

Impact of War (1983 – 2009) on Jaffna Tamil: English, Sinhala and Some Indian Languages.

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Introduction

Where two different languages have contact over a certain period of time they will surely influence each other. Words might be taken over from one language and are adapted to the other. This process is called borrowing. Borrowing refers to the transfer of any linguistic item from one language to another. The linguistic item transferred may be a sound, word, phrase or sentence. The linguistic borrowing may occur at a sound, word, phrase or sentence level. One language borrows from another language not only for the reason that the recipient language lacks such terms but also due to easy reference, economy of expression, prestige motive and euphemistic effect. But still, whenever the need for a new term arises, due to the contact between people from different cultures, the formation of a neologism, composed of elements of the own language, is only rarely done. One reason for borrowing a suitable word from another language is the need to find a term for an unfamiliar thing, animal, or cultural device. Katamba remarks in this context that there is no purely linguistic reason for borrowing. According to him no limit exists to the number of words that can be generated in any language (Katamba, 1994).

One of the most easily observable results of intercultural contact and communication is the set of loanwords that is imported into the vocabulary of each language involved. The field of cultures and languages in contact (Weinreich, 1953) has grown a great deal over the past hundred years. As far as Sri Lankan Tamil is concerned, the majority of words have been borrowed from Sanskrit. Tamil and Sanskrit came onto contact through ethnic, cultural, and religious interaction in India. A large number of Sanskrit words are mingled with Tamil in literature authored by Indian writers and such literature has been used as texts in state schools and universities in Sri Lanka. That's how Sanskrit words entered into Sri Lankan Tamil.

Research Problem

In the last 26 years the vocabulary of Jaffna Tamil has increased a lot. A study by scientist Johnson O'Connor helped quantify a direct correlation between vocabulary and rank on corporate ladder. Unfortunately the scholars of Jaffna didn't pay much attention on the linguistic changes that occurred during the war from 1983 to 2009. During the aforesaid period, Jaffna Tamil was empowered with a lot of borrowings from English, Sinhala and some Indian Languages. Thus the research aims to assess the impact of borrowings on Jaffna Tamil from 1983 – 2009 and to document and preserve them.

Objectives of the Study

The aims and objectives of the study are

- How Jaffna Tamil changed during the war from 1983 to 2009.
- How people from Jaffna were isolated from the other parts of the country and how this reflected in Jaffna Tamil.
- How languages of the key players in administration affected Jaffna Tamil.

Methodology

Interviews were conducted with public, people employed in government and private sector and undergraduates from Arts, Science, Management, Agriculture and Medicine streams. Samples were also being collected from Media, pamphlets, notices, stories, poems and articles.

Key Findings

The Jaffna Tamil society in Sri Lanka underwent a war era, comprising more than 25 years, from 1983 to 2009. During this period a number of new English, Sinhala and Indian terminology came into contact with the domestic language, and thus the Tamil Language went through Language contact situations like code-switching, code-mixing, borrowing etc. During the aforesaid period the Jaffna Tamil Society came into contact with Sri Lankan Armed Forces speaking Sinhala Language and for shorter period, from 1986 – 1989, Indian Armed Forces speaking Hindi, Marati, Telugu and Zeic languages. These army personnel used English terminology for the tools they used and for the processes coupled with war. The life style of the people

was mostly determined by war situation such as shelling, bombing, seeking shelter in bunkers, different types of weapons at different phases, checking, round-up, identifications, abductions, arrests etc. All the terminology related to the aforesaid environment, through language contact situations, are borrowed in Jaffna Tamil.

Loan words in Sri Lankan Tamil, on the other hand, are mostly found due to the contact between colonial powers and the native population. Languages such as Tamil with centuries of literature and multi-cultural contact offer the chance to compare the various processes of lexical change. The words of foreign origin or loanwords illustrate the processes such as calques, loanwords, the distinction between function words and content words.

Contact with the army personnel speaking distinct languages at different periods increased the vocabulary of Jaffna Tamil.

For instance,

Hindi	naan (a kind of bread) [pu:ri] (a kind of rotti from Indian languages)
Malayalam	Chappathi (rotti)
Sanskrit	Bhavam (real focus)
Sinhala	Wattalappan
English	Helicopter Shell Bunker

Thus, Jaffna society, after 26 years of war, had witnessed many types of language contact situations with armed forces. This reflected in their linguistic caliber, with the mixture of English, Sinhala and Indian terms, most of them are borrowed from west with the war utensils.

All these borrowed terms undergo the language borrowing process.

Language Borrowing Processes

Language borrowing has been an interest to various fields of linguistics for some time. (Whitney 1875; DeSaussure, 1915; Sapir, 1921; Pedersen, 1931; Haugen, 1950; Lehmann, 1962; Hockett, 1979; Anttila, 1989 & Hockett, 1958) has organized the options as follows.

a) Loanword

The loan forms now function in the usual grammatical processes, with nouns taking plural and/or possessive forms of the new language and with verbs and adjectives receiving native morphemes as well.

- Eg. [pu:ri] a kind of rotti from Indian languages
- [tɛmbili] king coconut from Sinhala
 - [roketlo:ɳčə] rocket launcher from English

For instance,

- [čappa:t̪ti] - singular
- [čappa:t̪tiya!] - Plural
- [čappa:t̪ti] - Nominal
- [čappa:t̪tiyɛ] - Ablative
- [čappa:t̪tiyilɛ] - Accusative

The borrowed term [čappa:t̪ti] 'a kind of bread' assimilates Tamil suffixes.

b) Loan-Shift

Another process that occurs is that of adapting native words to the new meanings.

For instance, in Jaffna Tamil

- [tumbi] - in old Jaffna Tamil it refers to dragonfly but during war time it meant helicopter.
- [čattappayi] - in Old Jaffna Tamil it means legally or lawful but in modern Tamil it means efficient and graceful

c) Loan-Translation

A Loan-translation or Calque occurs when the native language uses an item-for-item native version of the original.

For instance,

▪ [oṭṭaxam]	Welding workshop
[oṭṭi]	Join
[axam]	Place

Originally in Tamil [oṭṭaxam] means camel.

d) Loan-Blend

A Loan-blend is a form in which one element is a loanword and the other is a native element.

For instance,

▪ [ɛmbulens vaṇḍi]	Ambulance Vehicle
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Ambulance is from English and [vaṇḍi] vehicle is from Tamil

Conclusion

It is quite certain that Jaffna Tamil is influenced by War related terminology. This flexibility is a positive sign of development of the language. It can be positively used by language teachers especially teachers of English for their teaching.

Keywords: Borrowing; Jaffna Tamil; Languages; War Terminology

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