

FORTY YEARS OF LANGUAGE CHANGE IN KUPWAD

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This paper discusses an attempt to interpret synchronic variation in a convergence area (southern Maharashtra) within the framework of language contact and language change. This work started with a re-examination of the landmark study by Gumperz and Wilson (1971) in Kupwad and was later extended to Solapur, Akkalkot and two neighbouring villages which were a part of the Maharashtra-Karnataka border dispute post-1965. It is expected that a comparison of the 1971 findings and the recent findings should constitute a longitudinal study and throw further light on the sociolinguistic nature of the diffusion/convergence process in a convergence area.

The socio-historical method (which is a cross-fertilization of historical linguistics with the variationist methods of sociolinguistics; cf. Romaine 1982) has been used. The method involves comparing states of the language at different points in time, the assumption being that patterns of variation in the present time must have existed at an earlier time also. The success of the approach however depends on finding comparable data on the language variety. This in fact becomes the limitation of the method. In carrying out a real-time study of a community, the researcher has to rely on previous descriptions of the language variety but she has no control over the speaker backgrounds, discourse types, the sociolinguistic setting or the linguistic variables of the previous study.

G&W in their study do not provide any details of the social backgrounds of the particular speakers from whom data were elicited. In 2006 this researcher made contact with the 75 year old head of a Jain family in Kupwad with whom G&W stayed for 3 months and an attempt was made to partially reconstruct their data-collection methods. G&W (1971) give only one example for each of the eleven linguistic features they have described, where either Kannada or Marathi has provided the model for the convergence. It is therefore not clear whether G&W have described a *tendency* towards either Marathi or Kannada with scope for internal variation, or completely *focused* linguistic features where the change in either direction was complete.

Data

The observations reported in this paper are based on data collected from 26 speakers (aged 18 to 75) from traditionally Kannada-speaking families. The data include (1) field notes from participant observation (2) tape-recordings of informants' responses to a sociolinguistic questionnaire, (3) recordings of narratives from 17 informants and (4) recordings of some free speech. The paper reports three linguistic features in Kupwad Kannada, which are at variance with standard Kannada (cf. the typological-historical method of Emeneau 1956 and 1980; Gumperz and Wilson 1971; Reddy 2005). The linguistic features were examined using the variationist methods of sociolinguistics.

The Linguistic Features

(1) COPULA CONSTRUCTIONS. Introduction of functions of the copula 'to be' which are absent in standard Kannada. For example, copula sentences with nominal complements usually do not have overt *be* in the present tense – *bha:skar oLLeya: me:stru* 'Bhaskar is a good teacher'. Such sentences sound awkward in the standard variety of Kannada when used

with the copula *to be* (Sridhar 1991). Kannada spoken in southern Maharashtra optionally uses constructions such as *i: mani: doDDa eti*: ‘this house is big’ with an overt copula *eti*.

(2) LOSS OF SEPARATE ACCUSATIVE CASE MARKING. Kupwad Kannada does not have the distinct forms of standard Kannada to mark the accusative and the dative: both cases are marked by a single form as is found in Marathi.

(3) INTRODUCING A QUOTATION. G&W reported that Kannada speakers in Kupwad used the subordinating conjunction *ki* of Marathi/Hindi-Urdu to mark off a quotation. Non-finite subordinate constructions had changed to constructions consisting of conjunction + finite clause.

Observations

Table 1 below summarises the main observations from data collected in the present study:

TABLE 1: *A comparison of the 1971 and post-2006 observations of linguistic features in Kupwad Kannada which have shifted towards Marathi*

	Linguistic Feature	Gumperz & Wilson 1971	Kupwad (2006, 2009, 2010)
		Nature of shift towards Marathi model	Nature of shift towards Marathi model
1	COPULA	COMPLETE	COMPLETE
2	LOSS OF SEPARATE ACCUSATIVE CASE- MARKING	COMPLETE	SHOWS SOME VARIATION
3	INTRODUCING QUOTATIONS (Drav. complementiser <i>follows</i> subordinate clause → IA. complementiser <i>precedes</i> subordinate clause)	COMPLETE	SHOWS VARIATION

In keeping with the essential principle of socio-historical linguistics (cf. Romaine 1982) we could assume that, if variation exists in the language variety today, the same pattern of variation could be expected to have existed even earlier. So, does Gumperz’s description fail to capture the variation? Has he identified ‘tendencies’ rather than describing actual usage of the languages in contact? (The same observation was made in Kulkarni-Joshi 2008 for Kupwad Marathi; see Table 2).

