

Research Article

Linguistic Exclusion through Divergence: A Case of *Mappila Malayalam*'s Resistance against Social Exclusion

Thapasya Jayaraj^{1*} and Rajesh Kumar²

¹Research Scholar, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology-Madras, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India

²Professor, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology-Madras, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India

(*Corresponding author) email id: *thapasya.jayaraj@gmail.com, ²rajesh@iitm.ac.in

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ABSTRACT

The study explores the implications of social exclusion in the context of socio-historical development of Mappila Malayalam, a sociolect spoken by the Muslim community in the Malabar region of Kerala. Mappila Malayalam developed as a distinct variety of Malayalam in the setting of certain social exclusions, and the study identifies this stage of development as the first wave variation of Mappila Malayalam. The analysis further explores how Mappila Malayalam diverges from the existing system of Malayalam, a conscious means of linguistic exclusion, realised as resistance against social exclusion, and thereby ultimately helped the speech community to obtain social inclusion. The article seeks to address the contest of identities mediated by language variations in a social system with explicit norms in categorising the members that lead to social exclusion by exploring the instance of Mappila Malayalam.

Keywords: Language variation, Social exclusion, Linguistic exclusion, Mappila Malayalam, First wave variation

Abbreviations: 1: First person; ACC : Accusative; AUG : Augment; DAT : Dative; F : Feminine; M : Masculine; NOM : Nominal; PL : Plural; PST : Past; SG : Singular

INTRODUCTION

Linguistics apart being interested in a broad array of various aspects of language has also focused on the social implications and consequences of language variations. Language and society are interconnected with multiple layers and largely influence each other. In

the changing dynamics of society, language is also undergoing significant changes, and the field of sociolinguistics is concerned with such phenomena. The impact of a language on the society is multidimensional. Analysing how language is received in the society gets importance in the current world of multilingualism. Multilingualism denotes the incorporation of multiple languages in the daily life of a speaker or a speech community and it also deals with the exclusion of languages. Exclusion is one of the fundamentally discussed domains in various disciplines in the contemporary world since the late 1980s. Language is one of the influential fields connected with the perception of exclusion. However, most of them are related to the linguistic implications of migration or the situation where multilingualism exists. This article looks at language in the context of social exclusion by taking instances of the first wave variations in Mappila Malayalam. Mappila Malayalam is one of the sociolects of Malayalam spoken by the Muslim community in the Malabar region of Kerala, India. The article attempts to explore the social exclusion that the community had experienced before converting to Islam (during the precolonial to the colonial period), how they used language variation as a tool to create a divergence from 'others' Malayalams' and how linguistic exclusion used as a medium for resisting the scenario then. The article develops by analysing the implications of language variations in the context of social exclusion and extends to the specific instances of variations from various levels of linguistic expressions in Mappila Malayalam that led Mappila Malayalam towards linguistic exclusion with a cause. The study focuses article looks specifically at lexical, morphological and morphosyntactic variations in Mappila Malayalam and, finds a strong motivation for linguistic exclusion initiated within the speech community to show their distinct identity in the society which is a crucial requirement of the time for them to sustain in the society with dignity.

LANGUAGE VARIATION AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION

The term 'social exclusion' has initially emerged as one of the domains of analysis in social sciences, especially in the field of economics. The International Labour Organization defines social exclusion as being 'a state of poverty in which individuals cannot access the living conditions which would enable them both to satisfy theory-essential needs (food, education, health, etc.) and participate in the development of the society in which they live' (Smelser and Baltes, 2001). On the contrary, the European Union explained the idea of social exclusion by expanding the description emphasising that social exclusion is asocial phenomenon when people are not able to completely participate or contribute to society because they denied civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights manifested in different ways. In many situations, language is one of the agents that influence the binary of social exclusion and inclusion. In those situations, the system of exclusion is highly dependent on a hierarchy of languages in which they are considered

