

# How Dynamics of Popular Languages Influence the Usage of Indigenous Languages

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**Abstract-** The cultural maps of tribes have stood the test of time, to a great extent, even though the reasons are debatable. Typically, indigenous tribal groups are found to have languages that lack script. Gradual decay or immutable distortion is what awaits the vocabulary of such languages. Since it is hard for aboriginal languages to stay original in the face of this zeal for modernity, extinction surfaces as the inevitable. This paper enquires whether indigenous languages imbibe and incorporate derivatives of the dominant popular language's vocabulary; and how this integration affects the former. For the same, a case study of the Todas, a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group of Tamil Nadu, India, is undertaken. The sample was stratified into five groups of three each, from three Toda villages on the basis of age. Cluster sampling technique was employed to select sample from the population. Members of the different age groups were asked to talk as well as engage in conversation with each other in Toda language for 2 minutes each. Frequency in employing non-Toda words were noted. The findings of the study reveal that the younger generation Toda language speakers are turning oblivious of their native tongue.

**Keywords —** Communication, Culture, Extinction, Indigenous languages, Tradition, Writing system

## I. INTRODUCTION

Language, by and large, is an inextricable part of one's identity. Language, which is a product of the thoughts and behavior of a community, can be considered a towering bastion that intricately holds within it a virtual variant of the world that employs that tongue for communication—a world comprising of the culture, views, lifestyle, beliefs, customs, rituals, traditions and history of the community that speaks that particular language. To get to know the world inside, one needs to get past this lofty bastion. In other words, one needs to learn, if not master, this stronghold of a language to understand the behavior and cultural traditions of a given society so as to identify the truths and myths associated with that society. This explains why when people learn another language, it helps them to understand the worlds associated. Language and culture are found to have mutual effect on each other since language reflects the culture of a community and culture in turn shapes the language in the long run. Children learn language as a part of their culture. An individual's understanding of the world around him is largely facilitated by language.

Language, over the years, has evolved as an indispensable element of human communication. The idea of writing down what we speak/ communicate- the concept of written language is one of the sweeping dynamics that rerouted and moulded human history as we see it today. Unfortunately,

very few societies enjoy the privilege of having written language.

### 1.1. Written Word vs. Spoken Word

The difference between a word that's written and the word that's spoken is drastic. A written word holds prospect for umpteen definitions or explanations. Different readings, each time, attribute different meanings to a word that's written, according to the connotations offered by the period. Multiple readers contribute to developing the meaning of a written word in multiple ways. With the written word, a reader always has the privilege to take a break, get involved in something and come back to it, at any point of time.

When it comes to spoken word, communication at the time of speech may appear definite, but when considered in detail, it becomes visible that infinite amount of uncertainty is linked with it. A word spoken incorporates the emotion, thoughts, experience, knowledge and language ability of the speaker similar to the written word, but here the choice of words need to be made much spontaneously. This spontaneity and competence of the speaker stand as the first elements of 'noise' in speech. Emphasizing, visible gestures, sound modulation, tone, and slang impart an unwavering meaning to any word ever said. For a written word the communication is made through specific images while for a spoken word numerous external factors like external noise, crowd, ambience, climate, space and context

matter a lot. Besides, a word ceases to exist the moment it is said. The old word literally dies when the speaker moves on to the next word. In crux, a spoken word holds no record other than memories of the speaker and the listener. The meaning communicated depends upon the individuals involved. Even though the written word opens possibility for different interpretations, every interpretation revolves around a recorded image or word. But a spoken word is purely dependent on memory. The trouble with languages having no writing system is that, with the death of each member, a little of their culture too dies. We have had examples in the recent past where languages becoming extinct as the last speaker dies. With them, gets interred the cultural specifics of a community that might have been on the face of earth for millennia together.

By and large, languages of tribal people are found to be lacking writing system. Indian historian and anthropologist S. C. Dube in his work *Tribal Heritage of India* comments on the lack of clarity and acceptability associated with defining the term 'tribe'. Yet, Dube sites out certain characteristics typical of the tribes, on the grounds of popular definitions- they tend to live in segregation in forests or on hills; they would be the inhabitants of the soil for aeons together; they would be underdeveloped in terms of technological and economic advancements; they always confuse their remote history for mythology; their language, philosophies rites and rituals would be quite different from that of the rest; there is no concept of hierarchy (Dube, 1977). The Todas is one such unique tribe.

