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DIGLOSSIA AND TAMIL VARIETIES IN CHENNAI

1. Introduction¹

Chennai, known until 1996 as Madras, is the 5th largest city in India, according to the 2011 Census of India. It is the capital of the Indian state of Tamil Nadu and has a population of more than 4.6 mln. The Tamil language plays a predominant role here, with Telugu, Urdu, Malayalam and Hindi being spoken by 10% or less of the population. If we walk along the streets of Chennai megapolis, Tamil speech is what we will hear most often.

Tamil is a South Dravidian language with a long history, dating back more than two millenia. It is one of the 22 scheduled languages of India. It has an official status in the State of Tamil Nadu and the Indian Union Territory of Puducherry, and it is also one of the official languages in Sri Lanka and Singapore. The total number of its speakers is approximately 77 million people, thus it is one of the top twenty most popular languages in the world [Dubjansky 2013: 48].

The specific language situation in Chennai shows us four main different varieties of Tamil within quite a wide space of functions and forms, including territorial and social dialects (cf [Smirnitskaya 2013]), language registers, etc. These varieties are: Literary Tamil, Colloquial

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Tamil, Tanglish, and the special dialect of the territory investigated, in our case it's Chennai Tamil (or Madras Tamil, Madras Bhasha, "Madras Bhashai"). Literary and Colloquial Tamil play a role in Tamil Diglossia involving High and Low registers of the language that has already existed for many centuries. Tanglish is a Tamil-English code-switching language strategy used primarily by youngsters. We should also be aware of Chennai slang that is called Chennai Tamil or Madras Bhasha. If we consider the famous all-Indian magazine "The Hindu", they raise the question: "What Tamil does Madras speak?" and answer: "Madras Tamil" [The Hindu 2016]. But it's only partly true.

In this article we make a linguistic landscape research. We conducted a series of interviews with Tamil speakers living both in Chennai and in Moscow in order to outline the picture of Tamil language use in the city of Chennai. Such investigations have been made for languages of different language families, for example, for Northeast Caucasian Archi language in [Dobrushina 2007], but as far as we know, have never been made for Tamil. In the article we show the peculiarities of contemporary Tamil diglossia and code-switching. The preliminary results of our study concerning the data of Chennai Tamil slang are presented.

2. The specifics of diglossia in the case of Tamil

The earliest samples of Tamil language are found already in the old epigraphy of the 3rd century BCE. Almost from that period up to now, the two varieties of language have coexisted, forming the situation of classical diglossia, according to C. A. Ferguson's definition of the term: diglossia is a "relatively stable language situation in which, in addition to the primary dialects of the language, there is a very divergent, highly codified (often grammatically more complex) superposed variety... which is learned largely by formal education and is used for most written and formal spoken purposes but is not used by any sector of the community for ordinary conversation" [Ferguson 1959: 435].

Tamil diglossia involves two language varieties: the formal or H (High) variety that is Literary Tamil, and the spoken or Low (L) variety used in informal conversations, that is Colloquial Tamil. Both varieties complement each other in function, as was described in detail by Francis Britto [Britto 1986; 2017 revised].

As for now, Literary Tamil is taught in schools, and it is the language of instruction (except of colleges specifically focused

on learning English). Tamil textbooks are widely used, though there is no nation-wide program. In higher education in Chennai the situation is more complex: the main language of instruction is English, while only few institutions offer education in Tamil. So, we can say that Literary Tamil is in the process of losing its functions, giving way to English. In addition to it, there is a tendency of penetration of Colloquial speech into traditionally formal spheres: literature, radio, TV programs etc. L. P. Krysin named a similar tendency in Russian “the colloquialisation and jargonisation of the public spheres of communication” [Krysin 2011: 446].

There are excellent grammars of Literary Tamil, both Indian (among which the first one, — an ancient grammar *Tolkāppiyam*, dated between 3rd BCE and 5th CE) and foreign, such as Andronov’s “The Grammar of Tamil” [Andronov 1987] and T. Lehmann’s most up-to-date “A Grammar of Modern Tamil” [Lehmann 1993].

