



Linguistic Empowerment: A need of hour for the Tribal Diasporas living in Tamil Nadu

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Citation: Dr. M. Sivashanmugam, (2024). Linguistic Empowerment: A need of hour for the Tribal Diasporas living in Tamil Nadu, *Educational Administration: Theory and Practice*, 30(9) 1238-1244
Doi: 10.53555/kuey.v30i9.10901

Introduction

The tribal diasporas of Tamil Nadu, comprising diverse linguistic and cultural communities, have long been marginalized and excluded from mainstream development processes. Despite their rich cultural heritage and unique linguistic identities, the tribal communities, when come to plain areas where mainstream Tamil people live in, these people experience significant challenges in coping with linguistic abilities of hostland and also face challenges in preserving their indigenous language and culture and also experience challenges in accessing opportunities for social, economic and linguistic empowerment, which involves promoting and supporting the use of indigenous languages in various domains of life. This has emerged as a critical strategy for addressing these challenges. This paper thus tries to explore the concept of linguistic empowerment in the context of tribal diasporas whose homeland is the Nilgiris district, and whose host land is Tamil Nadu, examining their linguistic challenges being experienced in hostland. It also tries to understand the potential possibilities of making linguistic empowerment to be done for the tribal diasporas living in Tamil Nadu. By highlighting the importance of linguistic empowerment for tribal diasporas, this paper aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the complex relationship among language, culture and development and to frame policies and programmes that promote the rights and well being of these marginalized communities.

Diaspora

The term diaspora signifies a population distributed across totally new regions separate from its home or native geographic location or its homeland or its place of origin. It encompasses different groups, including ethnic, national or cultural communities that somehow maintain their relationship with their homeland and its linguistic and cultural heritage.

A classical explanation on diaspora is that a diaspora is characterized by traumatic dispersal, longing for and belonging to an ancestral home land, collective knowledge of ethnic identity, alienation from the host society and has a desire to return to lost ancestral places. It could also otherwise be defined that diaspora recognizes both forced and voluntary migration of population, highlighting transnational or even translocal connections and integration into host societies. It emphasizes the maintenance of ties with the homeland and co-ethnics elsewhere.

A socialist Rogers Brubaker defined the concept of diaspora may be voluntary or forced dispersion of a population. Diasporas will have orientation to homeland. That is, diasporas will have relationship with real or imagined homeland/ home culture/ native language as a source of value, identity and loyalty and Diasporas always work for maintenance of social boundary, thereby diasporas will maintain the distinctive diasporic identity differing from the host cultural heritage.

Michael J, (2001) defines diaspora as "a nation in exile", "a race in exile" and "a people in exile". However, one can define 'exile' and irrespective of how long it lasts or can last. Rubin Cohen (2002) unearthed six types of diasporas. They are,

1. Victim diasporas in it, people are forcibly exiled from homelands.
- 2) Labour diasporas, in it people for various reasons make movement from their native place in search of employment.
- 3) Imperial diasporas. Which happens in consequent of colonial expansion.
- 4) Trade diasporas, in it certain communities move from homeland to hostland for doing business.
5. Deterritorialized diasporas, in it people who live away from their homeland will lead their lives without a clear connection to a specific homeland. and
- 6) Cultural diasporas, in this people maintain shared cultural practices and identity at the hostland.

William Safran (1991) defined diasporas and enlists six characteristic features to distinguish diasporas from migrant communities, including maintaining a myth or collective memory of their homeland and regarding it as their true homeland. Vertovec (1995) also defines diasporas as a triadic relationship among homeland or

the place of origin of the diasporas, the diaspora group i.e., the community dispersed from the homeland and host country i.e., the country where the diasporas live in. These definitions illuminate the complexities and nuances of the concept of diaspora, reflecting perspectives of various academic disciplines.