### 1.2. The Todas

The Todas is one of the six tribes recognized as PVTGs or Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups of Tamil Nadu by the Government of India. This small pastoral tribe of South India resides along the highest regions of the Nilgiris. Their customs and practices are quite unique. Cultural anthropologist Dr. Jakka Parthasarathy (2008) opines that on account of the many rare cultural traits like social paternity through bow and arrow ceremony, vegetarianism, buffalo sacrifice, priesthood, sacred diaries and polyandry, anthropologists count Todas an internationally popular ethnic community. They speak Toda, a Dravidian language, which does not have writing system. The language is typologically aberrant and phonologically difficult. It is now recognized that Toda is a member of the southern subgroup of the historical family proto-South-Dravidian; it splits off from South Dravidian (Krishnamurti, 2006). The dominant popular languages of the area are Tamil and English.

### C. Objectives of the Study

1. To find out whether indigenous languages imbibe and incorporate derivatives of the dominant languages' vocabulary.
2. To find out if people belonging to older generation of communities that employ languages without

writing system for communication, find it difficult to communicate to the younger generation in their own language.

### 1.3. Significance of the Study

Understanding the consistency in communication patterns and nature of culture in relation to language is helpful in a number of ways. The significance of communication in expediting or defending cultural change can be learned. This study attempts to figure out the dilution happening to the communication schemes and the cultural structures of societies that do not have --writing system. The extent up to which aboriginal language speakers imbibe and incorporate the derivatives of popular dominant language's vocabulary can shed light on the magnitude of the obliteration jeopardy that language actually is in.

## II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

"Vanishing Voices: The Extinction of the World's Languages" (2000) by Daniel Nettle and Suzanne Romaine is an exceptionally comprehensive rendition that sheds light on the alarming rate at which languages turn extinct, and how it jeopardizes the future of biodiversity. The study holds that the extinction of languages is a part of the larger picture of the near-total disintegration of the worldwide ecosystem. Indigenous languages have in them encrypted, lion share of knowledge about the constituents of amalgamated ecosystems, the association between these constituents and deliberations about means to conserve biodiversity. The book depicts the losses that humanity as a whole will encounter if we cannot prevent these languages from turning extinct.

The study "Speaking Sovereignty: Indigenous Languages and Self-Determination" (2007) by Maximilian Viatori and Gloria Ushigua considers the language revitalization case of Zipara communities of eastern Ecuador. The study demonstrates that indigenous languages can play an important role in furthering indigenous self-determination in South and North America, where it often serves as a vital aspect of tribal governance. It observes that the act of revitalizing a language can also be an important step toward establishing sovereignty for an indigenous nation.

The most extensive study on Todas till date is "The Todas" (1906) by English anthropologist W. H. R. Rivers. Employing the anthropological method of ethnography, the author carried out participant observation for quite long to document the life style of the Todas. The monumental work published over a century ago discusses in detail everything related to the Todas. Rivers, through his extensive findings affirms that the Todas have degenerated from a higher culture. The accounts in this book paved the foundation for amassing a basic understanding of the Toda community, their customs and lifestyle.

The study "The Toda Reflexes of Proto-Dravidian \*l and \*l'" by P. S. Subrahmanyam published in the Journal of the

American Oriental Society (1977, Vol. 97) presents findings that enable the differentiation between loanwords and native words in particular cases in Toda. The study indicates the chances of Toda language having borrowed words from one the neighboring languages of Tamil, Malayalam or Kannada.

“Toda Grammar and Texts” by M. B. Emeneau (1984) is an authoritative description of the grammar of the Toda language. It features the prose texts the author had recorded on which his evaluation of morphology is largely based. The main body of the texts consists of descriptions of rituals and mythology. Emeneau describes the Toda language as one of the most interesting as well as most aberrant of the minor Dravidian languages. The study holds detailed and careful analysis and description of the recorded data. Even though the song language has been utilized to a lesser degree, sizeable field notes are there in addition to the translation which provide valuable contribution to each account.