Colloquial Tamil is a means of everyday communication. It has a common form used all over the country. It is learned naturally and not taught at schools. Colloquial Tamil hadnot been an object of study or education until the middle of the 20th century, when first descriptions of it appeared, cf. [Zvelebil 1964], [Shanmugam Pillai 1971], [Andronov 1962] etc. In recent years, however, the interest in Colloquial Tamil is growing. New foreign grammars and textbooks of Colloquial Tamil have been published: “Colloquial Tamil” by Asher and Annamalai [Asher et al. 2005], “Le Tamoul sans peine” by Sethupathy and Kasi [Sethupathy et al. 2002] and some others. In Tamil Nadu new mobile apps for learning colloquial language have been released.

At the same time the use of Literary Tamil is influenced by the penetration of English words. Such meanings as ‘refrigerator’, ‘computer’, ‘cooler’ are usually expressed in English (although there are Tamil lexemes *kuḷircātanapeṭṭi* ‘refrigerator’, *kaṇiṇi* ‘computer’ and others with the same meaning). These processes lead to the fact that nowadays a rare native speaker can speak Literary Tamil correctly, without inserting Colloquial forms or English words. As Tamil speakers say, it is difficult to speak pure Literary Tamil. Those who know it the best today are elderly people, because they do remember literary forms, and school children, because they learn it at school. However, there are some schools where the language of instruction is English from the first year. The children of such schools speak Literary Tamil worse than pupils of the others.

3. The phonetics of Colloquial Tamil

Tamil diglossia shows a large divergence between linguistic characteristics of Literary Tamil (below, LT) and Colloquial Tamil (CT). The main differences are phonetic, which were first examined in [Zvelebil 1964] and [Schiffman 1979]. Thus, we should mention some features of vowels change, attested in these sources and confirmed by our data:

- (1) Vowel reduction: LT *tampi*–CT [təmpi] ‘younger brother’².

The diphthongs of LT /ai/, /au/ are not preserved in CT: LT *maṇam*–CT *moṇam* ‘silence’.

Dropping-out of the final vowel or diphthong before the next word: LT *illai enṛāl* — CT *illeṇṇā* ‘if not’.

The diphthong /ai/ in the spoken language changes into /a/ in the absolute beginning of the word and in /e/ in all other positions: LT *aintu* — CT *añcu* ‘five’, LT *vaikka* — CT *vekka* ‘to place’, LT *ilai* — CT *ele* ‘leaf’, LT *mazai* — CT *maze* ‘rain’, LT *avaṇai* — CT *avaṇe* ‘him’.

Nasalization of the vowel preceding nasal consonants in final position (possibly influenced by hindi): LT *pōrāṇ* — CT *pōrā̃* ‘he goes’; LT *maram* — CT *marō* ‘tree’.

Qualitative changes in vowels in the context of retroflex consonants: LT *peṇ* — CT *poṇṇu* ‘girl’; LT *vītu* — CT *vūtu* ‘house’, LT *viḷakku* — CT *veḷakku* ‘lamp’ etc.

Some of the consonant system changes are also to be listed:

- (2) Dropping-out of the final consonant in some cases: LT *illai enṛāl*–CT *illeṇṇā* ‘if not’.

The pronunciation of the retroflex phoneme /z/ in CT varies from the normative [z] to [l] and even approximant [y].

Colloquial language simplifies clusters. For example, consonants /y/, /r/ are dropped out before the geminates: *vartti* — *vatti* / *vaṭṭi* ‘wick’.

² We follow the transliteration system suggested in Madras university Tamil lexicon dictionary (1924–1939). One exception made is retroflex /z/ instead of /l/. In examples from other authors we preserve the original transliteration. The difference will be explained in each case.

