

CHAPTER -7

Phonological and morphological variation between standard Telugu and Telangana Telugu

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<https://doi.org/10.66483/jsp.2026.001.ch07>

ABSTRACT:

This paper presents a descriptive analysis of selected phonological and morphological differences between Standard Telugu and the Telangana dialect, based on spoken language data. The study aims to show that dialectal variation is systematic and governed by regular linguistic processes rather than being random or irregular.

Two types of variation are identified at the morphological level. First, in masculine past tense verbal agreement, the Standard Telugu suffix *–āḍu/* is replaced by *–inḍu/* in Telangana Telugu, as seen in forms such as *vellāḍu* → *vellinḍu* and *cēsāḍu* → *cēsindu*...etc., In future tense constructions, Telangana Telugu employs a distinct set of agreement suffixes characterized by short vowels (this is regular not random), where Standard Telugu uses long-vowel morphemes. Thus, Standard forms such as *vasthānu*, *pothāmu*, *vasthāru*, and *pothāḍi* correspond to Telangana forms *vasthanu*, *pothamu*, *vastharu*, and *pothadi*.

In addition, two major phonological processes are observed. Telangana Telugu shows voicing of the palatal affricate, where the voiceless segment */tʃ/* in Standard Telugu is realized as the voiced */dʒ/* (especially in verbs) when */tʃ/* is followed by */e/*, as in *cēstāmu* → *jestāmu* and *ceppatam* → *jeppatam*. The dialect also exhibits word-initial prothesis of */a/* with insertion of the consonant */g/* when */a/* is followed by */d/* or the cluster: */tl/* for example, *adi* → *gadi* and *atla* → *gatla*,

These findings demonstrate that Telangana Telugu operates with consistent phonological rules and distinct morphological agreement patterns. The paper argues that such variations reflect structured grammatical differences between regional varieties and contribute to a more accurate understanding of Telugu dialectal diversity.

KEY WORDS: Telugu dialects, morphological variation, phonological processes, verbal agreement, regional varieties of Telugu, morphophonology

1 Introduction

Telugu, a major Dravidian language spoken predominantly in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, exhibits considerable dialectal variation. While Standard Telugu (based largely on the coastal variety) functions as the prestige and written norm, regional spoken varieties such as Telangana Telugu display distinct phonological and morphological characteristics.

This paper argues that differences between Standard Telugu and Telangana Telugu are not deviations but systematic linguistic patterns governed by regular phonological rules and morphological restructuring. The study focuses on:

- 1 Masculine past tense agreement variation
- 2 Future tense agreement vowel length variation

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- 3 Affricate voicing in verbal forms
- 4 Word-initial prothetic /g/ insertion

2 Background and Theoretical Orientation

Dialectal variation in Dravidian languages often involves:

- Morphological leveling
- Vowel length alternations
- Consonant voicing shifts
- Prothetic consonant insertion

Within a morphophonological framework, such variation can be analyzed using rule-based phonology (SPE model) and morphological agreement theory.

Telangana Telugu provides a strong case for systematic morphophonemic restructuring.

3 Data and Methodology

The data used in this study consist of naturally occurring spoken forms collected from native speakers of Telangana Telugu and compared with Standard Telugu forms.

The examples include:

- Masculine past tense verb forms
- Future tense verbal agreement forms
- Verbs beginning with /tʃe-/
- Deictic and demonstrative forms beginning with /a-/

IPA transcription is used to ensure phonological precision.

4 Morphological Variation

4.1 Masculine Past Tense Agreement

In Standard Telugu, masculine singular past tense is marked by: **–/a:ɖu/**

In Telangana Telugu, the corresponding suffix is: **–/indu/**

Examples:

/vella:ɖu/	/vellindu/	went (he)
/tʃe:sa:ɖu/	/tʃe:sindu/	did (he)
/tʃu:sa:ɖu/	/tʃu:sindu/	saw (he)
/pojja:ɖu/	/pojjindu/	went away / left (he)
/ra:sa:ɖu/	/ra:sindu/	wrote (he)
/tinn:aɖu/	/tinindu/	ate (he)
/tiriga:ɖu/	/tirigindu/	wandered / roamed (he)
/kalisa:ɖu/	/kalisindu/	met (he)
/pa:ripojja:ɖu/	/pa:ripojjindu/	ran away / escaped (he)
/tʃaɖiva:ɖu/	/tʃaɖivindu/	read / studied (he)
/teritʃa:ɖu/	/teritʃindu/	opened (he)
/vin:aɖu/	/vinindu/	heard / listened (he)

/petʈa:du/	/petʈindu/	put / placed (he)
/kotʈa:du/	/kotʈindu/	hit / beat (he)
/petʈa:du/	/petʈindu/	put / placed (he)
/pa:da:du/	/pa:dindu/	sang (he)
/navv:adu/	/navvindu/	laughed (he)
/tumm:a:du/	/tummindu/	sneezed (he)
/tokka:du/	/tokkindu/	pushed / kicked (he)
/pilitʃa:du/	/pilitʃindu/	called (he)
/aritʃa:du/	/aritʃindu/	shouted (he)

Rule Representation:

Morphological replacement: /a:du/ → /indu/ / [+masc, +past]

This change is systematic across verb classes and not lexically restricted.