Tribal diasporas in Tamil Nadu

Tamil Nadu is an abode of diverse population of tribal communities, with 36 scheduled tribes and six primitive tribal groups. These tribal communities are predominantly found to exist in the Western Ghats region in general and in the Nilgiris biosphere reserve in question. Tribal populations in Tamil Nadu are distributed across various districts of Tamil Nadu. The highest concentrations are found in the Nilgiris district, where in several primitive tribal groups viz., Toda, Kota, Kurumba, Irula, Paniya, Kattunayakka are found. Similarly in Dharmapuri, Thiruvannamalai, Villupuram, Vellore, Salem and Namakkal districts, a significant amount of tribal populations especially Malayali community which is one of the largest scheduled tribes in Tamil Nadu are found. Among those tribal communities, certain communities possess unique characteristic features in the aspects of language, culture and social activities. For example, Toda community is known for its peculiar cultural practices and they are popularly known for their skills in embroidery. Similarly, Kota people are skilled artisans and musicians. They are also known for their traditional craftsmanship and live in seven settlements in the Nilgiris district. Furthermore, Kurumba community is found in the southern and eastern regions of the Nilgiris. Different kinds of Kurumba viz, Betta kuruma, Halu kurumba, Jenu kurumba, etc., are also found in the Nilgiris. They are popularly known for their expertise in traditional medicine and honey collection. Other important group of tribes living in the Nilgiris is Irula. It is second largest tribal group in Tamil Nadu. Irula people are experts in conventional herbal therapy. They live both in hilly region of the Nilgiris and plain areas of the Tamil Nadu, especially in adjoining plain areas of the Nilgiri such a Coimbatore district. Paniyas are also important tribal people. They are predominantly found in Wayanad region and are known for their agricultural labor and traditional practices. One more notable tribal community of the Nilgiris is Kattunayakka. They are experts in honey collection. So, each tribal community is unique in many respects.

Socio – economic challenges faced by tribal diasporas

Tribal communities, in general, in Tamil Nadu, encounter different kinds of socio economic challenges in their day-to-day lives. Many tribal communities in Tamil Nadu struggle with poverty and limited access to basic amenities and requirements especially in health care, education, etc., Similarly, the process of deforestation effected in their livelihood as they had been depended on forest resources for their survival. Besides these, the influence of modernization and urbanization had led to cultural loss and assimilation among tribal communities.

Linguistic challenges

The dominance of regional language ‘Tamil’ in education, administration, and media had led to a decline in the use of indigenous tribal languages, threatening the cultural identity. It is overtly evidenced of late that the younger generations of the tribal communities are increasingly adopting Tamil as their primary language, ignoring their mother tongue. Moreover; there has been a social stigma with regard to their language. Tribal languages are often viewed as less prestigious compared to Tamil, which is associated with higher social status and modernity. This leads to reluctance to use tribal languages in public domains. Moreover, the social need of using indigenous language in public domain is very restricted. In the same fashion, the influence of modernization and urbanization has resulted in cultural loss and assimilation with popular among tribal communities. They also encounter limited access to quality education, leading to low literacy rate culture and they have no option of learning or getting education through their mother tongue. Besides this, because of linguistic hurdle, they get limited employment opportunities, health care facilities etc.,

Linguistic challenges faced by Tribal diasporas

There are some specific linguistic challenges being faced by the tribal communities in Tamil Nadu. It is a known fact that tribal languages are facing the threat of language shift due to increasing dominance of Tamil through various domains of language use such as education, media and other communication networks. Similarly, tribal languages are influenced by languages from neighboring states such as Kerala, Karnataka wherein different languages are spoken and the language contact situation of the state leads to cross – linguistic and cross – cultural influences. This in total affects the tribal language and tribal culture leading to acculturation or deculturation, or hybrid cultivation process, or melting pot cultural process, among the tribal population of the Nilgiris district. Therefore, these socio – economic and linguistic challenges have significant impacts over tribal communities which include marginalization, poverty and indebtedness, cultural erosion, at the end linguicide. It is to be stated that tribal communities are often marginalized and excluded from mainstream society, leading to limited access to resources and opportunities. Similarly, many tribal communities are trapped in poverty and indebtedness which can lead to exploitation and further marginalization. Besides this, the loss of traditional languages and cultural practices of tribal communities can lead to cultural erosion and loss of identity of the tribal communities. To address such challenges faced by the tribal population. efforts should be made to preserve and promote tribal languages by doing linguistic

documentation and through educational programmers. Access to education, healthcare etc for tribal communities, should be improved implementing targeted programmes and initiatives. Certain economic development programmers should be implemented to support tribal communities including initiatives to promote entrepreneurship and employment opportunities and enough efforts have to be made to preserve tribal culture, including documentation of traditional practices and customs besides language which is the storehouse of their knowledge and wisdom.

