

CHAPTER-6

Prosodic and phonological variation in Godavari Telugu: a comparison with standard Telugu

Kammara Sunil Kumar
Department of Linguistics, Central University of Karnataka,
kamarasunilkumar8@gmail.com
<https://doi.org/10.66483/jsp.2026.001.ch06>

ABSTRACT

This paper presents a descriptive analysis of selected prosodic and phonological features of the Godavari Telugu dialect in comparison with Standard Telugu, based on naturally occurring spoken data. The study aims to demonstrate that the Godavari variety exhibits systematic patterns of variation that function at both discourse and segmental levels.

At the prosodic and pragmatic level, Godavari Telugu shows consistent vowel lengthening at utterance boundaries, particularly at sentence end, expression end and questions or emotional emphasis, as in *vastānu* → *vastānuu* and *cēsāvā* → *cēsāvāā*. This lengthening does not mark grammatical categories but contributes to discourse functions such as emphasis and interpersonal engagement. In addition, the dialect employs a sentence-final politeness marker *-andi* as in *unnāru* → *unnārandi* and *ante* → *antenandi*, which serves as a discourse particle encoding respect and speaker attitude toward the hearer.

At the phonological and morphophonemic level, future tense verb forms of the verbs which end with the consonant cluster */sta/* exhibit cluster simplification, where the consonant sequence */st/* in Standard Telugu is realized as a geminate */tta/* in Godavari Telugu, as in *vastānu* → *vattānu* and *rāstānu* → *rattānu*. This process reflects assimilation and strengthening motivated by avoidance of complex consonant clusters and is conditioned by the morphological structure of the future suffix. Furthermore, the dialect shows word-initial deletion of the glide */v/* before vowels: */e/* and */i/*, as in *veltānu* → *eltānu* and *Venkatagiri* → *Enkatagiri*, representing a phonological process of apharesis in connected speech.

These findings indicate that Godavari Telugu differs from Standard Telugu through structured prosodic strategies, discourse-level markers, and regular phonological processes. The study supports the view that regional varieties maintain coherent grammatical and phonetic systems and should be analyzed as independent, rule-governed dialects rather than as informal deviations from the standard variety.

Keywords: Godavari Telugu, Dialectal Variation, Prosody, Phonological Processes, Discourse Markers

1 Introduction

Telugu, one of the major Dravidian languages, displays considerable regional variation across Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. While Standard Telugu functions as the prestige written norm, regional dialects maintain distinct phonological, morphological, and prosodic characteristics. Godavari Telugu, spoken in the East and West Godavari regions, presents a particularly interesting case of dialectal variation. Unlike purely segmental variation, this dialect exhibits systematic prosodic strategies and discourse-level features alongside phonological processes. This paper examines:

1. Prosodic vowel lengthening at utterance boundaries
2. Sentence-final politeness marker –andi
3. Cluster simplification in future tense forms
4. Word-initial glide deletion (/v/ → Ø)

The study argues that these features constitute rule-governed grammatical patterns.

2 Theoretical Background

Dialectal variation can operate at multiple linguistic levels:

- Segmental phonology
- Morphophonemics
- Prosody
- Discourse pragmatics

Within a rule-based phonological framework, processes such as cluster simplification, glide deletion, and vowel lengthening can be analyzed as systematic phonological operations. Additionally, discourse particles like –andi reflect pragmatic encoding within morphosyntax. Godavari Telugu provides evidence that dialects encode grammatical meaning through prosodic as well as segmental means.

3 Data and Methodology

The data consist of naturally occurring spoken forms collected from native speakers of Godavari Telugu and compared with Standard Telugu forms.

The analysis focuses on:

- Future tense verb constructions
- Sentence-final forms
- Politeness constructions
- Glide-initial lexical items

Phonetic transcription follows the conventions of the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA).

4 Prosodic Variation

4.1 Utterance-Final Vowel Lengthening

One of the most salient features of Godavari Telugu is vowel lengthening at utterance boundaries.

Examples:

/em tʃestʊ:navu/	/em tʃestʊ:navu:/	what are you doing?
/sna:nam tʃe:sava/	/sna:nam tʃe:sava:/	did you bathe?
/ne:nu vʌstʌ:nu/	/ne:nu vʌstʌ:nu:/	I will come
/aʈaʈu vel:aʈu/	/aʈaʈu vel:aʈu:/	he went
/avunu/	/avunu:/	yes
/avuna/	/avuna:/	is it so? / really?
/nidʒama/	/nidʒama:/	is it true?
/kaʈu/	/kaʈu:/	no / not
/o:ri naja:no/	/o:ri naja:no:/	oh! I don't know
/tinu/	/tinu:/	eat (imperative)
/itu ra/	/itu ra:/	come here
/bʱaʈuṇava/	/bʱaʈuṇava:/	are you fine?
/mikʰu telusa/	/mikʰu telusa:/	do you know?
/elaga/	/elaga:/	how?
/raʃta/	/raʃta:/	I will write

<https://jnanasetupress.com/>

Bharatiya Bhasha Pariwar: A New Framework in Linguistics

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

/vɛltuːna/	/vɛltuːnaː/	I am going
/kurtʃo/	/kurtʃoː/	sit (imperative)
/tinandi/	/tinandiː/	please eat (respectful)
/sare/	/sareː/	okay / alright
/vaʃʌda/	/vaʃʌdaː/	did (he) come?

