Fiji Hindi phrase *ghar wale*.

Generally, the replacement of one case marker by another often occurs in the speech of second language learners of the three Dravidian languages in question, including those whose first language is Hindi. Fiji Hindi has even less case marking than Standard and other Indian varieties of Hindi, and since Fiji Hindi is now the dominant language of most speakers of Tamil, Telugu and Malayalam in Fiji, case substitution and/or case marking loss may well be attributable at least in part to the influence of Fiji Hindi. Nonetheless, the loss of case marking in particular results in morphological simplification, which is a well-attested characteristic of language attrition. This simplification then is overdetermined, in that the influence of the dominant language of the community and processes of attrition can only reinforce each other.

3.2.4 SYNTAX

The most morphologically and syntactically complex constructions, such as causatives and relative participles, seem to be the ones which are most often and most drastically simplified. Occasionally word order also differs from that of the Indian varieties. In the following example from the Tamil data, both verb and noun morphology are simplified:

- (21) *En piḷḷaikaḷukku nān paḍittu vaittu irukkiryen.*
my children.DAT I study.VP make.VP be.PERF.PART
I made my children study [Tamil].

Where Indian Tamil has the accusative case for the object, the infinitive for the lexical verb and the conjugated, tensed form of the causative verb *vai*, this sentence has the dative of the noun and the participle of both the lexical and the causative verbs. There is a distinction in Indian Tamil between the causative (INF + *vai*) and an action done for future use (PART + *vai*), and the use of participle in causative constructions in the data may indicate that this distinction is being lost.

In the following causative sentence from the Malayalam data, there is some confusion between the transitive and intransitive:

- (22) *Ñānñalkka ī malayālam paḍippikkān nalla oru māstarkku bēnam*
We want a good teacher to teach us Malayalam.

In Indian Malayalam the sentence would be *ñānñale ... paḍippikkān*, with the pronoun in the accusative and the causative form of the verb, or *ñāalkka ... paḍikkān*, with the pronoun in the dative and the transitive form of the verb. The first sentence could be translated as 'we want a teacher to teach us Malayalam', and the second 'we want a teacher for us to learn Malayalam', since *paḍikkān* is 'to learn' and *paḍippikkān*, the causative, 'to teach' (lit. 'to cause to learn'). These two sentences of course have the same basic meaning. The sentence used by the informant then, compared to the Indian Malayalam sentence, has either a deviant case (dative for accusative) or a deviant verb form (causative for transitive). This transitive/intransitive confusion is another feature of the Malayalam of native speakers of Hindi (Nair 1986:298–299, 293).

A particularly dysfluent sentence in the Telugu data also exhibits greatly simplified structures:

- (23) *Nēnu peḷḷijēsi...peḷḷijēsinnānu...paddhenimidṣamatsaramulu.*
I got married 18 years ago. (lit. I marr...married...18 years.)

The reflexive *kun* is omitted, so that this sounds as if the speaker performed the marriage, while the intended meaning is clearly that of 'getting married', which would be in Indian Telugu *peḷḷicēsukunnānu*. There is no postposition, such as *kritam* (in Standard Telugu) or *mundu* (in the Rayalaseema dialects) 'before, ago', to connect the phrase for '18 years' with the preceding clause. If there was the word for 'year' would end with the genitive *-la* rather than the nominative *-lu*.

4. CONCLUSION

The Tamil, Telugu and Malayalam spoken in Fiji are readily identifiable as diasporic varieties, and it is not surprising to find in these transplanted languages which have been isolated for almost a hundred years such characteristics as retention of archaisms and of dialectal features which point to the geographical origins in India of the informants' ancestors. But one of the most noticeable and pervasive influences has been that of the major language the three Dravidian languages have been in contact with—Fiji Hindi. The lingua franca on plantations for nearly a quarter of a century before the arrival of indentured labourers recruited in South India, Fiji Hindi has continued to both displace and influence the Dravidian languages ever since. Indeed, for most descendants of South Indians, Fiji Hindi has replaced the Dravidian language of their ancestors, while for those who still have some knowledge of that language, Fiji Hindi has become the dominant language. Thus, if for many informants the Dravidian language of their forebears is their 'mother tongue' in the

sense of their ancestral language and often the language they feel the greatest emotional attachment and loyalty to, Fiji Hindi is just as clearly their first language, for many in the chronological sense (the first language they acquired as children), and for nearly all others in terms of competence, ease and fluency (their 'best' language) and frequency of use.

The influence of Fiji Hindi can be detected in the phonology, lexicon and semantics of the three Dravidian languages, while their morphology and syntax show a good deal of simplification and reduction of marking, a common sign of attrition not unexpected in languages whose domains and frequency of use have been drastically curtailed. Since Fiji Hindi is substantially less marked than Dravidian languages, it is often not possible to unambiguously attribute a particular case of reduction in marking to language attrition rather than to the influence of Fiji Hindi as the major contact language. Clearly both processes go in the same direction, that of reduction of morphosyntactic complexity. Indeed, we note that many such features found in the data also occur in the speech of second language speakers of Tamil, Telugu or Malayalam—and not only among those whose first language is Hindi. Of course, as mentioned earlier, many of our informants are, in terms of their competence, much more like second language speakers of, say, Tamil, than like first language speakers. And simplification is a common feature not only of language attrition but also of language acquisition, of pidginisation and generally of situations of restricted input—hence the importance of studies of the structural erosion of languages under stress.

The limited data available so far precludes anything more than a tentative conclusion. In particular, it is difficult at this stage to ascertain to what extent the features discussed here are typical of the whole language varieties or of the particular individuals recorded. Data gathering continues and will, it is hoped, include more middle-aged and younger informants. Fiji speakers of all three Dravidian languages are fewer with each generation, and it is important to record the speech of those who still have some knowledge of these languages, in the hope of throwing some light on the processes of structural change which affect minority languages undergoing drastic shift.

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