The study “Indigenous Language Usage and Maintenance Patterns among Indigenous People in the Era of Neoliberal Multiculturalism in Mexico and Guatemala” (2010, Vol. 45) by Hirotooshi Yoshioka published in Latin American Research Review (2010, Vol. 45) examines statistical correlations between various socioeconomic, demographic and community characteristics, and indigenous language usage among self-identified indigenous people in Mexico and Guatemala. One of the main findings of the study is that among those who self-identify as indigenous- those living in urban areas with a higher socioeconomic status- are significantly less likely to speak indigenous languages. So are the children of indigenous speakers with higher socio-economic status in both Mexico and Guatemala. The study holds that there is no negative correlation between migration and indigenous language use.

The study “The Origin of Writing Systems: Preclassic Mesoamerica” by John S. Justeson, published in the journal World Archaeology (1986, Vol. 17) discusses the evolution of incipient writing by paying particular attention to the origins of Mesoamerican writing. Progenitor systems in terms of the linguistic and graphic resources - hieroglyphic writing, Mesoamerican numeral systems and iconography are analyzed and the social context of the emergence of writing and linguistic encoding are propounded in the study.

### III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1. Sample Size

The Todas are sorely scattered along the Niligri hills. For the study to evaluate the hegemony of popular languages (Tamil/ English) over the aboriginal one, the sample was stratified into five groups of three each, from three Toda villages on the basis of age. The stratification was as

follows:

Table 1. Respondents’ Composition

Age Group	No. of participants from Village 1	No. of participants from Village 2	No. of participants from Village 3	Total
Group 1: 6-15 years	3	3	3	9
Group 2: 16-22 years	3	3	3	9
Group 3: 26-40 years	3	3	3	9
Group 4: 41-60 years	3	3	3	9
Group 5: above 60 years	3	3	3	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>45</b>

15 Todas each, hailing from 3 different settlements were selected. The 3 settlements were selected on the basis of the availability of the age group composition as well as their geographical placing. The first settlement was very much in the heart of the tourist spot Ooty, second one was moderately distanced from mainstream Ooty and the third settlement was hours’ drive away from the city. Further, 3 members each from each age group were randomly selected, in each village.

#### 3.2. Methodology

This study is part of a larger study that employed ethnographic methods of participant observation, in-depth interview and systematic observation. To collect data pertaining to the objectives of this particular paper, systematic observation method comprising of quantitative approaches labelled Interaction and Elocution were employed. In order to execute the research strategy, cluster sampling technique was implemented to select sample from the population. The assistance of a native Toda speaker who was fluent in both Tamil and English was sought throughout.

##### 3.2.1. Interaction

One of the specific objectives of the study was to identify if people belonging to older generation of communities that employ script-less language for communication find it difficult to communicate to the younger generation in their own language. Random members of age groups 1, 2, 3 and 4 were asked to separately engage in conversation with a member of age group 5, which consisted of natives aged 60 above, strictly in Toda language alone, on topics related to their cultural practices. If the vocabulary of the dominant language Tamil has in any way incapacitated the Toda language, the different age groups might find it difficult to



communicate to the 60 plus age group. There were four sessions in each village-

- Group 5 vs. Group 1
- Group 5 vs. Group 2
- Group 5 vs. Group 3
- Group 5 vs. Group 4.

The conversations technically turned out to be monologues, since one age group would only listen, and not interact, when the other age group talks. One age group would be interrupted only if they use a Toda word that the other age group could not make out. So as to facilitate 'dialogue', or a two-way conversation so to speak, both the participating groups in each session were given topics to pick from.

### 3.2.2. Elocution

Another specific objective of the study was to find out whether the indigenous languages imbibe and incorporate derivatives of the dominant language's vocabulary. All 3 members of all the 5 age groups were asked to talk on specific topics in Toda language for 2 minutes each. The interpreter kept a check as to whether the discourses made sense. Frequency in employing non-Toda words were noted.

## IV. DATA ANALYSIS

### 4.1. Interaction

Age groups 1, 2, 3 and 4 were asked to separately engage in conversation with age group 5, which consisted of natives aged 60 above, strictly in Toda language alone, on topics related to their cultural practices.