Assimilation in clusters: LT *oṅpatu*– CT *ompatu* ‘nine’, LT *nārkāli* — CT *nākkāli* ‘chair’, LT *uṭkār* — CT *ukkāru* ‘to sit down’. Palatalization is also an important feature of CT: LT *pittu* — CT *piccu* ‘stupidity’, LT *paṭittēn* — CT *paṭiccēṅ* ‘I read’, LT *irukkir-īrka!* — CT *irukki [ṅga]* ‘(they) are’.

There are also changes in the syllable structure: syllables of CVC type are often replaced in colloquial speech by CV + CV:

- (3) LT *pal* ‘tooth’– CT *pallu* ‘tooth’, LT *yār*– CT *yāre* ‘who’.

This feature is essential to CT, and we will see below that it persists in Tanglish mixing language code and in Chennai Tamil slang as well.

There are important changes in morphology. For example, displacement in final diphthong pronunciation -ai → -e leads to change in Accusative case form:

- (4) LT *maratt-ai* — CT *maratt-e* ‘tree-Acc’, LT *avaṅ-ai* — *avaṅ-e* ‘him’ (Acc), LT *peṅ-ka!-ai* — CT *poṅṅu-ka!-e* ‘girl-Pl-Acc’.

The spoken phonetic processes bring the form of Pres from the LT marker — **(k) kir-** through the sequence of phonetic shortenings to the form **-kk-** or even **-r-** and **-kk-**, as in:

- (5) ellāra nīnka va-nt-iru-**kk-**īnka, romba santōṣam.
all you come-Pst-be-pres-2Pl very joy
‘I’m very glad that all of you came.’ (lit. ‘It’s very joyful that all of you came’; 2.Pl -kkir-īrka! → -kk-īnka). [Pandiya Nādu movie 2013]

The similar reduction happens in the form of 3.Sg.n in Pres: — **(k) kir-atu** → **-kku**, as in:

- (6) itu romba kashtam-ā iru-**kku**
this very difficult-Adv to be-Pres-3Sg.n
‘It’s very difficult’. [ibid]

4. Code switching in Tanglish macaronic usage

A very important fact for India is that its verbal tradition is “an organic multilingual one, a grassroot plurilingualism where the various language identities of the plurilingual user behave as a global

communicational unit” [Montaut 2010: 85]. Thus, Literary and Colloquial Tamil diglossia is not the only main factor determining the language situation in Chennai. The penetration of English language into everyday conversations is also substantial. While serving as a second (along with Hindi) official language of all national events, English is associated with higher status, with the ideology of modernity and progress and good opportunities for the next generation. The native languages at the same time are associated with the ideology of tradition and cultural values [Krishnasamy 2009: 48].

The spread of English in India and Sri Lanka is traced back to the 16th century and the desire of Indian elite to use English for acquiring knowledge of modern science and technology [Kachru, Nelson 2006: 154]. All the causes of the spread of English in India contribute to one global picture. An important factor in the diffusion of English bilingualism is the English press, which has had a great influence for a very long period. Another factor is education. As the parents realized that English was the language required for a secure future in governmental or IT jobs, more people demanded to be educated in English, and more secondary schools, and in particular private ones, were established to cater to these uprising demands in learning English.

The prestige of the English language leads to the fact that parents start teaching their children as early as possible, even from the age of 3 years. My respondents agree that parents often speak English with children and insist on calling them “*mommy*” and “*daddy*” instead of Tamil “*ammā*” and “*appā*”.

Code-mixing, “the use of two or more languages in a cohesive way within a stream of discourse”, is a widespread phenomenon among multilingual South Asian English users, in all modes and virtually all registers [Kachru, Nelson 2006: 161]. It is an important characteristic of the situation with Tamil as well. Code-switching, as the phenomenon can also be called, “provides a unique window on the structural outcomes of language contact, which can be shown to be systematic rather than aberrant” [Bullock and Toribio 2009: 1]. Code-switching is a very important object of language contact research.

