

PRESERVING MINORITIZED VOICES IN A BORDERLESS WORLD: A DOCUMENTATION OF INDIGENOUS VEDDA ORAL TRADITIONS FOR CULTURAL HOMOGENEITY AND EQUITY

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ABSTRACT

The Vedda language, spoken by Sri Lanka's indigenous Adivasi community, is endangered due to the dominance of regional languages such as Sinhala and Tamil in relation to the Vedda community. This study aims to investigate the history of the Vedda language, as well as language contact and shift, to determine its status. A qualitative sociolinguistic study with a descriptive perspective, this study makes use of theory, namely, the GIDS by Fishman, Language Contact Theory by Thomason and Kaufman, and Ethnolinguistic Vitality Theory by Giles. The unit of analysis in this study is structured in terms of lexicon, suffixes, and language contact phenomena, as well as functional domains in regions such as Dambana, Rathugala, and Pollebadda. It is evident that extensive interaction for many centuries has resulted in considerable borrowing and relexification. Although Vedda has certain characteristic morphological traits, such as particular suffixes for animates (-atto) and inanimates (-pojja), most of its lexical items are borrowed from Sinhala and Tamil. Following the Fishman paradigm, intergenerational transmission is severely affected because the young generation speaks only Sinhala for economic reasons. Conclusions drawn from the research indicate that Vedda is critically endangered due to the lack of institutional support and narrowing down of its functional areas. The theoretical implication of the research indicates that there will be pressure exerted by dominant languages on indigenous languages, while practical implications of the research indicate the need for preservation of indigenous linguistic diversity of Sri Lanka.

1. Introduction

Language is not merely a means of communication; it is also an important marker of identity, culture, social belonging, and collective memories. For indigenous and minority communities, language represents a particularly significant connection between present generations and their cultural heritage. Therefore, the loss or weakening of a language involves more than the disappearance of a linguistic system. This can also result in the gradual erosion of traditional knowledge, cultural practices, social identities, and ways of understanding the world. Within the sociolinguistic context of Sri Lanka, the situation of the Vedda language provides

an important example of the relationship between language, society, identity, power, and cultural change.

The Vedda people, also called Adivasis, are widely considered to be the inhabitants of Sri Lanka. For a time, Vedda groups lived closely with the forests, relying on hunting, gathering, and other ways of living off the land. Their language has drawn much interest from researchers because of its connection with the languages of Sri Lanka, Sinhala, and Tamil. Sinhala and Tamil. Old records show that the Veddas once had a clear language, but over time, living near other communities brought major changes to their speech. Seligmann and Seligmann (1911) wrote

about the Vedda people during a time when many had already started speaking Sinhala.

It is not enough to ask whether the Vedda language is truly separate or merely a version shaped by Sinhala and Tamil. We must examine how term social and language contact shaped it. The Vedda community has always been part of a world. Their interactions with Sinhala- and Tamil-speaking people changed their expressions, grammar, and the situations in which they used their language. Thomason (2001) pointed out that how languages mix depends heavily on the setting. That means the changes in the Vedda language must be seen with changes in their socioeconomic, educational, and political lives.

Today a big question is whether the Vedda language is still alive through its connection to Vedda identity and traditions or if it's slowly being replaced by Sinhala. And in some places Tamil. The original study highlights this struggle between keeping their language and blending into society. As the Vedda people join mainstream systems the need to use dominant languages has grown. Sinhala, especially is key in schools, government jobs, work and daily communication. Because of this younger Veddas have reason to use Sinhala in their everyday lives.

This is where the idea of language shift comes in. Language shift occurs when people stop using one language and start using another for most of their communication. Crystal (2000) says that a minority language becomes endangered when it can no longer help its speakers achieve their economic goals. This is important for the Veddas because the real issue is not whether some people still speak parts of the language. It is whether the language still works in areas of life and whether it is being passed down naturally to children.