#### 4.1.1. Village 1

Village 1 lies pretty much in the heart of the city. Todas of Village 1 are much more exposed to external culture and languages when compared to the rest of the population. Apart from ancestral vocations, their livelihood is dependent more on tourism.

##### 4.1.1.1. Group 5 vs. Group 1

Respondents of age 8, 9 and 10 interacted with a 61 year female elder. The elder narrated a story in Toda language and the children were asked to raise hands whenever they could not follow. Group 1 participants understood the crux of the story perfectly well but seemingly missed out on the nuances. The elder was interrupted thrice, for the children could not catch a few Toda words- pumpkin, soaking and hole. The elder explained two words to them in Tamil and one in elaborate Toda. Once the interaction was completed, one of the Group 1 respondents was asked to narrate the story in English, and when the respondent did, it was understood that the story was communicated but with a few mix-up. The elder re-narrated the misheard parts of the story in English so that children understood.

The children were asked to list out their prominent festivals to the elder, in Toda language. One respondent listed out

the details peripherally, but was oblivious of what exactly was happening as part of the rituals. When the elder asked, all that the respondent could say was 'people would be coming in cars'. When the elder explained the details of the ritual to the kids, the latter interrupted the former 5 times, for they could not follow many of the Toda words related to rituals.

##### 4.1.1.2. Group 5 vs. Group 2

A 20 year old female interacted with a 70 year old female. The elder gave the Group 2 respondent advices for a successful married life. There were 4 words that Group 2 respondent could not follow and the elder did not know how to explain further in Toda and hence switched for Tamil words.

Group 2 respondent explained to the elder her daily house hold chores and used English words like 'dust', 'bed' and 'thanni' (the Tamil word for water) during the interaction. It turned out that the Group 2 respondent actually knew the Toda for these words but somehow ended up switching to the English and Tamil counterparts. Interestingly, the elder did not interrupt, for using Tamil and English words has become a norm for the Todas.

##### 4.1.1.3. Group 5 vs. Group 3

A 38 year old male interacted with a 72 year old female. Complications involved in parenting was the topic of discussion. The elder who recalled how it was in her days, was interrupted twice. The block was bypassed with the aid of Tamil words. Group 3 respondent explained future plans for his children. English words like 'college' and 'government' were used. It was said that there is no Toda counterpart for 'college'. The conversation was smooth, otherwise.

##### 4.1.1.4. Group 5 vs. Group 4

A 52 year old female interacted with a 70 year old female. The elder explained the crises innate of old age. No interruptions were made during the course of the conversation. Usage of no non-Toda words could be spotted.

The group 4 respondent talked about the need for sticking on to the Toda ethnic practices. Non-Toda words were not used. The conversation was quite smooth.

### 4.1.2. Village 2

Approximately, 1 hour drive from Village 1, this village was away from main stream Ooty and had comparably lesser number of settlers.

#### 4.1.2.1. Group 5 vs. Group 1

One respondent of age 6 years and two respondents of 10 years old interacted with a 67 year old male elder. The elder narrated a story to the children as well as how things were in his childhood. The 10 year olds could kind of follow the

elder, but the 6 year old could not. He could follow only when the story was explained in Tamil. The 10 year olds interrupted the elder 6 times, for they found it difficult to understand the concept in Toda. The Toda word for 'tiger' was one they found particularly baffling. The elder explained in detail and tried to make the children say the word. They struggled like a non-Toda would, to pronounce the Toda for 'tiger'. Naturally, the elder ended up using Tamil words for the ease of conversation

The children were asked to talk about why they are fond of or not fond of school. The 10 year olds struggled to talk in Toda. With the very conspicuous involvement of Tamil and English words, one of the respondents accomplished conversing with the elder. The elder could follow the conversation though. The 6 year old who was very talkative in Tamil turned absolutely mute when asked to talk in Toda, and narrated in Tamil why he likes his best friend.

#### 4.1.2.2. Group 5 vs. Group 2

A 25 year old male interacted with a 65 year old female. The elder narrated the Toda custom of salt giving ceremony and was interrupted 3 times. The practices were explained to the young in elaborate Toda and then he understood.

Group 2 respondent asked the elder how things were different in her younger days. He used many Tamil words but the conversation went rather smooth.

