



COARTICULATION IN TELUGU

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Similar to the concept of ‘homogeneity of language’ is the notion that individual segments of speech can be characterized in isolation from their surroundings. This notion helps the researchers in the fields of phonetics and phonology to ‘idealise’ the articulation of speech sounds. But ‘overlapping of adjacent articulations’ is a major problem in describing and analysing speech.

This paper is an attempt to look at the system of vowels in Telugu language as being disrupted by non-native learners of the language who also later on wrote dictionaries and grammars for the language. The paper is organised into three parts. The first part gives an account of phonological system of vowels in Telugu, the second part describes the views and remarks on the vowels by the non-native learner – compilers of Telugu language and the third part is concerned with a discussion on the articulatory co-articulation of ‘anticipatory gliding’ in relation to the remarks and observations raised by the non-native learner compilers, and problems of Telugu orthography if any, in the dictionary making. Thus the paper is confined only to the following two aspects of ‘co-production’ of semi-vowel or glide preceding the corresponding vowel:

One is the learning difficulties related to the vowels involved, and the other is the methodological issues involved in the compilation of Telugu bilingual dictionary for a learner.

Part-I: The system of Telugu vowels: Telugu has, in general, the following accepted 5 + 5 vowel system whereby five short vowels have their corresponding long vowels (in contrast) as indicated below:

Short vowel in Telugu			Long vowel in Telugu		
i			ii		
e		o	ee		oo
	a			aa	

The following examples may be shown, as contrasting minimal pairs:

Telugu	Meaning	Telugu	Meaning
<i>adi</i>	‘that’	<i>aadi</i>	‘etc’
<i>ika</i>	‘now’	<i>iika</i>	‘feather’
<i>eDa</i>	‘towards’	<i>eeDa</i>	‘where’
<i>uru</i>	‘great’	<i>uuru</i>	‘village’
<i>oDi</i>	‘by’	<i>ooDi</i>	‘having lost’

Apart from the above initial contrast, they do contrast, in other positions as well where in native Telugu orthography the corresponding secondary features are used. A few examples are given below:

Telugu Examples in Phonetic Transcription	Telugu Examples	Vowels in Telugu
<i>tiru</i>	తిరు	i
<i>tiiru</i>	తీరు	ii
<i>ceri</i>	చెరి	e
<i>ceeri</i>	చేరి	ee

All the consonants in orthography are dependent on secondary features of vowels while the secondary features are derived from the primary vowels of Telugu Alphabet.

Part II: Remarks on anticipatory gliding ‘co-production’ by non-native learner compilers:

During the 19th century Telugu is greatly enriched with the lexicographic and or grammatical works by non-native speakers of Telugu most of them coming from English speaking background. The important of them are William Brown (1918), C.P. Brown (1852).

A.D. Campbell (1821/1843) and A. Galletti (1935). Of these, Campbell dictionary could not be obtained for the present study though his grammar could be consulted.

In his preface to the dictionary William Brown mentioned that “in the arrangement of the initial letters I have chosen the order of the Gentoo alphabet, as most suitable to the genius of the work. Very few letters have been ‘rejected’ as the native Alphabet stands displayed in the grammar which has preceded the Vocabulary”.

Thus only *a* and *aa* find place, in his Vocabulary and the words beginning with the other vowels are given under the forms with their respective semivowel/glide preceding the vowels. This arrangement focus, the user to turn to the pages at the end of the dictionary where *y-* and *w-* occur in the alphabetic order of Telugu. So in order to locate *illu* ‘house’ the user is required to check under *yillu*; and so on. So words with traditional *i, ii, e, ee* take the anticipatory palatal glide *y* and are listed under *y-* while words with initial *u, uu, o, oo* are given under *wu/vu, wuu, wo, woo* respectively, with the anticipatory labial glide. Since the enlisted vocabulary is very limited, the learner user may not find it very difficult to trace the few words. But what; concerns us here is the representation of the vowels other than *a* and *aa* with semivowels. We shall come back to this point again.

Now let us look at G.P. Brown’s dictionary as his is a relatively comprehensive dictionary with an authority till to-date. His grammar as well as dictionary contain great deal of description of his views on the Telugu Alphabet, its orthography, spelling and pronunciation. While giving the entire alphabet as it is traditionally mentioned for the Telugu Language, in the dictionary, Brown also remarks at every letter representing the vowels *i, ii, e, ee* and *u, uu* and *o, oo* as being used as ‘initial’ in the. “dictionary and poetry” and elsewhere these are “written” with their respective semivowels.

Similarly, Galletti also, mentioned that the words are printed with initial vowels but are pronounced with *a* emphatic *y* and *v* respectively. Though Galletti has adopted the English/Roman alphabet instead, of Telugu Alphabet, his remarks are similar to that of both the Browns. Moreover while giving words beginning with *y-* he mentioned that “there are very few words in Telugu that begin with *y*, but as it is common holistic emphatic letter before vowels, especially *e*, many of the commonest words in the language are almost always pronounced, and written with *a y* before them. Thus *y* is practically part of the words....”

Even Campbell in his grammar mentioned that the consonants *yi* and *yii* are used “improperly” and “in correctly” instead of the initial vowels *i*, and *ii*. One can also refer to Arden for similar remark.

Part - III: Discussion

The similarities between the views and remarks of these lexicographers (and grammarians) of Telugu spreading over a period of more than a hundred years drew my attention to look up for words beginning with *i*, *ii*, *e* and *ee* and with initial *y*- as well as words with *u*, *uu*, *o* and *oo* as well as *w/v*. While William Brown has no words with ‘vowel letters’ and has only with the semi vowels. Galletti gave a few with vowels but according to the English alphabetic order, these words with *i*, *ii*, appear after twelfth letter and *u* and *uu* appear as 26 and 27 letters. C.P. Brown has no list of words with under *yi*, *yii* and *ye*, *yee* as well as under *wu*, *wuu* and *wo*, *woo*.

While all these non-native scholars made so much of efforts in their dictionaries and grammars to inform the learners of Telugu how Telugu is ‘spoken’ and therefore how it is to be ‘learnt’ in order to speak the language the renowned Telugu grammarian, considered to be an authority even in modern days, Chinnaya Suri makes it explicit by a rule that there are no initial words with ‘*y-kaara*’ and *wu*, *wuu*, *wo*, and *woo*.

The above description and discussion leads us to draw a few following observations on the system of vowels and the ‘coproduction’ of ‘anticipatory glide’ in the initial position of words beginning with vowels other than *a* and *aa*, thus raising the question if Telugu language has ten vowel system as stated in part one or only a two-vowel system as observed by the non-native lexicographers. While doing so care should be taken to distinguish between the phonological system of the language and its phonetic and/or orthographic representation. As it is already mentioned above, this coproduction or co-articulation of anticipatory semivowel is found only initially. Elsewhere, that is in the medial or final positions we find only clear vowels. Therefore, the author, on the basis of the articulatory evidence concludes that the attachment of a glide as a co-articulation before front and back vowels is predictable and not phonemic and therefore C.P. Brown’s methodology of vowel representation in the compilation of Telugu dictionary is close to the nature and characteristic features of Telugu when compared to that of William Brown’s or of Galletti’s

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