A key sign of language danger is when its use becomes limited. Wardhaugh and Fuller (2015) state that language survival depends on how it is used across different parts of life. When a minority language is only used at home or in ceremonies while the dominant language takes over schools, jobs, government, media, and public life, the minority language is at greater risk. For the Veddas, Sinhala's growing role in economic life makes it seem more useful to the young.

Another significant factor is transmission. Children learn and use the language from their parents and elders. Fishman (1991) stated that passing the language from parents to children is crucial for

keeping threatened languages alive. Even if schools or groups try to save the language, it will not last if it is not used naturally in homes. With young Veddas using Sinhala, there is a concern that the language will not survive from one generation to the next.

The story is not about decline. The Vedda language still holds value. It lives on in traditions, knowledge, ceremonies, stories, and expressions of group identity. This pride in language and culture can help keep it alive. More awareness and respect for heritage might also help strengthen the language's place in society.

This paper examines the Vedda language through a lens. It focuses on language contact, language shift, language maintenance, passing the language to children, ethnolinguistic vitality, and language endangerment. It uses existing research and established theories to understand the Vedda language situation.

The main goal is to explore the history and current state of the Vedda language in Sri Lanka. Specifically, it wants to see how Sinhala and Tamil have influenced it, what social, educational, economic, and institutional forces are pushing people toward languages, how language shift and contact theories explain the current situation, and what can be done to preserve or revive the language.

The study is guided by a key questions. How has long-term contact with Sinhala and Tamil changed the Vedda language? Second, what social, educational, economic, and institutional factors are driving the shift to languages? Third, how do theories of language shift, contact, and ethnolinguistic vitality help explain the Vedda language today? Finally, what chances are there to preserve and bring back the Vedda linguistic heritage?

This study has implications beyond the Vedda community. In Sri Lanka, language is tied to ethnicity, culture, identity, and power. Studying an indigenous language helps us understand language diversity and inequality. The Vedda case also shows that language loss is not about grammar or vocabulary. It is about economic pressures, institutions, how people feel about languages, education, and changing lifestyles.

Thus, the study views the Vedda language not as a set of words and rules but as part of a larger cultural system. To understand its state, we need to examine

how language connects with the changing lives of the people who speak it.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Historical Studies of the Vedda Community and Language

The study of the Vedda community has a long history in anthropology, linguistics, and Sri Lankan social research. Seligmann and Seligmann (1911) produced one of the major early ethnographic accounts of the Veddas. Their work provides important evidence regarding Vedda social organisation, culture, beliefs, and language at the beginning of the twentieth century. Their observations are particularly relevant to the present study because they indicate that linguistic change and Sinhalization were already occurring at that time.

I have read that the history of the Vedda people is tied to the forests and natural places of Sri Lanka. In the past, the way the Vedda lived helped them keep their culture and language for many years. The thought that the Vedda lived alone with no contact with other Sri Lankans is not true. The Vedda talked with Sinhala and Tamil speakers for a time. Therefore, the way the Vedda language grew must be seen as a result of contacts, not as if the Vedda language grew in isolation.

This view is important because it shows that languages cannot always be divided into two groups: either fully original or fully copied from another language. The way the Vedda language works shows a complex story that includes contact, borrowing, changes, and shifts in society.

Obeyesekere (1984) studied how the Vedda think about who they are and how they see themselves in society. This study is useful for sociolinguistics because language and identity go hand in hand. When the Vedda language is not spoken in every part of life, it still stands as a strong sign of belonging for the Vedda people.

Kent (2011) discussed the people and how they maintain their culture in Sri Lanka. He also showed the problems that native groups face when society and the economy change. These changes can affect the Vedda way of life, including how they are organised, their traditions, and even their language. Therefore, the current state of the Vedda language must be seen as part of a cultural shift.