#### 4.1.2.3. Group 5 vs. Group 3

A 28 year old female interacted with a 62 year old female. The elder talked about how to bring up children. Interestingly, the elder used a few English words like 'ready' and 'free'. The elder was interrupted twice for the Group 3 respondent could not follow two Toda words. The elder explained in Tamil, the words the young could not grasp.

The Group 3 respondent recounted her plans for her kid. Used words like 'engineering', 'fees', 'English medium' and 'sports'. Engineering and English do not have Toda substitutes.

#### 4.1.2.4. Group 5 vs. Group 4

A 58 year old female interacted with a 65 year old female. They talked about health concerns and inter caste marriage. No non-Toda words could be detected. Neither was there any interruption.

#### 4.1.3. Village 3

Village 3 is two hours' drive from main stream Ooty. Accessing the village can be quite an adventurous venture in the last 20 minutes of the journey. Village 3 is believed to be one of the very few Toda settlements where age old temples are preserved with their initial sanctity. Majority of the people are into agriculture.

##### 4.1.3.1. Group 5 vs. Group 1

Respondents aged 6, 12 and 14 years interacted with an 80 year old female Toda. The elder narrated a Toda folklore, and she was interrupted 6 times. Children asked for the interpretation of six words the elder used. But they understood the story.

One of the Group 1 respondents recounted the story of her favourite Tamil movie to the elder. She used words like 'climate', 'ground' and many Tamil words. After the interaction the young respondent admitted that she used English and Tamil for she did not know the Toda words. The rest of Group 1 too was unaware. The elder taught the children the Toda for the words they did not know.

##### 4.1.3.2. Group 5 vs. Group 2

A 21 year old male interacted with a 68 year old female. The elder talked about the duties vested in and qualities expected of a Toda priest. The elder was interrupted only once. One thing that needs to be noticed here is, being a male it is mandatory for the Group 2 respondent to assume the role of priest. He might have been familiar with the topic of conversation.

Group 2 respondent recounted to the elder his future aspirations in Toda and ended up using only one Tamil word.

##### 4.1.3.3. Group 5 vs. Group 3

A 33 year old male interacted with a 78 year old male. Buffalo rearing and the Group 3 respondent's business were the topics of conversation. There were no interruptions and no use of non-Toda words.

##### 4.1.3.4. Group 5 vs. Group 4

A 48 year old female engaged in conversation with an 80 year old female. The topics of conversation were 'how the younger generation should be guided' and 'how does it feel to be a Toda elder'. As observed in the former two settlements, there was no involvement of non-Toda words or interruptions in this Group 5 vs. Group 4 conversation as well. The findings are summarized as follows:

Table 2. Interruptions during Interaction

Age Group Combination	Village	No. of interruptions made
Age Group 5 vs. 1	Village 1	8
Age Group 5 vs. 1	Village 2	6
Age Group 5 vs. 1	Village 3	6
Age Group 5 vs. 2	Village 1	4
Age Group 5 vs. 2	Village 2	3
Age Group 5 vs. 2	Village 3	1
Age Group 5 vs. 3	Village 1	2
Age Group 5 vs. 3	Village 2	2
Age Group 5 vs. 3	Village 3	0
Age Group 5 vs. 4	Village 1	0
Age Group 5 vs. 4	Village 2	0
Age Group 5 vs. 4	Village 3	0

As evidenced from Table 2, Group 5 and Group 4 could steadily and effortlessly converse with each other in Toda language. But the trend changed down the younger age groups. Elders were interrupted for an average of 7 times by Age group 1 of the three villages. The assumption was, if the vocabulary of the dominant language has in any way incapacitated the Toda language, the different age groups might find it difficult to communicate to the 60 plus age group. Turned out that it was inappropriate to use the adjective ‘difficult’ to assess the ease of conversation. All age groups freely conversed with groups aged 60 and above. There was no difficulty as such. But, it was neither super smooth. The young, particularly Age Group 1 battled to speak strictly in Toda. There was no difficulty in conversation because the elders too were well-versed in

Tamil. The general trend was, regardless of whether it is an elder or a young, automatically switching to Tamil in times of trouble. This was more evidenced in the next method employed for data collection- Elocution. It was learnt that majority of the Group 1 respondents’ households chose to talk in Tamil or English within the household.

