

Overview of Internal Linguistic Features of the Chinese Language in Sri Lanka

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Abstract

In focusing on language and society, various peculiarities of social language problems are encountered. Bilingualism, multilingualism, and monolingualism are among them. Even within the same language, many language forms are found. These include parimitha Languages, regional languages, verbal languages, propositional languages, etc. Among these, register languages show the nature of the language which is tied to the occasion of its use. There are many such registers and among them, the subject registers take prominence. The purpose of this study is to conduct a sociolinguistic analysis of registers, giving priority to the Chinese subject registers in Sri

Lanka. The study includes the qualitative research method. The points of the register language, the special characteristics of register languages, the linguistic way of usage registers in language communication, and the linguistic way used in the Chinese language in Sri Lanka are discussed in the data analysis. The study is conducted through the internal and external classification of the main register forms by examining the theoretical facts related to the topic.

Keywords: linguistics, registers, social discussions, sociolinguistics, subjective registers

Introduction

Sociolinguistics is the field of linguistics that studies the relationship between language and society. It examines how language varies and changes in different social contexts, and how social factors such as class, gender, ethnicity, and age influence language use. The study of language diversity is done in the field of sociolinguistics. Language is not a mechanical activity. Language is a project that binds society

together. Talking to each other facilitates social craft. Sometimes language is a way of expressing ideas. Sometimes it is used for "social conversations". Sometimes it is used to make work easier. In all these ways, the language serves to bring a pleasant life to the social residents and to facilitate their work.

"Every human being has a desire to live together, to live happily and to enjoy" (Silva, 1963, p. 2).

"The natural man resents the silence of the other. It is regarded as something that creates fear and suspicion. Every savage considers a foreigner as his enemy who cannot speak his language" (Silva, 1963, p. 2).

There is a link between language and society according to the above comments made by the anthropologist Malinowski on the subject of "social communications", the connection between language and society.

Literature review

K. N. O. Dharmadasa's book *Bilingualism* (1966) analytically describes sociolinguistics, as noted during

the examination of the literature related to this research. Although this book can be introduced as a very important source in the investigation of the theoretical issues related to the research, it should be noted that this research is moving in a new direction without being based only on those facts.

Dharmadasa's book, *Language and Society* (1996) presents theoretical points about the registers and forms of social language. However, there are no discussions in Chinese. Theoretical points are presented in describing internal language models. The fact that certain details are explained using examples in the Sinhala language facilitates the researcher to study theoretical matters in the mother tongue. In this research, it is hoped to focus only on the Chinese language forms used in Sri Lanka. J.B. Dissanayake's introduction to human languages (2005) Presents theoretical facts in a very simple way. The nature of human languages, applied form, history, new approaches, etc. is presented in a new way. However, this source is used for further study of registered

languages. This research is not only limited to the basic facts about register languages.

Local and foreign sources related to registers are abundant and there is a lack of sociolinguistic research conducted in Sri Lanka on the Chinese language. According to the sources used, *The Internal Linguistic Features of the Chinese Language in Sri Lanka*, this study is a new investigation utilizing both secondary and primary sources related to registers in sociolinguistics.

Research Problem

The research problem focuses on understanding the concept of "register language" within sociolinguistics, particularly in the context of the Chinese language in Sri Lanka. Specifically, it aims to explore the linguistic features, characteristics, and patterns of usage of registers in language communication.

Research Methodology

The study was done under the qualitative research method. According to the qualitative research method, primary and secondary data were collected. Written sources and the internet have been used to collect secondary data. Primary data were collected through discussion and direct observation.

Analytical methods, including research tools and measurements such as the examination of primary and secondary documents, observation of online and unwritten sources, discussions with scholars, expert opinions, and personal experiences with the Chinese language, are employed in studying the internal linguistic features of the Chinese language in Sri Lanka.

In this way, the data obtained is examined sequentially according to topics and sub-topics. Then, the data is coded, summarized, and classified, and used for research under the content analysis method. Accordingly, the research plan covers the sections of data collection, data analysis, interpretation, and reporting.

Theoretical Framework

This research is related to sociolinguistics. In the investigation of registers of sociolinguistics, the sociolinguist, Martin Montgomery asserts that three main aspects of language must be addressed. Field, meaning, and rule are those three things. His presentation is used as the theoretical framework for this research.