2.2 Language Contact and Linguistic Change

Language contact is one of the most important concepts for understanding the Vedda language's development. Thomason (2001) argues that the extent of linguistic change resulting from contact depends substantially on the social circumstances of the contact situation. Languages do not borrow linguistic features simply because speakers interact; the intensity, duration, direction, and social balance of contact influence the nature of linguistic outcomes.

The Vedda community has had long-term contact with both Sinhala and Tamil communities. Sinhala has had an influence because it is the main language used in official and public settings in Sri Lanka. Tamil has also played a role in regions where the Vedda people live near Tamil-speaking groups, such as in the Eastern Province.

When languages are in contact for a long time, borrowing words is common. People often adopt words when they need to talk about objects, actions, or institutions that come from another culture. Over time, these borrowed words can become part of speech. In the case of Vedda, many words come from Sinhala, showing how deeply this contact has gone over the years.

Language change isn't only about words. It can also affect grammar and structure. Thomason (2001) points out that when contact is intense the way a language works, its grammar, sentence patterns and expressions can be shaped by a dominant language. The original document says that the Vedda language shows signs of Sinhala influence in its structure but still keeps some features that are unique to Vedda speech.

This makes the Vedda situation important in sociolinguistics. We should not assume that language change means that a language has died out. Instead, we need to look at how people use their language in response to social changes. Language contact can lead to ways of speaking while at the same time weakening older forms.

2.3 Language Shift and Language Maintenance

Fishman's (1991) Theory of Language Shift and Maintenance provides an important theoretical foundation for analysing minority-language situations. Fishman emphasised the importance of intergenerational transmission and introduced the Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (GIDS) as

a framework for considering the degree to which a language has been disrupted across generations.

The main idea that matters for the Vedda language is mother tongue transmission. If parents keep passing the language to their children and the children use it in social situations, the language remains strong. If instead, children mostly learn a language first, the minority language is at risk.

This problem matters a great deal to the Vedda people. The study shows that parents think Sinhala is key to their children's future. This makes sense because Sinhala opens doors to schools, jobs, government help, and wider social life. When Sinhala is seen as the way to get ahead while the minority language stays only in home or culture, intergenerational mother tongue transmission breaks down and language shift can speed up.

Fishman (2001) states that threatened languages can be made stronger if people work hard to revive them. Yet schools and government help alone will not work if families and communities do not pass the language on. Therefore, to revive a language, we need both help and active work from families and local groups.

2.4 Language Endangerment

Crystal (2000) provides a broader framework for understanding language death and endangerment. A language becomes increasingly vulnerable when the number of speakers declines, younger generations cease to use it, and its functional domains become restricted.

Language endangerment should therefore not be measured through speaker numbers. A language can have speakers. A language can have speakers, still be endangered if speakers are elderly, if children are not learning the language, or if the language is not used in important domains of social life.

Language endangerment is shown by the Vedda language. Some members of the community continue to identify with the language and use forms associated with their heritage. Nevertheless, the language has lost ground in important domains. Sinhala has become increasingly important in education, administration, economic activity, and wider communication. As these domains grow, the social necessity of the Vedda language decreases.

This process can create a cycle of language decline. When fewer people use the minority language, the

opportunities to use the language become fewer. When opportunities decline, younger speakers may perceive the language as useful. Consequently, children use the language more frequently, which weakens intergenerational transmission.

2.5 Ethnolinguistic Vitality

The concept of ethnolinguistic vitality developed by Giles, Bourhis, and Taylor (1977) provides another useful framework. According to this perspective, the strength or vitality of an ethnolinguistic group is influenced by factors such as status, demographics, and institutional support.

Status refers to the social standing of a group and the respect that comes with its language. Demographic factors relate to the number of people who speak the language, where they live, and how concentrated they are. Institutional support means that the language is used in schools, government, media, and other official places.

The Vedda language has problems in all three areas. Its limited presence in places makes it hard to use the language in formal settings. Its social standing is also hurt because other languages are seen as respected and more useful. In addition, changes in population and more contact with groups make it harder for Vedda to be the main language people use every day.