The paper by Kanthimathi Krishnasamy “Code-mixing among Tamil — English Bilingual Children” shows how far the borders of English use have now moved because of this situation [Krishnasamy 2015]. The author calls this state of affairs “bilingualism”, because the children are exposed to English from early childhood: “Adults prefer to use

English as it makes them feel “modern”. Unlike adults, the use of English by children is not because of its prestige status. There is no positive or negative attitude towards the use of English among children. Code-mixing emerges because of simultaneous acquisition of Tamil and English. The general attitude in India for code-mixing is not negative. The code-mixing language behavior of children is not viewed as a negative behavior by them and their parents. Though children are unaware of the prestige status of English, parents feel that mixing with English and speaking English is essential for the progress of the child. The parents’ attitude towards language mixing is very positive. They feel that language mixing is a step to achieving fluency in English. About the mother tongue fluency parents seem to be less worried” [Krishnasamy 2015: 790].

In the experiment, children of primary school in an informal atmosphere performed the tasks “Telling a story by picture” and “Free story”. The cases of code-switching were counted and evaluated. Here is an example of a text obtained by such method (see [Krishnasamy 2015: 789]). It’s a popular story “*The Hare and the Tortoise*”. The author’s system of transliteration is preserved, the words of English origin are highlighted in bold:

- (7) *Orunaal oru **tortoiseum** oru **rabbitum** race vaikalammu sollichan. **Race start** pannanga. **Rabbit fasta** odichu. **Tortoises lowva** nadanthuchu. Appuram **rabbit think** pannichu **tortoise slow** vanthaanavaruthunu **tree** keela thungalaammu pochu. **Tortoise slowva** nadanthu nadanthu **finish point reach** aayiduchu. **Rabbit thungi** yendrichu paathu **lateaa** vanduchu. **Tortoise first** vanduchu.*

One day a tortoise and a rabbit decided to arrange a race. The race started. The rabbit was running faster. The tortoise was running slow. Then the rabbit decided that tortoise goes slowly and he fall asleep under the tree. The tortoise slowly going, step by step reached the finish point. The rabbit got up from sleep and came late. The tortoise came to the finish first.

The number of words of English origin is significant in this text. The author makes the conclusion that the level of code-mixing made by children is influenced by such factors as:

1. Tamil or English is used as a language of instruction at school;
2. Parents use code-mixing as a language strategy in communicating with children;

3. The level of education of the parents (factor connected with №2);
4. Positive attitude to code-mixing among people surrounding the child, including relatives, teachers, neighbours etc. (The list of the factors is based on [Krishnasamy 2015: 791].)

The maximum degree of code-mixing leads to a new language form — Tanglish. Tanglish (Tamil-English mix) is becoming popular among the youngsters. This situation is similar to that of Hindi-English mixing: “mixing can take the form of less or more heavy borrowing, or codeswitching, or —in the most extreme cases and accompanied by various structural reductions — may lead to the creation of linguistic entities bearing some characteristics of a pidgin” [Kuczkiwicz-Fraś, Gil 2014: 201]. The extent that the mixing reaches is variable, it depends on speaker’s individual characteristics and on the specific features of the situation. In the normal case, code-switching is “under the conscious control of the speaker and, significantly, not all bilinguals are observed to engage in CS” [Bullock and Toribio 2009: 7]. It appears when two languages are an “intrinsic part of [the speakers’] identity and of their communicative practices. The cohabitation of the two varieties within CS is a natural consequence of this integrated duality” [ibid: 104].

Tanglish is the Tamil-English macaronic language, in which various elements of the English language vocabulary (and to lesser extent — grammar) are incorporated into a Tamil phrase. In another one of her works, “Tamil-English Mixed Language Used in Tamil Nadu” (2009) on the material of speech samples collected from adults, K. Krishnasamy calculates the percentage of switching occurrences for her material: from 11 to 52 %, on average 32.94 %. Here are some important manifestations of code-switching [Krishnasamy 2009: 50–52]. They follow the well-known general rules of borrowings, mentioned for example, in [Matras, Bakker 2003: 157]: nouns are more frequently borrowed than verbs or adjectives, lexical items are more frequently borrowed than grammatical items, the unbound elements are more easily borrowed than bound elements etc.