Discussion

Registers

Currently, every language society in the world has become multilingual. The creation of multicultural societies cannot be prevented. Another factor related to this is the widening of social registers. It is difficult to imagine the situation in a multilingual society when the formation of the language changes in different contexts.

i.“先生，你好！我已经买了一张星期二的火车票。要推迟到星期三，可以吗？不好意思，星期三的火车票已经卖完了。”

(xiānshēng, nǐ hǎo! wǒ yǐjīng mǎile yī zhāng xīngqí'èr de huǒchē piào. yào tuīchí dào xīngqísān, kěyǐ ma? Bù hǎoyìsi, xīngqísān de huǒchē piào yǐjīng mài wánliǎo.)

ii. “大家好，学生好，现在上课，今天我们就开始我们的今天课文。”

(dàjiā hǎo, xuéshēng hǎo, xiànzài shàngkè, jīntiān wǒmen jiù kāishǐ wǒmen de jīntiān kèwén.)

iii. “你要多喝热水，还要吃点儿药。你吃一点儿中药，下星期一再来。”

(nǐ yào duō hē rè shuǐ, hái yào chī diǎn er yào. nǐ chī yīdiǎn r zhōngyào, xià xīngqí yī zàilái.)

iv. “服务员，有菜单吗？我想要吃辣的炒饭，一个盘子。服务员，要付钱，多少钱？不要票。”

(fúwùyuán, yǒu càidān ma? wǒ xiǎng yào chī là de chǎofàn, yīgè pánzi. fúwùyuán, yào fù qián, duōshǎo qián? bù yào piào.)

Considering these statements' language features, grammar, and vocabulary, it is not difficult to indicate

which social function is related to each. The same person presents the same idea in the same language, but he uses different words and sentence forms on several occasions. Words and sentence forms which can be applied in one context cannot be applied in another context. Language is used in different ways for different purposes in society.

"Thus, the different language vowels associated with each function are called registers" (Dharmadasa, 1996, p. 72).

The speech of the speaker is influenced by his social class, religion, ethnicity, gender, age, etc. A language society can function as a combination of different groups as well as varieties of the same language. Even a word that comes out of our mouth can show the social group, social status, and social background to which we belong. Our brain is used indiscriminately when using the language. Accordingly, registers are related to various situations within the same language. It differs from sub-languages and regional languages.

Major Register Forms (Bilingualism)

"Two register forms of language are seen as colloquial and written." (Dharmadasa, 1996, p. 72). It is clear when looking at the religious registers.

拜佛 (bàifó)

比丘尼，您吃饭了吗？ 是的，吃饭了。

(bǐqiūní, nín chīfànle ma? shì de, chīfànle.)

圣诞节快乐！(shèngdàn jié kuàilè!)

你今天来清真寺了吗？(nǐ jīntiān lái qīngzhēnsī ma?)

你想要吃清真饭吗？(nǐ xiǎng yào chī qīngzhēn fàn ma?)

The distinction between written and spoken Chinese is very close. The difference between writing and speaking is very far in some languages. All linguistic units such as phonetics, morphemes, sentences, pragmatics, and semantics belong to that distinction. The written documents are further developed by literary scholars. The spoken language changes with time. There are many differences between the language of a young person and an old person.

Functional Distribution of Bilingualism (Lower Language and Upper Language)

"The presence of two language forms (complementary) for the activities of a one language society was first formally investigated by the linguist Chas. A. Ferguson. He created the name 'diglossia' for this. Currently tested languages are Arabic, Chinese, French Creole, Modern Greek, Tamil, Carnatic, and Sinhala" (Dharmadasa, 1996, p.80).

Ferguson pointed out that there are two types of functional distribution seen in written and spoken situations as low variety and high variety. In general, the grammar of the written form is widely used in the spoken Chinese language.

比丘尼，我们好久不见了，您的身体怎么样？好不好，我听说您昨天去长城了。

(bǐqiūní, wǒmen hǎojiǔ bùjiànle, nín de shēntǐ shénme yàng? hǎobù hǎo, wǒ tīng shuō nín zuótiān qù chángchéngle.)