The strength of a language is not always the same. People can feel proud of their culture, get attention in public, see more tourists, have more community efforts, and get more help from institutions. These things can make the language more important as a symbol of identity. This creates a situation: a language might be used less in daily life but be seen as more important for cultural identity.

2.6 Language, Identity and Cultural Survival

Language and identity are particularly significant in indigenous communities. Language can encode traditional knowledge, historical memory, cultural practices, and social relationships. When a language weakens, the community may continue to maintain its cultural identity, but some linguistic dimensions of that identity can become increasingly difficult to sustain.

The Vedda language is very close to the community's heritage. Even when people speak Sinhala, Vedda words can still hold symbolic importance. This shows that keeping a language

alive does not always mean staying completely separate from the languages around. Communities can keep parts of their language identity while they are part of a society that uses languages.

Obeyesekere's (1984) discussion of Vedda personhood and social identity is relevant here because it shows how important it is to see the community inside its cultural setting. Likewise, Kent (2011) points out that cultural survival is a part of native life. Therefore, preserving language can be seen as one part of an effort for cultural survival.

2.7 Education and Institutional Domains

Education plays an important role in language shift. Schools generally provide access to dominant languages and wider socioeconomic opportunities for their students. When an Indigenous language is absent from formal education, children may receive the message that the language has limited academic or professional value.

The same principle applies to government and jobs. If public organisations mainly use languages, people who speak other languages are pushed to learn those languages for real reasons. Wardhaugh and Fuller (2015) say that how languages are used in areas is very important for keeping a language alive. The more areas a language is used in, the stronger it becomes.

Therefore, the Vedda language has a problem with institutions. Sinhala is used in official places. Tamil is also important in places where Tamil is spoken. On the other hand, Vedda is not recognised much by institutions and is not used very often.

This does not mean that schools are to blame for language loss. Instead, schools can help maintain existing differences between people in terms of money and power. If schools taught the language and culture while also helping students learn the main languages, it could help keep the culture alive and also help people move up in society.

2.8 Research Gap

The existing literature provides important historical, anthropological, linguistic, and sociolinguistic perspectives on the Vedda community. However, there is a need to bring these perspectives together within a systematic sociolinguistic analysis of language shift and maintenance.

The books available show that the Vedda language has had a lot of contact with Sinhala and Tamil, but changes in the language need to be linked clearly with power, respect, support from institutions passing the language from one generation to the next, and a sense of identity.

Because of this, the current study adds something by combining sociolinguistic ideas to understand how the Vedda language is today. Fishman's idea helps explain how a language is passed on and changed, and Thomason's idea helps explain the changes that occur because of contact between languages. The idea of ethnolinguistic vitality helps explain how language status, the number of people who speak it and support it, and the institutions that support it are connected.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study utilises an interpretive research design to analyze the sociolinguistic situation of the Vedda language in Sri Lanka. Unlike collecting any new empirical data by engaging directly with Vedda speakers, the study makes the use of existing sources and apply well-established sociolinguistic theories in order to understand the information gathered.

Furthermore, qualitative approach is suitable for this study because the main purpose of the study is not quantitative analysis of frequency of occurrence of some language items. Instead, qualitative methodology is focused on the understanding of relations between languages and factors. Issues such as language shift, identity, language attitudes, cultural continuity, and linguistic vitality are not quantifiable. These issues need to be interpreted in the context of social and cultural environment.

3.2 Data Sources

The study makes the use of the following sources about the Vedda community, language contact, language shift, language endangerment and sociolinguistic theory. Key sources include Seligmann and Seligmann (1911) Fishman (1991, 2001) Crystal (2000) Thomason (2001) Giles et al. (1977) Obeyesekere (1984) Kent (2011). Wardhaugh and Fuller (2015).

These sources provide background, theoretical ideas, anthropological information and sociolinguistic analysis. Together they help build a picture of the Vedda language situation.