are unequal. Thus, the idea of exclusion is substantially grounded on relational identities centred on the socio political characteristics and scale of acceptability. Language plays an essential role at this point regarding social exclusion. Language variations create the binaries of acceptability and fuels linguistic exclusion or inclusion. It can act as an agent of social inclusion or exclusion based on the acceptability. Piller (2014) notes that ‘linguistic diversity is highly relevant to social inclusion as the languages someone speaks (or not) influence which jobs they can get, which information they can access, and who they can socialize with’. He further reports that the literature regarding the understanding between the sociologies of inclusion and language exhibits a void space that gives room for further studies (Piller, 2014). Similar observation has been previously put forward by Collins (2009), by explaining how little the analysis on the relationship between language variations and social inclusion (or exclusion) is explored, and the negligence for the question of how language functions to produce social inequality since the field’s post-modern approach developed in the 1990s when ‘identity’ emerged as the dominant social category instead of ‘inequality’ (Collins, 2009). The current analysis gains relevance at this point in it which tries to fill the gap in the knowledge about the link between language and social inequality. Unlike the study of how language variations become a cause of linguistic exclusion or inequalities, the current analysis would be looking at how a conscious language variation accompanied a movement against disparities and social exclusion by analysing the first wave variations in Mappila Malayalam as a process of linguistic exclusion through divergence in language contributed to the resistance against social exclusion.

MAPPILAS OF MALABAR AND DEVELOPMENT OF MAPPILA MALAYALAM

This article looks at the influence of the idea of exclusion in language variation in its social context, especially by taking instances from Mappila Malayalam. Mappila Malayalam is one of the sociolects of Malayalam, which has most variations pertaining to different levels of linguistic expressions. Mappilas of Malabar has a vast history and social traditions to share. Exclusion is one of the major terrains in their history. Language variation is one of the core areas in shaping their socio political history. The growth of Mappila Malayalam as one of the important dialects of Malayalam and thereby become a dominant sociolect among the varieties of Malayalam has another side of a social movement motivated against the discriminations then existed in the society. Majority of the Mappilas are converts from Hindu religion, especially from the ‘lower castes’. The caste hierarchy existed in the society tend to differentiate them from the main stream to an extent of untouchability. The social exclusion they have undergone as part of their previous identity as ‘lower caste’ and the egalitarian ideology proclaimed by Islam together motivated

them to convert to Islam (Lakshmi, 2012; Osella and Osella, 2008; Rantatthani, 2007; Saidalav, 2017). The later was a resolution for their problems in the initial state. The census data of the period reflects the conversion from Hindu lower castes to the Mappila community in the Malabar region by showing the change in population of each community (Cornish, 1874; Risley, 1903). At this changed scenario, the newly converts had to highlight their new identity as Mappilas to get social acceptance. Divaricating their identity in different aspects taken place, starting from the appearance through dressing style. Language variation is another important medium to establish their new identity as Mappilas. One of the major vehicles of language variation is the development and immersion of Arabi–Malayalam to the Mappila culture. Arabi–Malayalam is one of the majorly discussed and studied aspect as a literary tradition rooted in Mappila culture.

ARABI–MALAYALAM AND INFLUENCE ON MAPPILA MALAYALAM

Studies on Mappila Malayalam always correlated Arabi–Malayalam literary tradition of Mappilas in its cultural aspects. Arabi–Malayalam is a literary language developed among Mappilas in the Malabar region. It is an amalgam of languages resulted out of the contact between the language of the Kerala and Arabia. It incorporated the grammar and syntax of Malayalam and its lexis included vocabulary from Arabic, Urdu, Persian, Malayalam and Tamil. It was written in Arabic script, with some new symbols to denote Malayalam consonants unfamiliar to Arabic alphabet. It can be viewed as a synthesis of Malayalam grammatical base, Arabic script with special orthographic features and vocabulary from Malayalam, Arabic, Tamil, Urdu and Persian (Ilias and Hussain, 2017). Literature on Arabi–Malayalam was majorly revolved around the style variations in its literature and the syntax and poetic diction of songs (Mappila Songs known as *Mappila paattu*). There are a number of rituals, life-cycle events and performative occasions in which the oral literary tradition in Arabi–Malayalam finds its expression (Ilias and Hussain, 2017; Saidalavi, 2013; Shamsudheen, 1978). This study focuses the variations in the spoken language of Mappilas, that is, Mappila Malayalam and the influence of Arabi–Malayalam in creating its identity diverged from other varieties of Malayalam and its further social implications.