As said earlier, the dominance of regional language, Tamil in education, administration and media had led to a decline in the use of indigenous tribal languages, threading their cultural identity. Moreover, the Indian education system often prioritizes dominant languages, with tribal languages receiving little or no support. This limits the use of tribal languages in contemporary and dynamic social contexts. In the same fashion, tribal people migrate to urban areas for work and in turn they adopt the dominant language of the host places, leading to a decline in the use of their native language. The pressure to assimilate into mainstream society leads many tribal people to abandon their native language and cultural practices in favor of more widely spoken languages and modern ways of life. To avoid this sorry state of affairs, tribal languages and cultural practices have to be documented and preserved. Education should be provided to tribal children through tribal languages. Efforts have to be taken to preserve tribal's language and culture, by engaging the tribal communities themselves.

Empowerment

It is worth mentioning that empowerment is a multifaceted term that signifies the process of gaining power, control over, and confidence to make informed decisions and take actions that improve one's life and surroundings. It involves enhancing the ability of individuals or groups to participate fully in society and to influence the decisions that affect their lives.

Batliwala (1994) explains that empowerment is "the process of challenging existing power returns and gaining greater control over the sources of power". Similarly, Kabeer (1999) says that empowerment is "the expansion in people's ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them". Rowlands (1997) defines that empowerment involves "a process of change that enables individuals or groups to make choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes".

Zimmerman (1995) says that "Empowerment is a process where people gain control over their lives, democratic participation in their community and a critical understanding of their socio – economic, political environments". All these definitions imply a fact that empowerment is a process of enhancing powers and strength and ability to individuals or group of individuals or society as to equip everyone to fit in perfectly at the social environment for leading their lives effectively and efficiently. So, empowerment involves challenging, changing and existing power dynamics, enabling individuals, and at large groups to gain greater control over their lives and surroundings. The process of empowerment enhances the ability of individuals to make informed decisions and take actions that improve their lives. Empowerment also promotes the participation and inclusion in decision – making processes enabling individuals to influence the decisions that affect their lives

Kinds of Empowerment

Empowerment is crucial for promoting social justice, equality and human rights. It equips individual to take control of their lives, make informed decisions, participate fully in society. Furthermore, empowerment can lead to positive outcomes, such as improved health, education, and socio – economic well-being, as well as increased participation and inclusion in decision making processes. There are different kinds of empowerment such as 1. Economic empowerment, which involves gaining control over economic resources and opportunities, enabling individuals to improve their economic well-being. 2. Social empowerment which includes gaining recognition, respect and inclusion in social structures and institutions enabling individuals to participate fully in society. 3. Political empowerment, which refers to aspects of power – gaining and influence in political processes and decision – making, enabling individuals to shape policies and laws that adept their lives. And 4. Linguistic empowerment is a process of gaining linguistic skills needed at the context at which the individual lives.

Linguistic Empowerment

Linguistic empowerment refers to the process of promoting and supporting the use of minority or marginalized languages, enabling speakers to maintain their linguistic identity and participate fully in the society. It involves recognizing and valuing linguistic diversity, promoting language rights and proceeding opportunities for language development and use, Skutnabb – kangas (2000) opines that linguistic empowerment involves recognizing and promoting language rights, enabling speakers to use their language in various contexts, including education, government and media. Hinton and Hale (2001) say that linguistic empowerment involves efforts to revitalize and promote endangered languages, enabling speakers to maintain their linguistic identity and cultural heritage. Cummins (2000) says that linguistic empowerment involves providing opportunities for language education and development, enabling speakers to acquire literacy and proficiency in their language. So, linguistic empowerment happens for recognizing and valuing linguistic diversity, promoting language rights, providing opportunities for language development and use,

for providing opportunities for language education and development for enabling speakers to acquire literacy skills and proficiency in their language and for promoting the use of minority / minor / marginalized languages in various contexts including education, government, media etc.,