This lengthening:

- Occurs at sentence-final position
- Signals emphasis or emotional engagement
- Does not encode grammatical tense or agreement
- This reflects discourse-driven vowel extension.

4.2 Sentence-Final Politeness Marker –andi

Godavari Telugu frequently uses –andi as a sentence-final particle.

Examples:

/ila tʃaːlamandi rikwest tʃestʉːnaːru andiː/	many people are requesting like this
/mikʰu kontʃam etʌkaːram ekʰuvandiː/	you have a bit more pride/attitude
/tʃuːpiʃtaːnu randiː/	I will show (you), please come
/praʃi intʃlo anandam unʌaːli kaʌandiː/	there should be happiness in every house, right?
/juːs avuʉːndemo tʃuːʌandiː/	see if it works / gets used
/mikʰu teliste kɔment tʃejandiː/	if you know, please comment
/tonʌaraga randiː/	please come quickly
/pilustaːnandiː/	I will call (you)
/unʌaːrantʌandiː/	they said to stay / please stay
/pani tʃejatʌm lendiː/	there is no work to do
/vɛlːaːlandiː/	(we/you) should go
/kontʃam tinandiː/	please eat a little
/em tʃestʉːnaːrandiː/	what are you doing?
/bʱagunaːrandiː/	are you fine?
/malːi kalustaːmu andiː/	we will meet again
/namaskaːram andiː/	hello / greetings
/ivːandiː andiː/	please give
/nanːa gaːrandiː/	father (respectful)
/miː peːranti andiː/	what is your name?
/bʱoːdʒanam ajːinda andiː/	have you eaten?

This marker:

- Encodes respect and politeness
- Functions as a discourse particle
- Is pragmatically conditioned

It operates independently of core verbal agreement morphology.

5 Phonological and Morphophonemic Processes**5.1 Cluster Simplification in Future Tense Forms**

In Standard Telugu, future tense forms often contain the cluster /st/,

but

In Godavari Telugu: /tt/

Rule: /st/ → /tt/

Examples:

/vaʃtaːnu/	/vaʃtaːnu/	I will come
/tʃestʉːnu/	/tʃestʉːnu/	I will do
/raʃtaːnu/	/raʃtaːnu/	I will write

/gɪst̪aːnu/	/gɪtt̪aːnu/	I will draw / mark
/tɪst̪aːnu/	/tɪtt̪aːnu/	I will take / bring
/kost̪aːnu/	/kott̪aːnu/	I will cut
/ləgɛst̪aːnu/	/ləgɛtt̪aːnu/	I will pull
/pikɛst̪aːnu/	/pikɛtt̪aːnu/	I will pluck / pick
/tosɛst̪aːnu/	/tosɛtt̪aːnu/	I will push
/lɛst̪aːnu/	/lɛtt̪aːnu/	I will get up / rise
/must̪aːnu/	/mut̪taːnu/	I will close / shut
/kalust̪aːnu/	/kalutt̪aːnu/	I will meet
/pilust̪aːnu/	/pilutt̪aːnu/	I will call
/tost̪aːnu/	/tot̪taːnu/	I will push / press
/karust̪aːnu/	/karutt̪aːnu/	I will bite
/arust̪aːnu/	/arutt̪aːnu/	I will shout / cry
/tokɛst̪aːnu/	/tokɛtt̪aːnu/	I will push / poke
/virust̪aːnu/	/virutt̪aːnu/	it will break / tear
/post̪aːnu/	/pott̪aːnu/	I will apply / put (e.g., mark, paste)

This reflects:

- Assimilation
- Gemination
- Simplification of consonant clusters

Phonological Rule:

/st/ → [tt] / V ____ aːnu

This change is morphologically conditioned by the future tense suffix.

5.2 Word-Initial Glide Deletion (Aphaeresis)

Rule:

/v/ → Ø / # ____ [+front vowel]

This represents systematic glide deletion before /e/ and /i/.