MAPPILA MALAYALAM VARIATIONS INITIATING DIVERGENCE

Apart from the literary and cultural elements incorporated in the Mappila tradition, the spoken language variation also played an important role in marking their identity. The spoken language of Mappilas now identified as Mappila Malayalam undergone variations at different degrees at different levels of linguistic expressions from phonology, morphology, morphosyntax, lexis and so on. Most of the phonological variations are adopted from Arabi–Malayalam, and the lexical variations are by borrowing Arabic,

Persian and Urdu lexical items to their corpus. Phonological and lexical variations being easily identifiable differences to the speech community, speakers of Malayalam identified the variations in Mappila Malayalam and thereby made a distinction about their community identity. Studies identify this phase of variation that initiated the existence of Mappila Malayalam as a unique variety of Malayalam as first wave variations of Mappila Malayalam. This article looks at various levels of variations in Mappila Malayalam and its contributions towards resistance against social exclusion.

Lexical Variations

Lexical variation is one of the fundamental variations that almost all the languages exhibit among their varieties. The most commonly described in such variations is the case of dialects of English (Clopper and Pisoni, 2006; Trudgill and Chambers, 2017; Wolfram and Schilling, 2016). Margaret Field (2012) explains the lexical variations attributes towards the speech community identity among the speakers of Kumeyaay (Field, 2012). In Malayalam also, most of the sociolinguistic analysis looked at lexical variations along with the regional and socio-dialectal variations. The dialectal map of Malayalam especially drawn out from the analysis of Thiyya dialect of Malayalam is also based on the lexical variations. Mappila Malayalam is also mentioned in various analyses for the lexical variations they obtained through borrowings. Apart from those, this article looks at the other lexical variations in Mappila Malayalam. The variations among the pronouns and kinship terms of Mappila Malayalam show a unique set of expressions. The first-person pronoun *namma*[(ə)] in Mappila Malayalam shows variations from other dialects of Malayalam in usage as well as form. *namma*[(ə)] is a unique expression present only in Mappila Malayalam that stands for both singular and plural first-person pronouns as seen in Example 1(a). Unlike Mappila Malayalam, other dialects of Malayalam have singular and plural variants of first-person pronouns expressed as *na:n* ‘I’ and *naŋŋa* ‘we’ respectively as seen in the Examples 1(b) and 1(c).¹

1.

a. <i>namma</i> [(ə)]	<i>ca:ja</i>	<i>kuḍiccu</i>	<i>(Mappila Malayalam)</i>
1sg/1pl	tea	drink-PST	
‘I/we drank tea’			
b. <i>na:n</i>	<i>ca:ja</i>	<i>kuḍiccu</i>	
1sg	tea	drink-PST	
‘I drank tea’			
c. <i>naŋŋa</i>]	<i>ca:ja</i>	<i>kuḍiccu</i>	
1sg/1pl	tea	drink-PST	
‘We drank tea’			

¹Malayalam does not mark agreement for person, number and gender on the verb.

Since Mappila Malayalam does not have a singular and plural distinction marked on the forms of first-person pronoun, it does not mean that it has caused a lexical gap in communication.

Also, there are major variations in the kinship terms used by Mappila Malayalam that provided unique identity to the speech community. The terms used to represent parents, as *uppa* 'father' and *umma* 'mother' and elder siblings such as *ikka:kka* 'elder brother' and *itta:tta* 'elder sister' are only used by Mappilas and provides them unique identity through language variation (Jayaraj and Kumar, 2019). These variations were creating divergence to Mappila Malayalam from the other varieties of Malayalam. Apart from these variations, Mappila Malayalam show several lexical variations in expressions used in day today life initiated through borrowings. The word form *na:s̥ta* 'breakfast', originally borrowed from Persian and to *nika:h* 'marriage' borrowed from Arabic. Such words used in their daily life events and made a divergence to Mappila Malayalam contributing to express their identity as Mappilas. Some of the other borrowed expressions are listed in Example 2.

2. Mappila Malayalam	Malayalam	
a) <i>kabu:lə</i>	<i>sammaṭam</i>	'agree'
b) <i>sabu:rə</i>	<i>ma:ppə</i>	'forgive'
c) <i>khalbə</i>	<i>manasə</i>	'mind/heart'
d) <i>subahə</i>	<i>pularçça</i>	'early morning'

The Mappila Malayalam speakers consciously incorporated these kinds of words by replacing the corresponding Malayalam words in the public domains during the first wave variations. These variations being very perceptible to others created a linguistic distinction, excluding Mappila Malayalam by creating divergence from other dialects of Malayalam aiming at a better social acceptance.