Thus, linguistic empowerment is essential for promoting linguistic diversity, cultural identity and social inclusion. Linguistic empowerment enables the speakers of minority language to maintain their linguistic identity, participate fully in society and access opportunities for education, employment and social mobility. There are some scholars who are popularly known for the study of linguistic empowerment. They are known in the field for their most acclaimed research works. Namely, Tove Skutnabb kangas (2001) work entitled "Language rights and Linguistic human rights" Jim cummins (2000) work "Language revitalization and documentation. So, in total, through linguistic empowerment, the speakers of minor / minority / marginalized languages can be empowered to employ their language fully in the society, besides preserving the linguistic and cultural diversity and promoting their linguistic and cultural heritage ensuring social justice and equality. Linguistic empowerment can significantly enhance the lives of tribal diasporas in Tamil Nadu by promoting their linguistic identity, cultural heritage and social inclusion. These are some ways linguistic empowerment can benefit tribal communities.

Generally linguistic empowerment helps preserve the languages and dialects of tribal communities, enabling them to maintain their cultural identity and pass it down of future generations. Linguistic empowerment enables the tribal communities to express their cultural values, tradition and practices. It also promotes education in tribal languages, which can improve learning outcomes, increase access to education and enhance academic achievement. It provides new opportunities in education, employment and social mobility. It recognizes and respects for tribal languages enabling communities to feel more included and valued in the society. Linguistic empowerment enables communities to participate more effectively in decision, making processes that affect their lives. Linguistic empowerment enables the tribal communities to take control of their languages and cultural development and can also enhances the confidence and self – esteem of community members. So, by making linguistic empowerment to tribal diasporas one can promote their cultural and linguistic heritage and identity social inclusion and above all overall well – being of them.

Linguistic minorities and diasporas in Tamil Nadu

Tamil Nadu is a hub of diverse range of linguistic minoritise. Certain major language speakers live here in Tamil Nadu. Some linguistic minorities and some minor language speakers live here as minorities as well. They are designated as linguistic minorities in an umbrella term. For example, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam language speakers live here as permanent residents in Tamil Nadu. Similarly, certain speakers of Aryan linguistic family, such as Saurashtra, Marathi, Hindi, Urdu also live in Tamil Nadu as minority linguistic communities. In the same line, certain tribal communities which have been traditionally in isolated pockets of Tamil Nadu.

such as Western Ghats, Palani hills, eastern Ghats and in certain plain areas of Tamil Nadu, live as linguistic minorities in plain areas of Tamil Nadu. Significant population among them are Irula, Toda, Kota, Kurumba, Paniya, Kattunayakka, Vettuvakavandar etc., These linguistic minorities have been here in Tamil Nadu, advocating for their rights, including the rights to learn their language (mother tongue) and participate in the state's linguistic and cultural landscape. The state and central government have also been taking serious steps to support these communities, such as documenting and preserving their language. Besides these, many academic researchers have also been carried out in different denominations to study their languages with an intention to write grammars for those languages, and to introduce writing systems to some of the languages which have more speakers. Some researchers have also been carried out their linguistic issues. But it is observed through critical review of early works that no senior research has been carried out to understand the linguistic challenges being experienced by the tribal population while migrated to plain areas of Tamil Nadu, for various socio – economic reasons and on the aspects of empowering them (such tribal diasporas) linguistically, so as to quip them to be socially conditioned meeting all the linguistic tasks to be faced in performing their routines both in their private life and professional and social life. This is in fact an urgent need of the hour. This paper is one of the outcomes of the project carried out on this crucial issue of Tribal People.

It is needless to say that the tribal population had to move on to the plain areas of Tamil Nadu, and to be away from their homeland such as Nilgiris district, where a unique kind of linguistic situation prevails. The linguistic situation found to exist in host society i.e Tamil Nadu, especially in the urban regions of Tamil Nadu, such as Coimbatore, Chennai, Salem, Madurai etc, is totally different from their own homeland situation. For educational, or occupational, or business purposes, the tribal population had to permeant stay at Tamil Nadu. In order to survive in new situation, they have to acclimatize to language and culture of hostland. The social norms, projected by the host society became so odd to tribal diasporas. Therefore, they find a lot of discomfort in leading their lives in the hostland. The differences in cultural traits and linguistic traits between homeland and hostland are vast and they create trouble to them. Some of the important linguistic and cultural differences which have been unearthed through field study are given below.