3.3 Analytical Framework

The study draws on three theoretical approaches for analysis.

First Fishman's Theory of Language Shift and Maintenance assists to investigate how the Vedda language is passed from one generation to the next. It looks at whether the Vedda languages still used in homes and communities or if it is replaced by Sinhala.

Second, the framework developed by Thomason (2001) on language contact utilizes to examine how the Vedda language was influenced by Sinhala and Tamil languages. In particular, borrowing, changes in grammar and structure, and social factors influencing language dominance will be considered.

Third, the concept of vitality proposed by Glies, Bourhis, and Taylor (1977) is used to explore the status, demography, and institutions of the Vedda language. These factors will allow explain why Sinhala and Tamil have more power in society than the Vedda language.

Moreover, this includes Crystal's (2000) discussion on language endangerment and Wardhaugh and Fuller's (2015) ideas about language domains.

3.4 Procedure of Analysis

The analysis starts with a review of the literature to find out the sociolinguistic issues. The issues will then be classified according to their perspective.

Historical data is considered first to set the stage for language contact. Next the influence of Sinhala and Tamil is examined. The study then moves on to examine language domains, how languages are used in different spheres of life and the generational transmission of language.

It also considers language attitudes towards the language and institutional support. Finally, all these results will be integrated to find out the vulnerability of the Vedda language and its maintenance.

3.5 Limitations

First of all, the most important limitation of the study presented is that it uses secondary data sources but not the results of any original research. Thus, it does not contain any data, including the exact number of speakers of Vedda nowadays or

information about the usage and attitudes towards it.

Another limitation of the study is that the linguistic situation among Vedda people can be different in various regions, depending on the frequency of their contacts with Sinhala-or Tamil-speaking communities.

This problem can be solved by future research through conducting interviews and observing language usage in various situations as well as making surveys concerning language usage in different Vedda villages.

4. Discussion

4.1 The Vedda Language as a Product of Long-Term Contact

The modern Vedda language should be seen as the result of lasting interactions between the Vedda people and nearby language groups. There is no proof that the Vedda people were completely alone. Instead, they have spoken with people who speak Sinhala and Tamil for years.

This contact has had effects on the language. Words have been taken from other languages, ways of speaking have changed, and the way grammar works has been affected by the bigger languages. These kinds of changes match what Thomason (2001) said, that the social situation during contact shapes how much and in what way a language changes.

The key idea is that changes caused by contact should not be seen as a failure. Languages always change when the people who speak them face social situations. The problem occurs when contact takes place in a situation where one group has more power than the other, and the smaller language starts to lose its own places in society.

In the case of Vedda Sinhala had more power in society and, in institutions. Because of that the influence was not equal. Vedda speakers had reasons to learn Sinhala than Sinhala speakers had to learn Vedda. This one-sidedness is a part of language shift.

4.2 Influence of Sinhala

Sinhala has had an impact on the way many Vedda groups use language today. Its importance comes from the way it is used in school, in the government, in the news, in jobs, and in talking to people.

Children who go to schools where Sinhala is the main language learn to speak Sinhala better. They also meet Sinhala in books, tests, messages, and chats outside their group. Because of this, Sinhala is linked with learning and better future chances.

The effect of Sinhala goes beyond words. It also affects the way society works. When a language becomes the one used in school and jobs, it gains respect. Parents may want their children to speak the language because they think it will help them move up in society.

This situation makes things difficult for the Vedda families. While maintaining their language is important and special, Sinhala seems more helpful for the children's future. As Fishman (1991) states, when a small language stops being used by younger people, it is more likely to change.

4.3 Influence of Tamil

Tamil has an effect in areas where Vedda groups have been around Tamil speakers for a long time. The first text says that the eastern Vedda groups have been affected by Tamil including taking in some words and phrases.

This shows that the way Vedda language changes depends on where the group lives. The language can not be the same in all places. The languages around a group affect the way they speak.