4.2. Elocution

All the members of all the age groups were asked to talk about a topic of their choice for two minutes, strictly in Toda language. The number of incidences of non-Toda words during the course of the elocution were logged. The tabulation was devised in such a way that the least number of incidence is zero and the maximum 10. Number of incidences more than 10 were rounded off as 10.

Figure 1. Incidence rate of non-Toda words

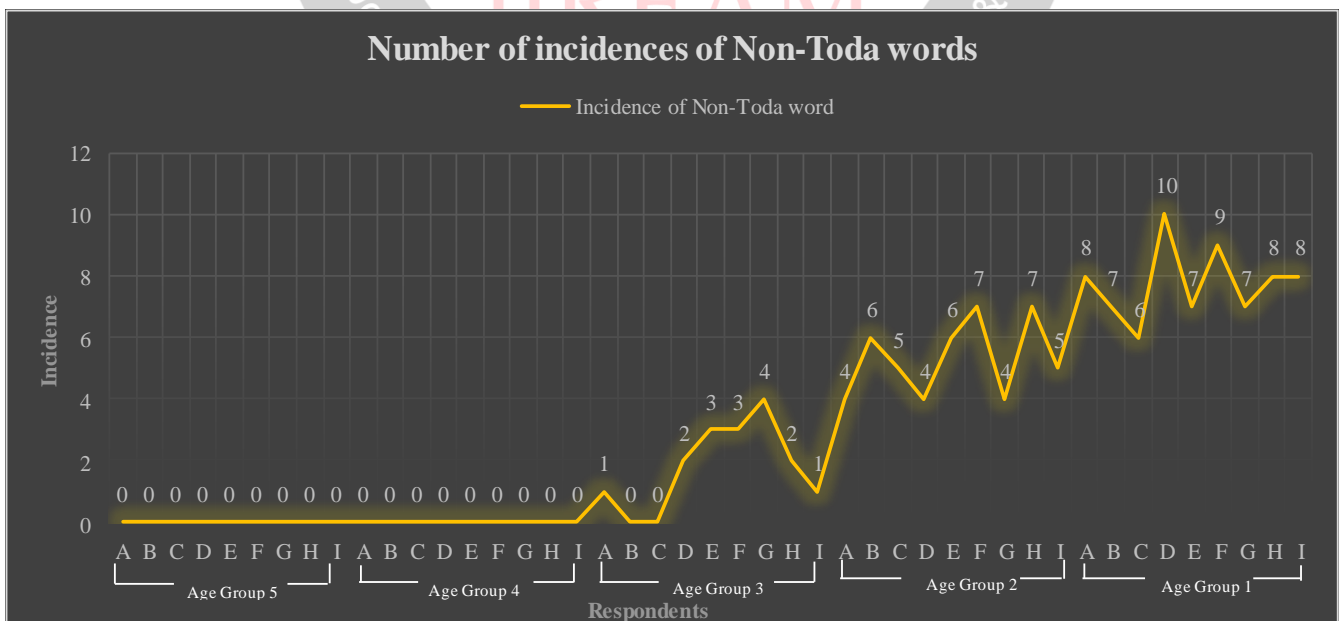


Figure 1 represents the incidence of non-Toda words during the course of the 2 minute long elocution delivered by respondents of the 5 age groups.

Table 3. Average Incidence

Age group	Average Incidence of Non Toda words
Group 5	0
Group 4	0
Group 3	2
Group 2	5
Group 1	8

From Figure 1, the incidence of non-Toda words can be seen increasing with the decrease in age. There is visible incidence of non-Toda words in the younger age groups. The elders can fluently speak in Tamil but when asked to talk only in Toda, they could accomplish the task. But for the younger age groups, English and Tamil have become so inextricable a part of their day to day vocabulary that they cannot undertake the challenge even for two minutes. There were respondents in Age group 1 who could not speak in Toda at all. (The score designated to respondents in the Age group 1 category, who could not talk in Toda at all, is 10.) In Age group 1, there were respondents who talked in Tamil first and then painstakingly translated those sentences into Toda since they could not process their thoughts in Toda. When asked, these children admitted that they speak with their parents in Tamil or English, and not Toda, at home