Cultural and linguistic differences

It is a known fact that Tamil is widely spoken language in Tamil Nadu. Tamil is used in all four skills of language viz., Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing. This is used as lingua – franca among tribes of Tamil Nadu and mainstream society. But, tribal languages like Toda, Kota, Irula, Kurumba, Paniya and Kattunayakaa etc., are unique languages spoken by individual tribes, which are distinct from Tamil and reflect their cultural identities. Tamil society in general engages in various occupations including agriculture, business and industry. But tribal community rely heavily on forest – based agro – economy, agriculture manual labour, while some tribes, specializing in traditional occupation, like hunting, gathering of forest products and also in certain craftsmanship.

Furthermore, mainstream Tamil society follows traditional social structure and family structure, especially caste – system and social hierarchies. But tribal communities have their own distinct social structures, often based on kinship ties and community relationships with a strong emphasis on equality and sharing.

With regard to culture, Tamil society is endowed with rich cultural heritage, with strong emphasis on festivals, temples and classical arts. At the same frame, tribal population have unique cultural practices, such as the Toda's traditional buffalo herding and dairy forming, The Irula's snake – catching skills and the Kurumba's mystical tradition and black magic.

Tamil society has high literacy rate and they have access to modern education. But tribal communities historically have faced challenges in accessing education, although efforts are being made to improve literacy rates and provide educational opportunities of tribal communities.

It is a known fact that while Tamil culture appreciate nature, tribal cultures have a deeper connection to the land and natural resources which are integral to their ways of life. Tribals often rely on forests and natural resources for their livelihood and their cultural practices often reflect a strong spiritual connection to nature.

Linguistic differences between Tamil and Tamil Nadu Tribes: At a glance

The linguistic different between Tamil language and the languages of Tribal communities living in Tamil Nadu are vast and significant, reflecting the unique cultural and historical contexts of each language and each tribal community.

Tamil, being a Dravidian language, with a long history and rich literary tradition, is spoken by majority of the population in Tamil Nadu, and used in all domains of language use including core and peripheral domains, with a wide range of linguistic fitness to designate various semantic nuances. But, Tribal languages, in general although they also belong to Dravidian linguistic family, each language in particular is used by limited number of speakers with distinct differences in phonology, Morphology, Syntax, Vocabulary and Semantics. For example, Irula language spoken in western Ghats, with archaic features and a unique vocabulary. Toda, which is also spoken in the Nilgiris, has a complex system of vowel harmony and tone.

With regard to phonological system of language, Tamil has a distinct set of retroflex consonants and lacks voiced and aspirated stops. But tribal languages have unique phonological features such as the Toda language is known for its complex vowel harmony system.

The script or writing system being used by Tamil language has been evolved from the Brahmi script. But, Tribal languages of Tamil Nadu, often do not have a writing system but in certain restricted contexts, the tribal languages avail Tamil scripts for documentation – (Being a bilingual tribe who know their mother tongue and regional and dominant language Tamil).

In this line, Tamil has a rich literary tradition and vocabularies are influenced by Sanskrit, English and other languages. But tribal languages have very different vocabularies which reflect their cultural and environmental contexts with limited grammatical structures that differ from Tamil.

In the sociolinguistic context also, Tamil and tribal languages of Tamil Nadu, differ. Being a dominant language, Tamil in Tamil Nadu is used education, administration and media. But Tribal languages often marginalized, with limited institutional support and a risk of language shift due to urbanization and modernization.

Language use situation differences

The language use situation in Tamil Nadu is characterized by a dominant Tamil language and a rich linguistic diversity among tribal communities. There are some key differences between these two linguistic social situations. As Tamil is considered as official and dominant language in Tamil Nadu, it dominates various aspects of life, including education education, administration, media and daily communication activities. It is spoken by the majority of the population and serves as a lingua – franca among different communities residing in Tamil Nadu. Tribal languages such as Irula, Toda, Kota, Kurumba and are primarily used in spoken mode especially for domestic and cultural purposes. However, of late, their use is declining, especially among younger generations, due to increasing dominance of Tamil and English.

