

Abstract 107

The Contrast between Jaffna Tamil and Upcountry Tamil: A Dialectological Study

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The scientific study of dialects is known as dialectology, which is generally regarded as a subfield of sociolinguistics. Tamil, which belongs to the Dravidian language family, is one of the major languages spoken in Sri Lanka. As Tamil is a diglossic language, it constitutes two complementary varieties: the literary and the colloquial. The latter has a variety of dialects both regional and social. The aim of this research is to identify the contrast between regional dialects of Tamil. The Jaffna Tamil dialect is a Tamil dialect that is native to the Jaffna peninsula and it is the primary dialect used in the entire north province of Sri Lanka. The upcountry Tamil dialect is another Tamil dialect, which is native to the central province and Uva province. In this paper, the Jaffna dialect of Tamil is compared with the upcountry dialect of Tamil with emphasis on different linguistic features. A contrastive study and descriptive analysis was conducted to identify the differences and similarities between Jaffna Tamil dialect and upcountry Tamil dialect. The primary data were collected through participatory observation and the secondary data for this study were obtained from related books, journal articles, conference proceedings and websites. Jaffna Tamil dialect is largely distinct from the Upcountry Tamil dialects of Sri Lanka. Accordingly, a number of similarities and dissimilarities in phonology, morphology, and lexicon of Jaffna Tamil and Upcountry Tamil dialects have been identified.

Key words: Contrast, Dialect, Jaffna Tamil, Sociolinguistics, Upcountry Tamil