

Phonological nativization of Persian loan words in Mappila Malayalam: A sociolinguistic study

Thamanna Raza P P and Somdev kar

Indian Institute of Technology Ropar

Abstract

Most discussions on the varied vernacular currents of cosmopolitanism in the Indian ocean paints a complex picture indicating many routes of cultural mobilities (Ottathingal, 2021). Expanding this line of research, the current study explores the possibilities of a socio-historical inquiry of Persian loan words in Mappila Malayalam, the dialectics involved in trans-creating the cultural experiences of Mappila Muslims of Malabar. Furthermore, this paper provides an overview of the theoretical and experimental investigations into the gemination strategy employed in the nativization of these words, with a crucial focus on other phenomena associated with it.

Malayalam has both voiceless as well as voiced obstruent geminates (Asher and Kumari, 1997). However, previous research shows that intervocalic voiceless obstruent singletons in Malayalam words undergo voicing. Hence the analysis of voiceless obstruent geminates has been a difficult endeavor. Due to this distributional irregularity, we compare intervocalic geminates (e.g., [paɽɽiri] ‘a type of pancake’) with non-intervocalic geminates (e.g., [paɽɽrə] ‘a type of pancake’) as the closure duration of intervocalic geminates are more than that of non-intervocalic geminates (Dmitrieva 2017). Additionally, the prominent phonetic correlates of gemination such as closure duration and VOT are examined in detail. Most importantly, the segmental distribution and gemination patterns of obstruents are phonologically characterized and accounted for within the framework of the stratal optimality theoretic model (Prince and Smolensky 1993, Kiparsky 2000, Ito and Mester 1995). We further compare the constraint hierarchy of obstruent gemination in Persian loan words across the varieties of Mappila Malayalam spoken in the north Malabar region of Kerala state. Finally, the conclusion is drawn towards implications for syllable structure theories in Malayalam.

References

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