Morphological Variations

Mappila Malayalam had divergence in the other levels of linguistic expressions. However, these variations are not that consciously included in their variety of Malayalam, rather, imbibed mostly from Arabi–Malayalam due to its influence on the spoken variety of Mappilas. One of the instances of morphological variations is the variation in plural marking. The indicator of the plurality in Malayalam is a suffix added to the noun stem. Apart from a small number of exemptions, the form of the suffix is determined initially by two ways: Firstly, by examining whether the nouns are [+HUM] and if not, [+ANIM]; and secondly by the phonological shape of the noun stem. The plural suffixes in Malayalam are *-ma:r* and *-kam*. The suffix *-ma:r* is added to masculine nouns and to

feminine nouns ending in the sound *_a*. The feminine nouns ending in *-i* also take the suffix *-ma:r* in plural formation (Asher and Kumari 1997). However, in Mappila dialect, there is a variation in some of the plural forms. In the case of +HUM nouns ends in *-i* which takes the plural suffix *-ma:r* in other dialects of Malayalam, Mappila dialect speakers take *-kam* as their plural suffix as seen in Example 3;

3.		<i>Plural forms</i>	
		<i>Mappila Dialect Other Dialects</i>	
a)	<i>amma:ji</i> ‘paternal aunt’	<i>amma:ji(k)a[</i>	<i>amma:jima:r</i>
b)	<i>a:ça:ri</i> ‘carpenter’	<i>a:ça:ri(k)a[</i>	<i>a:ça:rima:r</i>
c)	<i>caṅṅa:ji</i> ‘friend-M’ ²	<i>caṅṅa:j(k)a[</i>	<i>caṅṅa:jma:r</i>
d)	<i>caṅṅa:jcci</i> ‘friend-F’	<i>caṅṅa:jççei(k)a[</i>	<i>caṅṅa:jççima:r</i>

The plural suffix *-kam* has become a generic form in Mappila Malayalam which is a feature taken from the Arabi–Malayalam tradition. The Malayalam speakers chose between these two suffixes intuitively as the case in Mappila Malayalam also. However, the deeply rooted Arabi–Malayalam tradition reflatd through the spoken form as well.

Morphosyntactic Variations

In this section, we are looking at the variations in Mappila Malayalam regarding case marking. Case marking in Malayalam is done predominantly through suffixation and through post positions. Dative case marking in Malayalam is also carried out through suffixation. The dative suffix has two variants which are phonologically conditioned such as *-(n)ə* and *-kkə*. *-(n)ə* occurs with singular nouns with stems ending in *-an* and other nouns taking an augment *-in-* as in the following Example 4.

4.		Dative Form	
a)	<i>avan</i> ‘he’	<i>avan-(n)ə</i>	he-DAT
b)	<i>ma:n</i> ‘deer’	<i>ma:n-in-(n)ə</i>	deer-AUG-DAT
c)	<i>pa:mbə</i> ‘snake’	<i>pa:mb-in-(n)ə</i>	snake-AUG-DAT
d)	<i>pra:ṅṅan</i> ‘mad man’	<i>pra:ṅṅan-(n)ə</i>	madness-NOM(M)-DAT

The suffix *-kkə* is added to other singular nouns and all plurals as seen in the following example 5.

5.			
a)	<i>kutti</i> ‘child’	<i>kutti-kkə</i>	child-DAT
b)	<i>ava[</i> ‘she’	<i>ava[-kkə</i>	she-DAT
c)	<i>ma:n</i> ‘deer’	<i>ma:n-u-ka[-kkə</i>	deer-AUG-PL-DAT

²The word for friend, *caṅṅa:ti* ‘friend’ is a neuter gender word in other regional dialects of Malayalam, whereas, in the region of current study marks it for masculine gender. The feminine form is created with adding the feminine marker suffix *-cci* to the noun.

