ABSTRACT

Attitude is an integral component of human behaviour in psychology. “Attitude can be positive or negative feeling about an object, place or person” (Petty and Cacioppo (1981:6). As attitude research has played a distinguishing and critical role in social psychology, the notion of attitudes has also turned out to be a key point of significance in sociolinguistics (Garrett, 2003:2). Therefore, it is very important to study the attitude of a particular speech community towards their native language and other dominant languages from the sociolinguistic perceptive. It helps to identify the language choice of the speakers in a multilingual milieu, for instance, which language should be preferred, when it should be used and to what extent it should be employed in the different contexts.

The current study endeavours to explore the language usage patterns and language attitudes of educated Lambada youth towards Lambada and its related culture and identity, Telugu and English language in Telangana. This study tries to find out whether there is any significant correlation in relation to language use and language attitudes between the social variables such as geographical area, medium of instruction and gender. It would help the researcher to investigate the informants’ preference of languages on the basis of different domains and attitude towards the languages.

This present research aims to formulate the answers to the following research questions:

1) What are Lambada youth’s attitudes towards their mother tongue and the dominant languages in Telangana?
2) Do the social variables like gender, geographical area, and medium of instruction have an impact on the patterns of linguistic usage exhibited by Lambada youth?
3) Do language usage patterns and language attitudes vary towards the languages across gender?
4) Do language usage patterns and language attitudes vary towards languages in accordance with a particular geographical area?
5) Does medium of instruction of informants play a role in changing attitudes of Lambada youth towards their language and other languages?
In order to investigate the answers to the research questions pertaining to the language use patterns and attitudes of the speakers towards these three languages, 120 informants were chosen from the Lambada community from different educational backgrounds. The questionnaire survey was conducted to collect necessary data for the present study. The study was persuaded with a quantitative method. For the statistical analysis of the collected data, SPSS 16.0 was used and the individual t-tests were performed for each and every questions and statements to calculate the probability values. If the p-value is less than 0.05, it seems that there is a significant difference between two independent variables. The results of the t-tests were employed to make out whether there are any significant results pertaining to geographical area, medium of instruction and gender.

The results of the t-tests evidently stated that the social variables such as geographical area (urban and rural areas) and medium of instruction (Telugu and English mediums) have an impact on the informants’ language usage patterns and language attitudes. Whereas, there is no significant difference found pertaining to gender. As per the results of the study, the geographical area is considered to be a significant difference as the informants from the urban area have a positive attitude towards the usage of dominant languages Telugu and English at home and community domains whereas the rural area informants prefer Lambada in these domains. Similarly, medium of instruction also seemed to be a significant variable as the informants from English medium background preferred Telugu and English at home and in community domains. Interestingly, the informants belonging to English medium prefer Telugu language at home and in community domains most of the time, but the Telugu medium informants prefer Lambada in these domains.

Lambada is confined to home and community domain, on the other hand, Telugu and English are considered to be the language of social interaction, education, and employment opportunities. As per the results, the informants belonging to the rural area and Telugu medium were found to use more Telugu in official domain whereas the informants from the urban and English medium use English in this domain. The
informants of rural and Telugu medium mostly prefer Telugu for academic purposes but, the urban and English medium informants English for the activities.

The results of the study indicate that the rural area informants were found to have a positive attitude towards Lambada language and its associated identity, on the contrary, the urban area informants expressed a negative attitude towards it. Similarly, medium of instruction also influenced the informants’ attitude towards their mother tongue as the English medium informants revealed their negative attitude towards Lambada language and its associated identity whereas, the Telugu medium informants showed their positive attitude towards it. Gender wise, both the males and the females expressed positive attitude towards their mother tongue.

However, the t-test did not present any significant results pertaining to attitude towards Telugu and English. The results reveal that the informants from all social variables expressed their positive attitude towards Telugu as connecting language outside home and language of social communication. Similarly, the results also indicate that all the informants irrespective of geographical area, medium of instruction and gender have positive attitude towards English as education, professional opportunities, power and prestige are associated with it.

On the basis of the result of data, it can be finally stated that the informants seemed to have consistent positive attitudes towards the dominant languages Telugu and English. But, there is a significant difference in the responses of the informants towards Lambada language pertaining to geographical area and medium of instruction. The informants belonging to the urban are and English medium had negative attitudes towards their mother tongue whereas, the rural area and Telugu medium informants had highly positive attitude towards it. Most of the informants from the rural area and educated in Telugu medium opined that their mother tongue should be preserved and their culture and identity should be retained. As aforesaid, it can be concluded, a sizeable number of Lambada community is (especially urban and English medium background) switching to the dominant languages, the language can be under threat in urban context. But, it would be stable spoken language in rural area as the Lambada hamlets are situated far away from mainstream Telugu society.