In places where people speak languages, they may use different languages for different jobs. A Vedda person might use Tamil to talk to Tamil speakers but use Sinhala for school or government work. The Vedda way of speaking may still be connected to their group identity and customs.

This kind of use of more than one language shows that people can change how they speak.. It can also make the small language have less use when bigger languages take over more areas.

4.4 Borrowing Words and Changing Structure

One of the obvious signs of language contact is the borrowing of words. The Vedda language has added words from Sinhala, and Tamil influence is also present in groups that have contact with Tamil speakers.

Borrowing helps people talk better in situations. New jobs, new places, new tools, and new ways of doing things often require words that are not in the

way of speaking. Borrowing gives people the words to fit into ways of life.

If too many words are borrowed, some people might think that the language is just a version of the bigger language. When a language has many words and sentence shapes, people might not see it as different.

The first paper states that the Vedda language still has some parts even when it has a lot of Sinhala influence. This is important because you can not just look at how many borrowed words there are to determine whether a language is different. A language can change a lot from contact. Still have things that mean a lot to the people who speak it.

The way Vedda language changes should be seen as a mix of contact and change of a simple difference between a "pure" Vedda language and Sinhala.

4.5 Fewer Places to Use the Language

One of the signs that a language is in trouble is when it is used less and less in different areas.

In the past the Vedda language would have been used in life. Changes in how people live have changed where the language is used. As the groups become more settled and connected to places Sinhala becomes more needed.

School is one area where Sinhala has become more important. Government services are another. Jobs and money talks also need the languages. The news and wider communication help Sinhala and Tamil to be more important.

As these languages are used more Vedda is used less. It may still be in family talks in traditions in ways of saying things and in identity but these areas are not enough to keep the language alive if younger people don't learn it naturally.

Wardhaugh and Fuller (2015) say that where a language is used is important to see how strong it is. The Vedda situation shows that the number of people who can speak the language is not as important as the places where they actually use it.

4.6 Passing the Language Between Generations

Passing the language from one generation to the next is probably the most important thing for the future of the Vedda language.

If parents talk to their children in Sinhala, the

children may only understand Vedda a little or not at all. This can make a gap over time. Older people may know more about the language. Younger people rely more on Sinhala.

Fishmans (1991) idea is very helpful for this. The survival of a language depends on whether it is used in families and communities. Programs to save the language can not replace speaking.

The reasons for parents to choose Sinhala are not simple. They may want their children to do well in school, talk with people, get a job, and be part of the country.

Language change should not be seen as a loss of culture. It is more about how people respond to the world in which they live. When a main language offers opportunities, people have good reasons to use it.

This makes it difficult to bring back the language: keeping the small language without stopping people from using the main languages they need for work and life.

4.7 Attitudes About the Language and Its Value

Peoples feelings about a language are connected to whether it changes. People tend to keep languages they think are valuable useful or linked to who they're.. A language that is not seen as useful in work or life may slowly be used less.

The Vedda language has not been seen as important compared to Sinhala and Tamil. Sinhala has support from places like schools and government. This makes young Vedda speakers see Sinhala as needed for life.

This makes a difference between use and symbolic value. Sinhala may be more useful for jobs and school.. Vedda may be important for who they are and where they come from.

A program to bring back the language needs to make both parts strong. If Vedda is only important for identity younger people may like it. Not use it. For it to stay they need to use it in life.

4.8 The Strength of the Language and the People

Giles, Bourhis and Taylors (1977) idea helps look at how strong the Vedda language's

Status.

Vedda is not as strong as Sinhala and Tamil. The main languages have support from schools, government and society. This makes it less likely that young people will use Vedda.

Still more people knowing about the Vedda group may make Vedda more respected. More recognition of the group as a people can help the language feel more valuable.

Population

The size and where the group lives also affects how strong the language is. Smaller groups have people and fewer chances to talk in the language. Being spread out can make it harder to keep using the language.