1. Hybrid vocabulary (English lexeme with Tamil grammar markers):

(8) athu avan-ōta **teacher-ōṭa** **kār**.
 it he-Poss teacher-Poss car

‘It’s his teacher’s car.’

2. Some verbs involved in mixing and occurring in the corpus are: *adjust, admit, avoid, cross, feel, help, hit, move* and others, as in examples from [Krishnasamy 2009: 50]³:

- (9) antha **kār** avan vēkamā **cross** paNn-Nnu-thu –
 this car he fast cross to.do-Past-3.Sg.n
 ‘This car quickly crossed his way.’

3. Combinations of English Noun + Tamil Verbaliser:

- (10) **skid** āki **balance** paNnNna mutiyāma kīzē
 drift to be-Vpt balancedo-Inf can-Neg.Vbp down
 vizu-nth-ituṟāN. –
 Fall-Past-Vbp-leave-Pres-3Sgm.

‘He could not keep the balance when drifting [in the car] and fell down.’ (lit. ‘The drift having happened, the balance make he could not, for such a reason he fell down’).

4. English words acquire phonological features after the Colloquial Tamil model:

- (11) *dōr + u = dōru, fan + u = fanu, car + u = caru, ball + u = bālu* etc.

We have already mentioned this model of colloquial Tamil syllable structure CV + CV in section [3] above.

The contemporary situation shows a lot of examples of code-mixing peculiar for Tanglish in modern mass media — cinema, literature, Internet:

- (12) **Stēshan**-ukkup pō-ka-ṇum,
 station-Dat go-Inf-Prob
 innikku ammani var-ṟ-ā eṇ.r-āṇ.
 today Ammani arrive-Pres-3.Sg speak.Past-3Sgm.

‘We must go to the station, Ammani arrives today’, — he said.
 [‘Ammani’ novel by Vasanti, p. 49]

- (13) Kuzantai-kaḷ-ukku ippa **līvu**.
 child-Pl-Dat now holidays

³ The original transliteration by K. Krishnasamy is preserved in these examples. Syllable-organizing [ṇ], presented as /N/, is a specific feature of colloquial language.

Innum oru vārattilē **skul** tīrakkum.
 more one week school to open-Pres-3Sgn.

“Children have holidays now. In one week school opens.” [p. 53]

(14) “**rilāks, rilāks,**” eṇ.r-āṇ akarvāl mella.
 Relax, relax to talk.Past-3Sgm Akarval slowly

“Calm down,” — slowly said Aharval [ibid. p.56]

The following examples from a TV talkshow illustrate the inserting of a whole English clause or even a whole phrase into the conversation that was presupposed to be in Tamil:

(15) **I think cinema** maṭṭum ill-āmal ulaka.tt-il-ē ovvoru
 I think cinema only without world-loc-emph every
namma life-il vishayam naṭa-nt-atu.
 our-Incl life-Loc event happen-Past-3Sg.n

“I think, and without cinema, for each of us something happens in the world.”

(16) — **Take away money from the world.**

— **Ok, but** ata-kku **first step** enna?
 Ok, but this-Dat first step what

“Ok, but what is the first step for this?” [Actor Simbu, interview 2018]

5. Chennai Tamil slang lexical features

However, there is one more Tamil variety spoken in modern Chennai, which needs to be mentioned here. It is the *Chennai Tamil*, also called *Madras Tamil*, or *Madras bhasha* (from skt. *bhāṣā* ‘language’). The Chennai Tamil is an urban slang of the city of Chennai, having common sociolinguistic characteristics with the London *cockney*. Unlike Tanglish, widespread throughout the Tamil-speaking world, Chennai Tamil slang is spoken only in Chennai.