The above-spoken passage can be applied to the written language as well. Very few grammatical

features unique to speech are expressed. Learning standard Chinese is sufficient to learn about the register of the Chinese language in Sri Lanka. Both lower-language and upper-language features have been used in the reconstruction of the standard Chinese language.

External Classification of Register Forms

"The speaker is using different language forms for register forms in different social activities" (Wimalananda (ed.), 2003, p.150).

Culture and society are interrelated concepts that influence individuals. Any language is influenced by the culture and society it belongs to. Such language forms are called registers. Especially, vocabulary and sentence patterns are changed. Registers are divided into three basic parts: religious, professional, and subjective.

Subjective Registers

Subjective registers are related to various subjects in a language. Religious registers and professional registers can also be applied to the subjective registers as they are related to a particular subject such as 软件 (ruǎnjiàn) - Software, 网络 (wǎngluò) - Network, 语言学 (yǔyán xué) - (Linguistics), 社会学 (shèhuì xué) - Sociology, 佛教(fójiào) - Buddhism, 基督徒 (jīdū tú) - Christian, 伊斯兰 (yīslán) - Islam, 印度教 (yìndùjiào) - Hinduism etc.

“先生，你好！我已经买了一张星期二的火车票。要推迟到星期三，可以吗？”

(xiānshēng, nǐ hǎo! wǒ yǐjīng mǎile yī zhāng xīngqí'èr de huǒchē piào. yào tuīchí dào xīngqísān, kěyǐ ma?)

“不好意思，星期三的火车票已经卖完了。”

(bù hǎoyìsi, xīngqísān de huǒchē piào yǐjīng mài wán le).

“星期四，可以吗？” (xīngqísì, kěyǐ ma?)

“可以” (kěyǐ)

“谢谢”(xièxiè)

“不客气”(bù kèqì)

"It is easy to identify the existing subjective register forms, for example, the language form of economics is different from the language form of geography, and both are different from the language form of literature" (Dharmadasa, 1996, p.75).

The Internal Form of Registers

According to sociolinguist Martin Montgomery, there are three factors to consider when examining the internal aspects of a language form. They are: field, meaning and rule.

"The idea of register form can be analyzed as the interrelationship of language is governed by the three basic points of its field, meaning and rule" (Wimalananda (ed.), 2003, p.152).

The Field

If it is possible to come to a preconception about a particular subject from the words produced based on

the vocabulary used in a particular subject, then the entire process that takes place in that case means the field in which the language is used.

"It is possible to have a specific idea about that process from the words expressed in a certain process, the entire process can be called "The field of language use" (Wimalananda (ed.), 2003, p.152).

Accordingly, to identify "The field of language use", attention should be paid to the vocabulary included in it.

那麼釋迦牟尼佛！各位人們，他家好！我們都喜欢一个幸福的生活，但是因為我们对幸福的原因还是不太清楚，所以得不到幸福，有人可能以為如果我们有钱的话，我们把世界上所有的幸福一定会得到的。(Amazing Light, 2021) (Nà mó shì jiā móu ní fó! Gè wèi rén men, tā jiā hǎo! Wǒ men dōu xǐ huān yí gè xìng fú de shēng huó, dàn shì yīn wèi wǒ men duì xìng fú de yuán yīn hái shì bù tài qīng chǔ, suǒ yǐ dé bù dào xìng fú, yǒu rén kě néng yǐ wéi rú guǒ wǒ men yǒu qián de huà, wǒ men bǎ shì jiè shàng suǒ yǒu de xìng fú yī dìng huì dé dào de.) 其实，在这个世界上有很多有钱的人

。还没找到真正的幸福，所以我们能理解钱不能给我们带来，全部的幸福，钱只是为了幸福一个条件而已。(Amazing Light, 2021) (qíshí, zài zhège shìjiè shàng yǒu hěnduō yǒu qián de rén. Hái méi zhǎodào zhēnzhèng de xìngfú, suǒyǐ wǒmen néng lǐjiě qián bùnéng gěi wǒmen dài lái, quánbù de xìngfú, qián zhǐshì wèile xìngfú yīgè tiáojiàn éryǐ.)