TABLE 2: A Comparison of the 1971 and 2008 observations of the marking of the 3rd person subject NP and agreement patterns in the perfective clause in the Kupwad variety of Marathi

	Gumperz & Wilson 1971	Kupwad 2008
3 RD PERSON SUBJECT NP: MARKED OR UNMARKED	Unmarked	May or may not be marked
VERB AGREEMENT PATTERNS	Verb agrees with unmarked Subject NP	Variation in patterns of agreement (1) S _{erg} O _{nom} V _{object} concord (2) S _{non-erg} O _{nom} V _{subject} concord (3) S _{erg} O _{nom} V _{subject} concord
Nature of shift towards Kannada model	COMPLETE	SHOWS VARIATION

Summary of observations:

It was hypothesised in an earlier paper (Kulkarni-Joshi 2008) that convergence in Kupwad had been effected in that parallel structures had become available to speakers of the contact varieties. Complete ‘focussing’ of the linguistic variants had not taken place for all linguistic features. The hypothesis is strengthened.

The second part of the paper assumes G&W’s claim for a completely focused language variety as being correct. Using the 1971 description as the reference, the different trajectories of the three linguistic features (see Table 1 above) in the 2009 data are examined in terms of the following language-internal and language-external constraints: Internal constraints - (1) structural fit considerations i.e. has the morpheme order changed? (2) markedness consideration i.e. is ‘simplification’ involved? External constraints - (1) Age (2) Sex (3) Education (4) Medium of schooling (5) emotional attachment with Kannada (6) Reported Mother Tongue (7) Social Network (8) Contacts with Karnataka. While the two linguistic factors do not seem to predict the 2009 observations, some of the social factors show significant correlations with the linguistic outcome.

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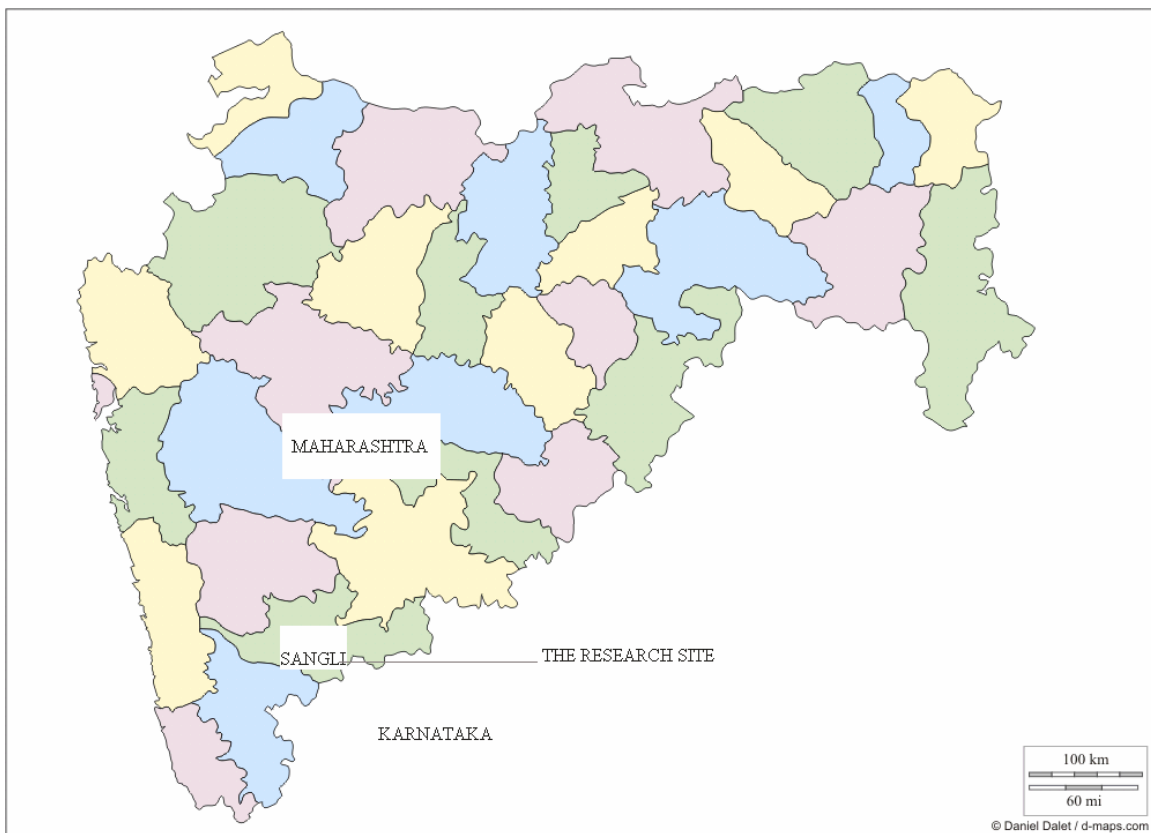
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LANGUAGES INVESTIGATED – Contact varieties of Marathi and
Kannada (partial data from Hindi-Urdu)

LOCATION – Kupwad, a town located in Sangli district of Maharashtra
state in India. The town is close to the Maharashtra-Karnataka
border.



THE STUDY- revisits J. Gumperz and R.Wilson's 1971 study of contact
and convergence in Kupwad.