During preliminary investigations for this research we did not find a scientific linguistic description of Chennai Tamil. There are publications on the Internet, an entry in Wikipedia, mass media articles, but, as for now, no scientific research. For example, there are several articles in “The Hindu” and other newspapers, such as: “What Tamil does Madras speak? Madras Tamil”, “Madras Bashai — the flamboyant lingo

of Chennai” [Soundararajan 2018], word lists as in the [Slangmela 2018] and videos on Youtube, such as “Chennai’s local words — Origin & Meanings”, “Tamil Swear Words” and others.

Who are the speakers of Chennai Tamil? What are the main features of this language variety? In order to answer the questions, I conducted a series of interviews with Tamil speakers — residents of Moscow and Chennai, born in Chennai.

Here are some findings of this research, which is still in progress.

Chennai Tamil slang is a language of slums. My respondents have attested it is more spread in the Northern districts of the city than in the Southern. “The Hindu” newspaper cites words of prof. V. Arasu from The University of Madras, confirming our data: “This language grew after the 1950s, when the city began developing. Labourers living in north Chennai slums, who needed to communicate with businessmen from different regions, picked up many words from their vocabulary.” [The Hindu 2012]

Participants of my inquiry, born in Chennai, made such comments on speaking in Chennai Tamil slang: *“I can talk like this. And my friends can do that. If they are in a bad mood.”* And *“I do not say that. Sometimes I can talk like this with friends. But at work, with colleagues, I will not speak the slang.”* Also: *“At home I never speak like this.”*

These and similar comments highlight the attitude toward Chennai Tamil slang. It is perceived as a phenomenon attributed to labourers, poor and uneducated people. Educated people do not talk like this.

The objectives of the research were 1) to find examples of Chennai Tamil slang vocabulary in the open sources, such as [Soundararajan 2018] and [Slangmela 2018], 2) to check the data with native speakers of Tamil and 3) to outline the coordination of Tamil varieties including Chennai slang during the day of a speaker, paying special attention to the greeting formulas. The procedure was to read every word of the vocabulary list, and answer the questions:

1. Have you heard or said this word or construction?
2. Does this word belong to Chennai Tamil? If not, does it belong to another variety of Tamil?
3. Could you explain its meaning?
4. Do you agree that the description of the word given in the list, is correct? Is it wrong?

Several interviews concerning the distribution of Tamil variants were made. Thus, as a result, we have the preliminary list of confirmed lexemes from Chennai Tamil and the comments on the use of some of them.

6. The preliminary results of lexis identifying inquiry

Chennai Tamil slang was influenced by various languages, and all of them were the sources for its vocabulary to a larger or lesser extent. The main lexical sources are Hindi, Urdu, English, Telugu, and distorted Literary Tamil. There is also an impact of some other languages, for example, Turkish, but it's much smaller. Here are some examples approved by Tamil speakers:

- (17) Urdu: *dil* 'chutzpah, audacity' as in "Do you have audacity to step outside and fight like a man?" from Urdu *dil* ('heart'), metaphorically meaning 'courage'.

Telugu: *dabbu* [dabbɪ]⁴ 'money' instead of LT *paṇam*.

Distorted Tamil: *alēka* [ale:ka] "smoothly", from LT *aṣakā* 'beautiful'.

Distorted English: *blēdu* [ble:ɖɪ] 'boring, useless', from English "bloody". As in: "Dey, blēdu paḍam da", that means "The film was boring"; *bāṭli* [ba:ṭli] 'a derogatory term for a woman', from English "bottle". A reference to a woman's hourglass shape. Used as in "Batli mādi oru figure" — "figure like a bottle".

The lexical items can be divided into groups depending on the language that, as far as we can recognize, was a source for an item:

Telugu: *gabbu* 'stink, foul odour'; *golti* 'Telugu speaker'; *gapsā* 'disinformation'; *takkar* 'super'.

Kannada: *duttu* 'money', *galīju* [gəli:ɖʒi] 'dirty'; *sōle* 'prostitute'.