**V. FINDINGS**

1. Vocabulary of the popular language as such, or their derivatives are getting incorporated into the Toda lexis.
2. Younger age group speakers of Toda language are more comfortable with non-Toda languages of Tamil and English.
3. Younger age groups are unaware of many of the original Toda words.
4. In the case of Age groups 1, 2, and 3, the geographical placing of the settlement has a visible impact on the fluency of the native tongue. The more distanced a settlement is from the mainstream tourist spot, the more eloquent the settlers are in Toda language.
5. Children who speaks in Toda at home are comparatively more articulate in Toda language.
6. There are no systematic efforts undertaken to pass on the language from generation to generation.
7. Majority of the young parents are insistent about conversing in Tamil or English at home.
8. Elder generation speakers find it difficult to communicate to the younger generation in their own language.
9. Elder age groups are equally comfortable in conversing in both Toda and Tamil.
10. Ease of communication is still possible since the elders are inadvertently switching to Tamil words, abundantly, while conversing with the young.

11. There is a visible dip in the usage of native Toda words and hike in switching to non-Toda words, among all age groups.

The study reveals that The Todas take their language for granted and are not particularly committed about preserving their language from going extinct. The results support the findings of the study of Michael Walsh (2005) who probes the efforts in language renewal and documentation in the light of anticipations by anthropologists and linguists on the impending demise of majority of indigenous languages. Walsh proposes that it takes a tremendous commitment on the part of the indigenous communities and those who might assist them if indigenous languages are to survive. The study by Willard Walker (1969) which discusses the prerequisites for the success of native literacy programs, by considering the case history of the development of traditional Cherokee writing system, lists out acceptance by the target population and the momentum of tradition as the most important of the prerequisites. The results of the present study too points in the same direction. The younger generation Todas are more familiar with the languages they get to write and speak at their schools- Tamil and English. They are not yet absolutely ignorant of the Toda. But the transition is on. Lack of script alone cannot be the culprit here. Lack of practice is equally responsible.

**VI. CONCLUSION**

The findings of the study reveal that there is visible hegemony of the popular languages over the aboriginal language that lacks writing system. It is evidenced from the study that the younger generation speakers of the Toda language are slowly yet steadily drifting away from their language. Toda households are favouring Tamil and English over their native tongue apparently for the academic and career security of their children. Even during the observation period, switching to Tamil in times of trouble was the general trend detected across the age groups. If this is the case under strict monitoring and mandatory conditions, for a stint that did not span over three minutes, the dip in the usage of native words and the hike in switching to non-Toda words during the natural course of time can be overwhelming. Unfortunately, for the community to sense the alarming rate at which their native tongue is getting subjugated to the popular ones, the ingress of non-Toda words does not involve the ostentation of a



fanfare. The ousting is rather slow and subtle that the native speakers are unaware that they barely employ the original tongue anymore, for conversing within the tribe. People belonging to the older generation do find it difficult to communicate to the younger generation in their native language. However, communication is smoothly taking place in the popular tongues.

The ingress of popular languages can obliterate Toda language forever since the latter does not have writing system; and along with it, might vanish a humongous native repository of knowledge regarding medicine, healing, flora and fauna, theurgy, alchemy and eco-systemic knowhow as Nettle and Romaine (2000) suggested. The findings of the study emphasizes on the need for the systematic learning of Toda language. Cultural rehabilitation centers can execute this, effectively. Measures need to be devised at the earliest for developing a writing system for Toda language. Depending on the existing phonetic system of English or other prominent Dravidian languages for transliteration will not be of much help since they do not encompass representations that can denote with precision, the exceptionally intricate pronunciation of the Toda sounds. Without the availability of proper phonemic representations, the pronunciation might get metamorphosed—possibly beyond recovery—down the line. Devising a new writing system, with ample input from learned Todas, is the only way to check the language from going extinct. But since this is a long term process, extensive audio-video documentation of the Toda language can save the language from turning extinct, for the time being.

#### Scope for Future Research

The present study holds prospect for several recommendations for extensive additional research. Assimilating elements of popular cultures in terms of life style, beliefs, religious practices and social organization can be studied.

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