However, in Mappila Malayalam, the generic form of dative case marker is *-kkə*. Mappila Malayalam takes *-ə* as the dative suffix for singular nouns taking an augment *-in-*, similar to the Examples 4(b) and 4(c). All other singular nouns and plural nouns take *-kkə* as the dative marker in Mappila Malayalam. For example,

6.

a) <i>avan</i>	‘he’	<i>avan-i-kkə</i>	he-DAT
		or	
	<i>o:n</i>	<i>o:n(i)-kkə</i>	he-DAT
b) <i>pra:uʈʈan</i>	‘mad man’	<i>pra:uʈʈan-kkə</i>	madness-NOM(M)-DAT
c) <i>kutti</i>	‘child’	<i>kutti-kkə</i>	child-DAT
d) <i>kutti:ka</i>	‘children’	<i>kutti-ka/-kkə</i>	child-PL-DAT

The singular nouns that end in *_an* and take *-(n)ə* as the dative suffix in other dialects of Malayalam undergoes a variation in Mappila Malayalam and the speakers chose to take the suffix *kkə* - for marking dative case as seen in the Examples 6(a) and (b).

Similarly, in the accusative case also, Mappila Malayalam diverges from other dialects of Malayalam. Mappila Malayalam marks accusative case by the suffix */a/* instead of */e/* used in other dialects of Malayalam as seen in the following Example 7.³

7. <i>Mappila Malayalam</i>	<i>Other Dialects in Malabar</i>	
a. <i>avana</i>	<i>avane</i>	he-ACC
b. <i>umma:na</i>	<i>umma:ne</i>	mother-AUG-ACC
c. <i>sali:mina</i>	<i>sali:mine</i>	Salim-AUG-ACC
d. <i>ammuna</i>	<i>ammune</i>	Ammu-AUG-ACC

This is again a feature carried from Arabi–Malayalam to Mappila Malayalam. The other levels of variations in Mappila Malayalam largely cover phonological variations which are documented in most of the studies of Mappila Malayalam as its iconic features (Devy, 2015; Namboothirippadu, 1994; Panikkar, 2017). These phonological variations also brought to Mappila Malayalam either through borrowings or from adaptation to Arabi–Malayalam during first wave variations in Mappila Malayalam. Indeed, these variations created a unique identity to the speech community and there by the religious identity they tried to attach with the sociolect are expressed through language variations. In a way, Mappilas tried to create a linguistic exclusion through creating a divergence from the realisation of the existing body of Malayalam language.

³singular nouns taking an augment *-in-* in examples 7(b), 7(c) and 7(c) as seen in the previous examples of dative case marking.

LINGUISTIC EXCLUSION IN MAPPILA MALAYALAM: A RESISTANCE AGAINST SOCIAL EXCLUSION

Mappila Malayalam, in its first wave variations, created individuality and unique identity as the language variety itself as well as the speech community. Language variations are a capable carrier of their identity as Mappilas, which is an essential need of the time during the spread of Islam in the Malabar region. Exhibiting Mappila identity through one of the primary means as language variation created a divergence in the sociolect from the existing system of language. However, this divergence in effect been part of social resistance against social exclusions through linguistic exclusion created by the speakers. The linguistic exclusion here denotes the process of making one variety of language distinct from others. It doesn't mean that the variety is mutually unintelligible with the other varieties. The social hierarchy played in the case of Mappila Malayalam is different from the case studies of acceptability and socio-political issues related to migration or multilingualism. Making a divergence and becoming linguistically exclusive changes the hierarchy and social acceptance in the first wave variations in a positive way. The speech community previously discriminated due to their caste identity gained more social status and acceptance through the divergence in Mappila Malayalam as an effective medium for commuting the new identity. Some languages are more equal than others due to the relationship between languages, and their speakers are hierarchically structured, and the instance of first wave variations of Mappila Malayalam shows that some dialects and sociolects are more equal too.

CONCLUSION

Language, existing as a sign of belonging and enhances as a screen for inclusion or exclusion with the capacity to regulate the social acceptability or exclusion. From the instances of the first wave variations in Mappila Malayalam, it is clear that language variation through divergence helped in creating a linguistic creating a linguistic exclusion elevated the social acceptance to the speech community lacking in their previous identity. Language variation is here acts as one of the fuelling means for social changes by accompanying the resistance against social exclusion. The study contributes to the idea of language variation as capable of establishing one's place in the social context rather than undergoing instrumental usage alone. Language variations have deeply rooted impacts on the society along with the society influencing language changes also. It has the capability to decide on the position of a speech community or a person in the hierarchical structure of society. The ceaseless faculties of language and language variations in its social context and its layered dimensions are to be explored to the better explanation of language as the phenomenal constituent contributed to the society.

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