Hindi: *dar* 'fear'; *ḍabba* 'junk'; *dada* 'ganglord'; *dūl* 'well done!'; *gāna pāṭtu* 'genre of Tamil film music'; *gāndu* 'to irritate'; *godāvula gudhi* 'jump into the fight'; *gilli* 'talented person'; *jatkā* 'a derogatory term for Hindi speaker'; *paradesi* 'vagabond'; *sāmān* 'weapon', 'man's genitals', 'luggage'.

Urdu: *bajāri* 'a loud woman, like a fish-seller at the market'; *bēku* 'imbecile'; *bēmani* 'a person without shame'; *dam* [dʌm] 'strength'; *gāli* 'finished'; *jalsā* [dʒʌlsa:] 'enjoy'; *naštā* 'breakfast'; *tamāshu* [tama:ʃi] 'funny event'.

Malayalam: *kenei* 'fool'; *kuṭṭi* 'young attractive girl'.

⁴ In some examples, when the pronunciation is unclear, I add a transcription following the IPA phonetic notation system.

English: *āf-pāyil* ‘half-boiled egg’; *akkist* ‘accused’; *ahā(n)* ‘aha’ (interjection of agreement); *allo* ‘hello’; *apētu* ‘to exit quickly’ (from *upbeat* ‘busy, fast’); *bādu* ‘breast’; *bāmāyilu* ‘palmoil’; *bittu* (from *bit*) ‘a short erotic scene in the movie’; *buddi* [bʌddi] ‘derogatory term for someone who wears thick glasses’; *certigātu* [sertika:t̪i] ‘certificate’; *dār* ‘torn’; *danks* ‘thanks’; *es agurutu* [ɛs aguruð̪i] ‘to escape’ (shortened from *escape*); *figaru* ‘attractive woman’; *free-a-vidu* ‘let the past be past’; *inglēsu* ‘english language’; *kish-nāyil* ‘kerosene oil’; *lard labakdass* ‘a person who thinks very highly of himself’; *līvu* ‘holiday’ (from *to leave*); *lūsū* ‘crazy’; *OC* ‘free, at no cost’; *outte* ‘out’; *Peter, Mary* ‘people of Tamil origin who speak English to impress others’; *filim* ‘show off’; *rasēdu* ‘receipt’; *rēl* ‘a lie’; *sightu adikkarutu* [ɛdikkaruð̪i] ‘admiring women from a distance, without knowing her’; *sulphata* [sɛlfatə] ‘cheap, strong and harmful self-prepared liquor’; *žūsū* [d̪ʒu:su:] ‘juice’.

There are **lexical items which origin is not clearly identified** yet: *bejār* ‘boring’; *bigilu* ‘whistle’; *masa-masa* ‘a person who works or walks slowly’; *nijār* ‘underwear’; *jujube* [d̪ʒuð̪ubi] ‘small, unimportant’; *kakkūs* ‘lavatory’, *ushāru* ‘be too careful’, *nainā* ‘dude’; *parshu* ‘first’, *abase* [abe:z] *pandradu* ‘to steal’; *rousu udarthu* ‘showing off’ and others.

Some most recognizable phrases — markers of Chennai Tamil slang:

(18) *meyāluma?* ~ CT *uṇmaiṃā?* ~ ‘Is it true?’

jujube matru ~ CT *eḷitāṇa viṣayam* ~ ‘Easy thing to do’.

enna machi, nalla kēriya? ~ CT *enna maccān, nallā irukku?* ~ LT *enna tambi, nanṛāka irukkirīrkalā?* ~ ‘Hey dude, how are you?’

pō dā baḍu! ~ CT *pō!* ~ ‘Go away, bastard!’

ūṭanda poi tunnuttu varēn ~ LT *vīṭṭin anṭai pōyṭtu tinni viṭṭu varukirēn.* ~ ‘The home is near, I will go, eat and return’.

aiyā monjiya paru. ~ CT *aiyā, mukattaip pār!* ~ ‘Look at the face’.

