

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

5.0 Introduction

From the findings of this study, it was possible to detect the various ways the users of Tamil.Net used English and Tamil to obtain and give information and also to communicate with each other. The objective of the study was to find out how much English was used, the types of English and Tamil words used and to observe the pattern of code-switching between English and Tamil in Tamil.Net which is a website organized by and for the Tamil community. The language to provide information was obtained from the homepage of Tamil.Net. The language used to communicate among the participants of Tamil.Net and the pattern of code switching was obtained from the selected emails from the chosen month of November, 2001.

5.1 Summary of Findings

It can be summarized that the context of situation, in this case, the Internet, had a great influence on the language used to provide information and for communication. Similarly, the context of culture too, had an influence on the language used. As was mentioned in Chapter 1, the participants of this website come from various parts of the world. They can be said to be proficient in both English and Tamil as was observed in their

code-switching patterns. They had knowledge of two languages where a choice was made to suit their needs. However, the native language was used more for communicating with each other to establish common bonds and more English was used to provide information.

This study has shown that for the purpose of international communication aimed at everyone as in the homepage, the language used is English. The language of information production and information retrieval is English. Technical words, even when there are equivalent words in the mother tongue, are used in English for contextual need to retain the accuracy and consistency. When participants of a particular race communicate with each other through emails, greetings and words related to religion, culture, food and names of famous people are in the mother tongue provided the technical settings support the language.

Generally, it can be concluded that the Tamil words were used as identity markers in greetings both in the homepage and emails. There seems to be a need to identify themselves as part of the group even if their proficiency in the English language is higher than in Tamil as is observed by their English message texts.

5.2. Answers to Research Questions

5.2.1. Research Question 1 – How much English was used in this website in a month?

To provide information to the participants, English was the main language used as was found in the percentage of English words in the homepage, which amounted to 95.78% and 1.85% of addresses in English. To communicate with each other, about half the emails were in Tamil and only about 30% emails were in English.

The analysis of data in this study reveals that for the purpose of introduction and retrieval of information in this website for Tamil Language, English is the main language used. This is mainly because of the context of situation in this case, the Internet. The technology of the operating systems and software on the Internet supports with ease the Roman alphabet used in English Language. Texts on the Internet with its properties of technology texts such as tags, links, margins and URL addresses, are understood by the users of the Internet even with moderate proficiency in English. However, when communicating via emails, the participants have shown an inclination to use Tamil. The participants seem to have identified themselves with the ethnic group despite Internet being a global setting.

5.2.2. Research Question 2 – What are the types of English and Tamil words used?

Generally, English words reflect shared knowledge and understanding of the Internet setting. Words used were simple, concise and brief indicating an understanding of technical terms inherent on the Internet. The message form and contents were informal but imperative indicating a need by the producer of text to be accepted and for participants to come back to use the website again. To show shared ethnicity, a few Tamil words were used. Generally, the Tamil words used were mainly referring to the Internet, food, fashion or coined words and words belonging to expressions.

Even though, the emails were not used to answer this research question, from the study of the emails, it was realized that the lexical borrowings in the emails for technical terms seem to be higher from English to Tamil. For accurate transmission of information, the original English terms have been retained. For terms related to culture, religion, food and other sensitive and personal matters, Tamil was used

It can be concluded that even though English is used to produce and retrieve information, certain finer aspects of solidarity and intimacy are better expressed in Tamil. At the same time, Tamil lexical items which are implicitly understood by the participants have been used in the original form.

5.2.3. Research Question 3 : Is there a pattern of code-switching in the emails?

Generally, as in the case of Valdes-Fallis strategies of code-switching, it was found that, in this study code-switching occurred more as a result of external factors than internal factors. Code-switching occurred for the following reasons :

- a. Contextual – when the Internet setting determines the language choice as in the URL addresses and titles of emails.
- b. Identity markers – when the producer of text had used Tamil words in the homepage and when the participants of the discussion group had used Tamil in the openings and closings of emails.
- c. Quotations & paraphrases – when foreign language words, and English phrases were used.

Code-switching also occurred for the following reasons :

- a. As a means of reflecting social information in relation to role relations and settings. There were no occurrences found for code-switching which occur with a shift in topics.
- b. As a stylistic process where both languages were used.
- c. To show the proficiency of the participants in both languages.

5.3.

Recommendations for further studies

There have not been many studies done on language choice in bilingual and multilingual websites. To carry out more of such studies would be useful because, using computer-mediated communication in classrooms has become a current trend. Similarly, distance and interactive learning via the Internet are also on the increase. Such similar studies would help educators to explore the language used by bilinguals to communicate with each and to obtain information via the Internet.

5.4.

Conclusion

From this sample study, it can be concluded that English has been and still remains the important language required to access and surf the Internet. However, it can also be seen that technological advancement has enabled the use of non-romanised scripts to obtain information and to communicate in Internet. Language choice is not as limited as compared to the beginning era of Internet. With such resources and choices in the Internet, it now depends on users of Internet who are non-native speakers of English to increase the non-English content in Internet. Similarly, non-native speakers of English who are computer experts can start their own language domain names and URL addresses as is already being carried out in countries like China. The efforts of these non-native speakers of English will determine whether English will still be used in foreign language websites in future.