4.2 Future Tense Agreement: Long vs Short Vowels

- Standard Telugu future forms contain long vowels
- In Telangana Telugu, the long vowels are shortened

Examples:

/po:ʈa:di/	/po:ʈadi/	will go (she/it)
/vasta:di/	/vastadi/	will come (she/it)
/kaluʂʈa:di/	/kaluʂʈadi/	will meet (she/it)
/po:ʈa:ru/	/po:ʈaru/	will go (they / respectful)
/po:ʈa:nu/	/po:ʈanu/	I will go
/po:ʈavu/	/po:ʈavu/	you will go (singular informal)
/vasta:vu/	/vastavu/	you will come (singular informal)
/vasta:ru/	/vastaru/	will come (they / respectful)
/vasta:mu/	/vastamu/	we will come
/vinʈa:nu/	/vinʈanu/	I will listen / hear
/konʈa:ru/	/konʈaru/	will buy (they / respectful)
/pa:daʈa:ru/	/pa:daʈaru/	will sing (they / respectful)
/navvuʈa:ru/	/navvuʈaru/	will laugh (they / respectful)
/ra:ʂʈa:di/	/ra:ʂʈadi/	will write (she/it)
/ʈinʈa:ru/	/ʈinʈaru/	will eat (they / respectful)
/koḍaʈa:ru/	/koḍaʈaru/	will hit / beat (they / respectful)
/peḍaʈa:ru/	/peḍaʈaru/	will put / place (they / respectful)

/pilist̪a:ru/	/pilust̪aru/	will call (they / respectful)
/pilust̪a:nu/	/pilust̪anu/	I will call

5. Phonological Processes

5.1 Affricate Voicing

➤ Telangana Telugu shows voicing of the palatal affricate, where the voiceless segment /tʃ/ in Standard Telugu is realized as the voiced /dʒ/ (especially in verbs) when /tʃ/ is followed by /e/

➤ **Rule:** /tʃ/ → /dʒ/ / __ e

Examples:

/tʃejja:li/	/dʒejja:li/	should do / must do
/tʃe:st̪a:mu/	/dʒe:st̪amu/	we do / will do
/tʃep̪t̪a:nu/	/dʒep̪t̪anu/	I will say / tell
/tʃeppa:du/	/dʒeppindu/	said (he)
/tʃeppadam/	/dʒeppadam/	to say / telling
/tʃejjaru/	/dʒejjaru/	they do / did not do (context-dependent dialectal)
/tʃe:jaṭam/	/dʒe:jaṭam/	doing (verbal noun)
/tʃeppu/	/dʒeppu/	say / tell (imperative)
/tʃep̪t̪a:le/	/dʒep̪t̪ale/	should say / must say
/tʃep̪t̪a:ru/	/dʒep̪t̪aru/	they say / will say
/tʃekkuṭa:nu/	/dʒekkuṭanu/	I carve / scratch
/tʃe:st̪a:nu/	/dʒe:st̪anu/	I do / will do
/tʃejja:la:/	/dʒejja:la:/	should (I/we) do? / need to o?
/tʃe:piṣṭa:mu/	/dʒe:piṣṭamu/	we will make (someone) do / cause to do
/tʃep̪iṣṭa:di/	/dʒep̪iṣṭadi/	makes (someone) do (she/it)
/tʃe:rust̪a:nu/	/dʒe:rust̪anu/	I will carry and reach it
/tʃe:st̪a:ḍule/	/dʒe:st̪aḍule/	he will do it (someone saying about other male)

This change is particularly frequent in verbal paradigms.

5.2 Word-Initial Prothesis of /g/

Rule: Ø → g / # __ a (+d / tl)

This represents consonant insertion before low vowel-initial forms.

Examples:

/aṭlane:/	/gaṭlane:/	like that / just like that
/aṭluṇṭuṇḍi/	/gaṭluṇṭuṇḍi/	it will be like that
/aṭla/	/gaṭla/	like that / that way

/aṭṭeṇḍuku/	/gaṭṭeṇḍuku/	why like that?
/aṭṭana:/	/gaṭṭana:/	is it like that?
/aṭṭe:/	/gaṭṭe:/	not like that
/aṭṭuṇḍu/	/gaṭṭuṇḍu/	stay like that / be like that
/aṭṭaṭṭe:jaku/	/gaṭṭaṭṭe:jaku/	don't do like that
/aṭṭoḍḍu/	/gaṭṭoḍḍu/	don't want like that / not acceptable like that
/aṭṭara:/	/gaṭṭara:/	come like that
/aḍḍi/	/gaḍḍi/	that
/aḍḍela/	/gaḍḍela/	how is that?
/aḍḍa:/	/gaḍḍa:/	is that so? / that (emphatic/question)
/aḍḍe:miṭṭi/	/gaḍḍe:miṭṭi/	what is that?
/aḍḍimari/	/gaḍḍimari/	then what about that?
/aḍḍivvaru/	/gaḍḍivvaru/	they will give that
/aṭṭara:/	/gaṭṭara:/	come like that
/aḍḍiṣṭṭa:nu/	/gaḍḍiṣṭṭa:nu/	I will give that

6. Discussion

The observed variations show:

- Morphological restructuring (agreement shift)
- Vowel quantity neutralization
- Systematic consonant voicing
- Prothetic consonant insertion

These processes are regular and productive. They reflect internal grammatical organization rather than corruption or simplification.

Telangana Telugu demonstrates:

- Independent agreement morphology
- Predictable phonological conditioning
- Dialect-specific morphophonemic rules

7. Conclusion

The analysis confirms that Telangana Telugu exhibits structured and rule-governed phonological and morphological patterns. Masculine past agreement restructuring, vowel shortening in future tense forms, affricate voicing, and prothetic /g/ insertion are consistent processes.

These findings contribute to:

- Telugu dialectology

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<https://doi.org/10.66483/jsp.2026.001>

- Dravidian morphophonology
- Theoretical models of dialect variation

Future research may explore sociolinguistic conditioning, frequency effects, and comparative Dravidian parallels.

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