A preconceived conclusion about the occasion can be reached from the words 释迦牟尼佛 (shì jiā móu ní fó), 那麼 (Nà mó), 幸福的原因 (xìngfú de yuányīn) used in the above-mentioned situation. The area where the language is used here can be assumed to be a sermon. But in some occasions, it is impossible to infer an event considering the language used. The word 'field' can be used to indicate something contained in an utterance, or to imply an external activity. Vocabulary is very important for the specificity of the language used in a certain field.

Vocabulary in a Register Field

"It can be said that we all have thousands of vocabularies stored in our minds. But we use few words in conversation. It is reasonable to call the number of words that we can identify as active vocabulary and the number of words that we can not identify as deactive vocabulary. We learn new words throughout our lives and add those words to our brain's lexicon" (Karunathilake, 2000, p.549).

When a subject enters into the field of study, special new terms are added. Register forms of social language are created by combining trends of religious, political natural so on. The reasons for the changes in the language we speak are not only related to the class we belong to and the status we hold but also to the situations we encounter. The specific field associations of those registers will have specialized vocabularies. Various forms of registers can be found even within the same register.

Vocabulary of Religion

Religious vocabulary has many words like 佛教 (fójiào), 佛塔 (fótǎ), 佛法 (fǎfǎ), 释迦牟尼 (shìjiā móunífó), 佛 (fó), 和尚 (héshàng), 比丘尼 (bǐqiūní), 原三宝保护(yuánsānbǎobǎohù), 阿弥陀佛(ēmituófó), 药师佛(yàoshīfó), 念经 (niànjīng) etc. These are created related to the religious field. Some words can only be understood by people in that field. Words like 念经 (niànjīng) are unique words belonging to the same register. It is difficult for a common person to identify those ideas and concepts. Larger vocabulary leads to the emergence of new fields.

"These specialized vocabularies are created by utilizing the existing vocabulary of various fields. Examples are the vocabularies that have emerged in the field of clothing or the field of modern fashion" (Karunathilake, 2000, p. 154).

The Meaning

"The concept of meaning makes it clear that the choice of language terms is influenced not only by the subject matter or topic of communication but also by the social relations between people" (Karunathilake, 2000, p. 154).

When examining how social relations are expressed in language, it is evident that meaning drives the choice of language terms.

师傅，可以进来吗？(shīfu, kěyǐ jìnlái ma?)

我们法师，我来到看见您。(wǒmen fǎshī,
wǒ lái dào kànjiàn nín.)

僧人，那是不好。(sēngrén, nà shì bùhǎo.)

傅，不好意思。(shīfu, bùhǎoyìsi)

All utterances show subtle differences. The reasons for those differences are the social relations. Some utterances are kind and some utterances are cruel. This shows the diversity of social relations. The Meanings such as Civility, vulgarity, rituals, respectability, etc. appear in language due to social relations. Accordingly, it appears that special attention is paid to

meaning in the selection of language terms in societies that use the Chinese language.

The General Meaning

你来。(nǐ lái.)

你叫什么名字? (nǐ jiào shénme míngzì?)

你很漂亮。(nǐ hěn piàoliang.)

我叫情风。(wǒ jiào qíng fēng.)

我们走吧。(wǒmen zǒu ba.)

It is easy to identify the usages that are not used in the low variety of the Chinese language that are used in the High variety of the Chinese language.

Respectability

您来(nín lái)

您贵姓? (nín guìxìng?)

Modesty

免贵姓.....(miǎn guìxìng)

哪里哪里。(nǎlǐ nǎlǐ)

Civility

“请问，您贵姓? (qǐngwèn, nín guìxìng?)

“可以进来吗?” (kěyǐ jìnlái ma?)

“可以。” (kěyǐ.)

“可以啊……” (kěyǐ a……) “请进，请坐”

(qǐng jìn, qǐng zuò)

It is a Chinese custom to use this phrase before seeking attention, permission, or correcting a mistake. They often use, the honorific 您 (nín) instead of 你(nǐ) and the honorific 谁(shuí) instead of 谁(shéi). In addition to these, for respectable and special people, instead of the term 你(nǐ), They use words of address such as 老师(lǎoshī), 法师(fǎshī), 比丘尼(bǐqiūní), 老人(lǎorén), 老板(lǎobǎn), 师傅(shīfù), 僧人(sēngrén) etc. All those words are meaningful words based on social relations. It is seen that in the creation of those meaningful words, radicals that bring meanings such as 老(lǎo), 师(shī), 心(xīn) are included.