Support From Institutions

Institutions are the problem. Vedda is not used much in schools, government or the news. Without support from places the language depends more on the group to keep it going.

From this idea the Vedda language is still in trouble.. The idea also shows places to help: making the language more respected helping the group talk more and making sure places help the language.

4.9 Language and Cultural Identity

When the language is used less it doesn't mean the culture disappears. The Vedda group still keeps their traditions. Feels proud of their past.

The language is still part of that past. Some old ways of speaking and special ideas may be hard to say in another language. Losing the language can make it hard to pass on knowledge.

Keeping the language is part of keeping the culture. Efforts to write down stories, songs, sayings and histories can help keep both the language and the culture going.

The link between language and who they are can also make younger people care more about their language. If they feel proud it can help bring the language if they have a chance to learn and use it.

4.10 Modern Life and Changing Jos

Modern life is another reason the language is changing. The way Vedda people live has changed a lot. More people live in one place, go to school, get jobs, and talk with people. These changes have

changed how the group talks.

These changes are not all bad. More schools, jobs, healthcare, and better places can make life better.

The challenge is ensuring that modern life does not mean giving up the language. A group should be able to take part in places while still keeping their language.

This requires the use of more than one language, not just switching to the bigger ones. Sinhala and Tamil can be used to talk to people, while Vedda remains the language of the group and their culture.

4.11 Is the Vedda Language in Danger?

The signs in this study show that the Vedda language is in a state of decline. The main signs are places where Sinhala is used more and less conversation between generations.

It is important not to say that the language is dead or gone. People still care about their language. It is used in some parts of their life. So the situation is not simple.

Languages in danger are on a scale. A language can lose people and places slowly, not all at once. The Vedda language seems to be getting weaker in a way.

Therefore, the right question is not just whether the language is still being spoken. If there is a chance of it being passed on and used by future people.

4.12 Ways to Keep the Language

Even though there are problems, the loss of the Vedda language is not certain to happen. Fishman (2001) says that languages that are in trouble can get better when the group helps and when parents pass it on to children.

The Vedda language needs a place where it can be kept alive. Parents and grandparents should speak to their children in Vedda. This can help pass the language on to the next generation.

Involving the community in recording the language is also important for documentation. Words, stories, songs, and old tales can be written down. Kept for later.

Schools can help too. Teaching children about Vedda culture and language can be done without

taking from Sinhala or Tamil. It can help make sure kids know than one language.

4.13 Official Support

Getting support for a smaller language can help it be more respected. Government groups, schools, cultural groups, and people who study languages can all help.

For instance, shows and events can include the Vedda language. Books can teach students about the history and features of the language. Schools can support projects that study and record the language.

The media can help well. Making videos, films, and online collections can help more people see and hear Vedda. This can make the language more known outside the community.

Official help also shows that language is important. It is not a leftover from the past but a real part of Sri Lanka's languages.

4.14 Involving the People

Any plan to save a language must come from the people who speak it. Outsiders can not save a language without the help of the people who use it.

The community should decide what to record, how to show it, and how to teach it. Elders have knowledge, and younger people can help with new ways to share the language.

This is very important because language should not be stuck in an idea. Languages change over time. The goal is to ensure that Vedda is used in life while allowing people to also speak Sinhala and Tamil.

4.15 What Comes Next for Vedda

The future of the Vedda language depends on things. First, will younger people learn it? Second, can the language be used in places? Third, will people feel proud of using it? Fourth, will groups support it?

If younger people stop learning Vedda, it will only be used by people and in special settings. If people feel proud and work together, the language might do better.

The best goal is not to take Vedda from Sinhala and Tamil. Being able to speak more than one language is

already a part of life for many. A good future would mean keeping Vedda with the languages.

The aim should be to add languages, not replace them. People should use Sinhala and Tamil when needed but still speak Vedda at home and in settings.