Tamil has a rich literary tradition and is well – documented with a strong presence in education, media and administration domains. But tribal languages in Tamil Nadu are facing challenges in preservation and documentation. All the tribal languages are not written. Efforts are being seriously taken to document and preserve them.

Tamil has gained charm and is associated with higher social status, and modernity, which can lead to a preference for Tamil over tribal languages. In most cases, tribal languages are stigmatized, and speakers may feel compelled to adopt Tamil for better opportunities and integration into mainstream society.

In the language contact situation, also, there has been a lot of differences between Tamil and other tribal languages. In is a known fact that Tamil has been influenced by other languages such as Sanskrit, English and other neighbouring languages like, Kannada, Telugu, Malayalam. Similarly, tribal languages of Tamil Nadu also have been influenced by Tamil and other neighbouring languages leading to language contact situation and linguistic exchange. Although Tamil is not considered as an endangered language, with a strong presence in various aspects of life, it accounts threat from other dominant language like English. But tribal languages are often facing language shift and are considered endangered. Efforts are in fact needed to preserve them.

Linguistic challenges faced by Tribal diaspores

Tribal people somehow, for various reasons have to mingle with mainstream Tamil people and to lead their lives in Tamil social situation. While being in Tamil society, the tribal diasporas experience a number of bottlenecks especially related to linguistic behaviour. Certain salient hurdles they face are given below.

Tribal diaspores, living in Tamil Nadu, encounter significant linguistic challenges that impact their cultural identity and social integration. These challenges can be categorized into several areas.

Tribal languages rapidly being replaced by Tamil, especially among younger generation. This shift is driven by factors like urbanization, Modernization and Media.

Tribal communities are often pressed to assimilate into mainstream Tamil culture, leading to a decline in their linguistic and cultural heritage. Such assimilation can result in a loss of traditional practices, customs, and language, ultimately eroding the community identity.

The lack of institutional support for tribal languages, such as education and media in mother tongues of tribes, exacerbates language shift and loss. Scholars in tribal areas, typically use Tamil as the medium of instruction, and lingua – Franca further diminishing the use tribal languages.

At this context, a global context examples have to be stated to understand the seriousness of this issue. A Study on Tamil diaspora in Indonesia found significant generational difference in attitudes towards Tamil language maintenance. While 85% of parents viewed Tamil as crucial for cultural preservation, only 50% of children shared this sentiment. Similarly, research on Srilankan Tamil diaspora communities in the UK highlights the complexities of language maintenance and the impact of onward migration on heritage language use. These two examples signify a fact that, if the diaspora community is not empowered linguistically, there will be great threat to the community to survive.

The tribal diasporas living in Tamil Nadu encounter several linguistic issues when interacting with mainstream Tamil speaking people.

The tribal people, if they do not know Tamil, may not understand Tamil and its sociolects, dialects, idiolect etc., which will lead to communication difficulties. This situation compelle the Tribal diasporas to learn Tamil by any hook or crook. Moreover, even when the tribal diasporas are fluent in Tamil, they struggle to communicate effectively. Particularly in the formal settings or when interacting with government officials or health care providers or educators. Limited proficiency in Tamil could hinder access to essential services, education and employment opportunities.

Because Tamil is a unique language, obtaining competence over the nuances of Tamil, it's dialectal, societal variations, sociolinguistic subtleties, and its diglossic nature. Even if the tribal individuals speak Tamil, their dialect may differ from the standard Tamil spoken in other parts of Tamil Nadu. Dialectal differences could lead to misunderstandings or difficulties in communication, particularly if the diasporic individual's dialect is not widely understood.

Tribal people's languages have unique vocabularies and terminologies, their world view, perspectives manifested in their language, their communication strategies, the ethnolinguistic elements attested in their languages would not be the same as in the Tamil language. So, it would be danger to communicate, if diasporas employ negative transfer strategy in their communication processes while interacting in Tamil language. While they employ words in their traditional practices, culture and environment, they avail unique, words. But when interacting with Tamil speakers, those tribal diaspora people may need to adopt to new vocabulary and terminology, which could be really a challenging task for tribal diasporas.