The civility in interpersonal relations greatly affects the time use of language. A politeness is attributed to

the expression of a request to be fulfilled. Care should be taken not to use rough language forms.

"It is known that the concept of 'Meaning' is included in the personal pronouns chosen on the basis of social relations" (Wimalananda (ed.), 2003, p.158).

Singular	Plural
您(nín)	您们(nínmen)

In many languages, second-person pronouns show features of feelings of social relationships. The Chinese language uses the word 您(nín), ascribing respectability and incorporating the meaning concept in personal pronouns, based on social relations. This is the imposition of the high variety on the low variety. In general social usage, when there is no specific personal word to address someone, the common pronoun 你(nǐ) is used.

It is difficult to say what kind of relationship exists among people who are engaged in conversation with the word 你(nǐ). These can be used when there is doubt about which form of address to use for someone.

Words such as 您(nín) are intended to highlight or affirm social connection.

法师(fǎshī) : 你好大卫! (nǐ hào dà wèi!)

大卫(dà wèi): 法师您好! (fǎshī nín hǎo!)

“可以进来吗?”(kěyǐ jìnlái ma?)

法师(fǎshī) : “可以。”(kěyǐ.)

“请进, 请坐”(qǐng jìn, qǐng zuò)

大卫(dà wèi): 法师, 我们大学的学生们在寺庙希望举行一个文化节, 也希望您的帮助。(fǎshī, wǒmen dàxué de xuéshēngmen zài sìmiào xīwàng jǔxíng yíge wénhuà jié, yě xīwàng nín de bāngzhù.)

法师(fǎshī) : 好的, 准备好, 通知我你们想要什么都。(hǎo de, zhǔnbèi hǎo, tōngzhī wǒ nǐmen xiǎng yào shénme dōu.)

大卫(dà wèi) : 好的。(hǎo de)

The monk uses the word 你(nǐ) to address the student. The student addresses the monk using the words 法师(fǎshī) and 您(nín). Here, respect for each other is expressed through language. The language of the

above discussion expresses a special kind of functional relationship between two people.

The Rule

In the use of language, attention should be paid to the rules used to communicate ideas, as well as to the content and the social relations of registered languages. The rules used in communicating ideas vary according to the culture and historical background.

"There is evidence that drumming and spreading fumes were used as well as inscriptions to communicate ideas at previous times. These rules differ mainly in writing and speaking in our own culture. There is no hard learning of any rules. But, certain rules must be considered while mastering the written language. The writing language should be learned with guidance and effort. Spoken is a common human endowment for anyone. But, writing viability must be achieved with effort" (Wimalananda (ed.), 2003, p.160).

There are certain common features and rules found in speech. This fact can be said to be reasonable for any registered language.

Ending of Utterance

“请坐吧，你叫马大为，是不是？” (qǐng zuò ba, nǐ jiào mǎ dà wéi, shì bùshì?)

比丘尼，您吃饭了吗？ (bǐqiūní, nín chīfànle ma?)

是的，吃饭了。 (shì de, chīfànle.)

Each utterance has a stop. This is a general rule of usage in the language. There is less attention on the top of utterance as spoken happens naturally.

Filling the Gaps in the Sentences

a.....法师，您吃了没有？ — (a.....fǎshī, nín chīle méiyǒu?)

m.....您去外面呢？ — (M.....nín qù wàimiàn ne?)

Hm.....法师，我们想要带去什么？
(hm.....Fǎshī, wǒmen xiǎng yào dài qù shénme?)

Words like mm, aa, hmm, and a are used to fill the gaps between sentences. Such terms often come into use due to increased concern. It is the nature of natural speech.

Repeat Responses

Repeat responses are defined as words used in response to a statement. Repeat responses such as 真的吗 (zhēn de ma?), 好的 (hǎo de), 对的 (duì de), 是的 (shì de), 好好好 (hǎohǎo hǎo), 真倒霉 (zhēn dǎoméi) are often used in the Chinese register languages.

师傅，我们明天回家。(shīfu, wǒmen míngtiān huí jiā.)

真的吗？(zhēn de ma?)