All the lexical items we’ve found and checked with the respondents belong to several lexical domains, including denoting girls and women and their figure, derogatory lexical terms, verbs of insulting and fighting and other social behavior, nouns describing personal qualities, kinship terms, forms of address, items of trade lexical field and others.

The investigation is still in progress. The complete overview of the whole vocabulary of Chennai Tamil slang with full transcription, interpretation, and etymology remains a task for future research.

7. Tamil varieties during the day of one person: greetings

How do all these four Tamil variants coexist not only in the linguistic landscape of the city, but in the everyday life of a person? What will we see, if we look through one day of a hypothetical Chennai resident? (Let us suppose him being a Tamil speaker, though it's not the one and only possibility). We have conducted a series of interviews with Tamil speakers in the attempt to outline the picture.

We suppose that in the morning when this hypothetical person gets up, he (or she) speaks Colloquial Tamil with his (her) family and listens to Literary Tamil at the TV or radio. Then, on the way to work, whether walking or by bus or car, he is exposed to Chennai Tamil slang around him. At work he speaks Tanglish with the chief and Colloquial Tamil or Tanglish with the colleagues. After finishing work he returns home and speaks Colloquial Tamil with family and friends. So to say, Tamil varieties accompany the life of this hypothetical person throughout the day, and every variety has its niche.

We will illustrate this notion with the help of the data gathered with our respondents, citizens of Chennai. In the morning, to say "Hello" to the parents or friends, our respondents use the formula:

- (19) *eppaṭi iru-kk-īnga?* / *iru-kk-a?*
 how to be-Pres-2.Pl
 'How are you?' (Pl or Sg.Polite) (Colloquial Tamil)

The form *irukkīnga* here is a CT shortened form of LT *irukkīr-īrkaḷ* 'you are'. A person can say after that:

- (20) *nā pan-dr-ā?* / *nā pan-dr-īnka?*
 What to do-Pres-quest? / to do-Pres-2.Pl (Colloquial Tamil)
 'What are you doing?' The CT form *nā* here is a shortened LT adverb *enna* 'what'. While watching TV news the respondent hears:

- (21) *kālai vaṇakkam!*
 Morning greeting (traditional Literary Tamil greetings)

If going somewhere by taxi, a person will say to a driver:

- (22) *nānā /nainā!* Nā *ḍeli-kku* *pō-ṇum*
brother! I Delhi-dat go-should (Chennai Tamil slang)
'Brother! I need to go to Delhi.' The address form *nainā* here is
a marker of Chennai slang.

In the office during the day he usually says to his friends:

- (23) *lunch sāppi-ṭṭi-y-ā?*
Lunch eat-Past.Vbp-quest?
'Have you had your lunch [already]?' (Tanglish)

Thus, as we can see, Tamil language in all its varieties is more or less presented during every day of the speakers. All the forms have their specific functions and are distributed according to the speaker's situation. The investigation of the specific distribution remains the task for future research.

8. Conclusion

Tamil is a modern, rapidly developing language. Tamil in Chennai exists in the situation of diglossia and experiences strong influence of English. The modern environment change language behavior of the speakers, and new language forms come into sight. The scholarly research of modern Tamil language varieties only begins. In this work we researched the linguistic landscape in the metropolis of Chennai. We described four Tamil varieties used there: the Literary Tamil, the Colloquial Tamil, Tamil-English mixing language code (Tanglish), and the Chennai Tamil slang. We pointed out the specific features of Tamil diglossia and phonetics of Colloquial Tamil, and analyzed the cases of code-mixing of Tamil and English, especially the amalgamation of English lexical elements in the Tamil phrase. We presented the preliminary results of our ongoing project of examining the lexical features of Chennai urban slang.

"*That's what Tamil turns out — different variants*" — as one of our respondents has said. All the Tamil varieties play an important role in the linguistic landscape of Chennai.

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