5. Conclusion

The sociolinguistic condition of the Vedda language shows how difficult it is for indigenous languages when societies change rapidly in social, economic, and cultural ways. In this paper, we show that the current state of the Vedda language cannot be explained by language. The Vedda language has been shaped by contact with Sinhala and Tamil by changes in where people live in schooling in economic ties by how institutions work, by how people feel about languages and by a weakening of how the Vedda language is passed from parents to children.

History shows that the Vedda community has never lived in language isolation. Constant contact with Sinhala and Tamil speakers has brought words and grammar changes into the Vedda language. Thomasons (2001) theory of language contact shows how such changes come from social situations. Sinhala influence is especially strong because Sinhala is used in important institutions and in the economy. Tamil influence also shows up in Vedda communities that are close to Tamil speakers.

The analysis also shows that the biggest sociolinguistic problem is language shift. Sinhala is increasingly used for school, government, work, and everyday messages. Because of this, younger people who speak Vedda feel reasons to speak Sinhala. This does not mean that they reject Vedda identity. It simply shows the social realities that the Vedda community faces.

Fishmans (1991) showed the importance of children learning the Vedda language from parents and friends. If children stop learning the Vedda language at home and in their villages, the future of the language is unclear. When the Vedda language is removed from schools, jobs, government, media, and other public places, it becomes harder for young people to see it as an everyday language.

The idea of vitality gives another reason. In status, numbers, and support from institutions, the Vedda language is at a level higher than Sinhala and Tamil.

Because the Vedda language is not seen much in places, it can be used less, and it becomes more at risk.. Pride in culture and more recognition of indigenous identity can help the Vedda language grow in symbolic strength.

An important conclusion from this study is that the loss of a language is linked to power and inequality. The move from the Vedda language to Sinhala is not a choice between two languages. This happens in a society where languages have levels of power in institutions and the economy. People often learn the language because it gives them access to school, jobs, travel, and a bigger role in society.

Protecting the Vedda language should not prevent people from learning Sinhala and Tamil. Instead, we should support a model in which people in the Vedda community can learn languages and maintain the Vedda language. In this way, we honour the needs of today and the cultural value of keeping the language alive.

We can take steps to help. First, the Vedda community can record words, sayings, stories, songs, and other language treasures. Second, schools can teach Vedda history and language. Third, other institutions can give visibility to Vedda culture and language. Fourth, young people should join in keeping the Vedda language alive. Lastly, the focus should be on making the Vedda language used from one generation to the next, not just keeping it in books.

Families are very important. School programs cannot replace the teaching of language from parents and elders to children. If the Vedda language is to stay alive, it must be used meaningfully in homes and villages.

At the time, we must understand that language changes naturally. We do not try to bring the Vedda language to a made up old form or to erase all Sinhala and Tamil influences. Instead, we aim to keep the Vedda language meaningful in the mix of languages that people use.

In the end, the Vedda language is more than words and grammar. It ties to the history, identity, memory, and heritage of a community in Sri Lanka. When the Vedda language weakens, it affects the variety of the whole country.

The future of the Vedda language is not clear. Decline is not a must. Fishman (2001) showed that threatened languages can grow when communities,

schools, scholars, and governments collaborate. In Sri Lanka, greater respect for language, stronger community work, recording, school programs, and good language policies could help revive the Vedda language.

Keeping the Vedda language alive is not about saving a rare language. It is also about keeping diversity and ensuring that modern life does not force the loss of indigenous languages. Sri Lanka is richer because it has languages and language traditions with different stories and meanings. The Vedda language deserves a place among these languages.

In summary, the sociolinguistic situation of the Vedda language shows how language, identity, power, and social change are linked. The Vedda language has been greatly affected by Sinhala and Tamil. There are big problems with its limited use and with passing the language from parents to children. Still the strong cultural importance of Vedda identity gives hope, for keeping and renewing the Vedda language. The best future is one where speakers of the Vedda language can take part fully in Sri Lankan life.

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