下个月我们回来这儿。(xià gè yuè wǒmen huílái zhèr.)

好的。(hǎo de.)

Cohesive Devices

这是对真实的看法，一个简单的解释，那么这里有两个方面，一个是好的，一个是不好的，那么这个好的方面是什么呢，那是我们在生活中经历的幸苦快乐，那么它的原因是什么呢。(Zhè shì duì zhēnshí de kànfǎ, yīgè jiǎndān de jiěshì, nàme zhè li yǒu liǎng gè fāngmiàn, yīgè shì hǎo de, yīgè shì bù hǎo de, nàme zhège hǎo de fāngmiàn shì shénme ne, nà shì wǒmen zài shēnghuó zhōng jīnglì de xìng kǔ kuàilè, nàme tā de yuányīn shì shénme ne.)

这个好像在田中播下种子一样如果我们播下芒果的种子的话，我们会得到甜甜的芒果。不过我们播下橘子的种子的话，我们会得到酸酸的橘子，你们知道呢？对不对？(Zhège hǎoxiàng zài tiánzhōng bō xià zhǒngzǐ yīyàng rúguǒ wǒmen bō xià mángguǒ de zhǒngzǐ dehuà, wǒmen huì dédào tián tián de mángguǒ. Bùguò wǒmen bō xià júzi de zhǒngzǐ dehuà, wǒmen huì dédào suān suān de júzi, nǐmen zhīdào ne? duì bùduì?)

Cohesive devices such as 你们知道呢? (nǐmen zhīdào ne?), 对不对? (duì bùduì?), 那么 (name), 好像 (hǎoxiang), 那样(nà yàng)" 这样 (zhè yàng)" 所以 (suǒyǐ) are often used to confirm something to others in Chinese register languages. Cohesive devices can be identified as a language rule commonly used in Chinese registers languages in Sri Lanka.

Repeat

Certain words are repeated in speech. Such cases can be reached in any register language in the Chinese language. 我想了和他谈谈我对于这个问题的看法。我们差不多有十年没见了。我真的想了和他谈谈我对于这个问题的看法。时间过去了，那很倒霉。(wǒ xiǎngle hé tā tán tán wǒ duìyú zhège wèntí de kànfǎ. wǒmen chàbùduō yǒu shí nián méi jiànle. wǒ zhēn de xiǎngle hé tā tán tán wǒ duìyú zhège wèntí de kànfǎ. dàn shíjiān méi jiànmiànle, nà hěn dǎoméi.)

It will be found in many such repeat words when someone carefully studies spoken language.

Fault Starting and Re-correction

我早上五点来到这儿的时候，不是，我昨天来到这儿的时候看到这事件了。(wǒ zǎoshang wǔ diǎn lái dào zhè'r de shíhòu, bùshì, wǒ zuótiān lái dào zhè'r de shíhòu, wǒ kàn dào zhè shìjiànle.)

我来到寺庙的时候，不是，我来到寺庙以前的时候，下雨了。(wǒ lái dào sìmiào de shíhòu, bùshì, wǒ lái dào sìmiào yǐqián de shíhòu, xià yǔle.)

Such cases can occur very rarely in speech. The speaker is careful to use words like 不好意思 (bù hǎoyìsi), 对不起(duìbùqǐ), 不是(bùshì), 没事(méishì) when re-correcting mistakes. Thus, the internal form of a Chinese register language can be understood as guided by the three points of field, meaning, and rule.

Conclusion

Register language means that language is tied to the occasion in which it is used. It is confirmed by exploring the internal and external forms of register language. Subjective register languages are identified as a special field among the register languages. This

study focuses on the Chinese register language in Sri Lanka. It can be identified as an intermediate case between high variety and a low variety of language forms. The internal form of a Chinese register language is guided by three points such as field, meaning and rule. Distinctive linguistics features are evident in the standard Chinese language as well as in the Sri Lankan Chinese register language. When examining the sociolinguistic features of the Sri Lankan Chinese register, it becomes evident that it has a unique form that aligns with the various functions of language in society. While it shares some common characteristics with other registers, it also possesses distinct traits. A specialized vocabulary has been integrated into the Chinese language in Sri Lanka, and this register continues to be influenced by standard Chinese.

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