In some cases, tribal diasporas may engage in code – switching, i.e switching between their native language and Tamil to facilitate communication. Of course code – switching can be an effective mechanism, but it may also lead to linguistic and cultural nuances being lost in translation.

Tribal diaspora often avail their language for oracy skills alone. But literacy skills are in fact new to them. In such cases, they have to take special effort to rightly use the literacy skills of Tamil which involves a number of intricacies. While using Tamil in written mode, the tribal people who as diasporas in Tamil land, ought to acquire, mechanism of writing Tami, ethnography of Tamil writing and pragmatics of Tamil writing. Mastering such issues needs enough practice and efforts. Then only they can steer the Tamil effectively in written mode.

Apart from this, the diglossic nature of Tamil will give a lot of hurdles to the neo – users of Tamil as diaspora. One has to suppress the oral or spoken mode oriented linguistic entities of Tamil, while Tamil is used in written mode. Apart from learning written mode oriented nuances written Tamil oriented characteristics have also to be acquired by the diasporas. So, that they could effectively handle the Tamil in written mode.

The tribal diaspora people have to obtain sociolinguistic competence in Tamil language, which is often obtained by Tamil speakers, through linguistic socialization process. It cannot be obtained in a day. So, it needs ample time and exposure. Furthermore, tribal diaspora people have to obtain dialectal and sociolectal properties of Tamil language for steering it effectively in various environments.

The differences between their mother tongues and Tamil language, at phonological, morphological, lexical, syntactical, morphophonemic, morphosyntactic, semantic, discourse and pragmatic levels of language, and also at spoken mode and written mode, have to be properly understood by the tribal diasporas, before involving in linguistic behaviour with Tamil speaking individuals.

So, learning the culture of writing i.e. ethnography of writing pragmatics of writing and ethnography of writing of Tamil is imperative for tribal diasporas. Then only, they can employ culture specific vocabulary in Tamil language properly.

Linguistic Empowerment initiatives proposed for Tribal diasporas living to Tamil Nadu

To equip tribal diasporas who have migrated to Tamil Nadu for various reasons, and with different linguistic background, the following kinds of linguistic empowerment initiatives can be done.

- ❖ It is the need of hour to develop Tamil language training programme tailored to the needs of tribal communities.
- ❖ In order to improve the linguistic competence in Tamil language, ample language classes, remedial / corrective measures related to Tamil workshops, and language exchange programmes can be conducted.
- ❖ Tamil language support service centres, that can offer translation between Tribal's mother tongue and Tamil language, interpretation, and other language assistance services can be established at select places of Tamil Nadu.
- ❖ Efforts have to be taken to develop multilingual resources including educational materials, health information, Government services availing the services of linguists.
- ❖ Community – based language initiatives exclusively for tribal diasporas can be undertaken for encouraging the use of their mother tongue as well as Tamil language.
- ❖ Digital literacy and online resources can be explored for language training to online resources in Tamil.
- ❖ Enough online language learning platforms, language resources and mobile apps to support language learning and access to information can be created.
- ❖ Cultural orientation programmes that introduce tribal communities to Tamil culture and language, can be organized then and there.
- ❖ In order to facilitate language exchange programme that bring together tribal communities and Tamil speakers to promote language learning and cultural exchange facility can be established.

Conclusion

This research paper highlights the critical need for linguistic empowerment among tribal diasporas living in Tamil Nadu. By promoting and supporting the use of indigenous languages, linguistic empowerment initiatives can help preserve linguistic and cultural heritage. At the same time, empowering the tribal diasporas living in Tamil Nadu in Tamil along with their mother tongue, will improve access to education, healthcare and employment opportunity and in turn enhance the socio – economic background of tribal diasporas living in Tamil Nadu. This paper also helps for developing policies and programmes that support their linguistic rights, and ways and means of facing the linguistic challenges being faced at hostland. Ultimately, this kind of linguistic empowerment has the potential to contribute to the social, economic and cultural well – being of tribal communities and to promote more inclusive and equitable development in Tamil Nadu. By prioritizing linguistic empowerment, policy makers, educators and community leaders can help create an equitable society for tribal diasporas living in Tamil Nadu.

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