Examples:

/vɛŋkəʈagiri/	/ɛŋkəʈagiri/	Venkatagiri (place name)
/vɛlːugu/	/ɛlːugu/	light
/vɛlɔʈaːnu/	/ɛlɔʈaːnu/	I will go
/vɛlɔʈɔʈlɛːdu/	/ɛlɔʈɔʈlɛːdu/	it did not shine / did not light up
/vɛlaku/	/ɛlaku/	for light / to light
/vɛgɛlɛːnu/	/ɛgɛlɛːnu/	I cannot bear / tolerate
/vɛlloːdu/	/ɛlloːdu/	he should not go
/vɛnaka/	/ɛnaka/	behind / back
/vɛːsavi/	/ɛːsavi/	summer
/viːdiki/	/iːdiki/	to this fellow / to him
/viditʃipɛt̪ːu/	/iditʃipɛt̪ːu/	leave / let go
/vɛppuɖu/	/ɛppuɖu/	when
/viʈanalu/	/iʈanalu/	seeds
/viluva/	/iluva/	value / worth
/vidiʈoːranu/	/idiʈoːranu/	I will not leave
/vijːalava.ru/	/ijːalava.ru/	Vijayalavaru (family/community name)
/vɛmpalaku/	/ɛmpalaku/	for choices / selections
/vɛmulavaːɖa/	/ɛmulavaːɖa/	Vemulawada (place name)
/vɛŋkɛʃː/	/ɛŋkɛʃː/	Venkatesh (name)

<https://jnanasetupress.com/>

Bharatiya Bhasha Pariwar: A New Framework in Linguistics

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

/vedʱukapuram/	/e:ʱukapuram/	Vedukapuram (place name)
----------------	---------------	--------------------------

6 Discussion

The features identified operate at multiple levels:

Level	Process	Type
Prosodic	Vowel lengthening	Discourse marking
Pragmatic	–andi particle	Politeness marking
Phonological	/st/ → /tt/	Cluster simplification
Phonological	/v/ deletion	Glide aphaeresis

These are not random speech habits but rule-governed dialectal structures.

Godavari Telugu demonstrates:

- Prosodic sensitivity to discourse context
- Morphophonemic restructuring in tense forms
- Regular phonological conditioning
- Independent pragmatic marking strategies

7 Conclusion

This study shows that Godavari Telugu differs from Standard Telugu through systematic prosodic, phonological, and discourse-level mechanisms. Vowel lengthening at utterance boundaries, the use of –andi as a politeness particle, cluster simplification in future tense constructions, and word-initial glide deletion are consistent processes.

These findings support the view that regional varieties of Telugu maintain structured linguistic systems. Dialects such as Godavari Telugu should therefore be analyzed as independent rule-governed varieties rather than as informal deviations from the standard norm.

References:

- Chambers, J. K., & Trudgill, P. (1998). *Dialectology* (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press.
- International Phonetic Association. (1999). *Handbook of the International Phonetic Association: A guide to the use of the International Phonetic Alphabet*. Cambridge University Press.
- Krishnamurti, B. (2003). *The Dravidian languages*. Cambridge University Press.
- Krishnamurti, B., & Gwynn, J. P. L. (1985). *A grammar of modern Telugu*. Oxford University Press.
- Ladefoged, P., & Johnson, K. (2015). *A course in phonetics* (7th ed.). Cengage Learning.
- Labov, W. (1994). *Principles of linguistic change: Internal factors*. Blackwell.
- Pierrehumbert, J. (1980). *The phonology and phonetics of English intonation* (Doctoral dissertation, Massachusetts Institute of Technology).
- Selkirk, E. (1984). *Phonology and syntax: The relation between sound and structure*. MIT Press.
- Subrahmanyam, P. S. (1983). *Dravidian comparative phonology*. Annamalai University.
- Trudgill, P. (2000). *Sociolinguistics: An introduction to language and society* (4th ed.). Penguin.

YOUR DISSERTATION DESERVES RECOGNITION, NOT A PLACE IN A STOREROOM

Publish Your Dissertation as a Book through the Emerging Scholars Series

Transform your thesis or dissertation into a professionally published scholarly work, boosting its academic visibility and impact.

Benefits

-  ISBN Registration*
-  Crossref DOI Assignment
-  ORCID Integration
-  Google Scholar Discoverability
-  Enhanced Citation Opportunities
-  Wider Academic Reach and Recognition
-  Long-Term Preservation and Accessibility

Publication Options

Jnanasetu Repository	Jnanasetu Repository Publication with an ISBN
✓ Crossref DOI Assignment ✓ Online Archiving and Preservation ✓ Academic Visibility ✓ Citations	✓ ISBN Registration ✓ Crossref DOI Assignment ✓ Professional Book Publication ✓ Global Accessibility ✓ Academic Visibility ✓ Citations

Looking to Publish Research Articles?

Researchers and scholars may also submit manuscripts to **Jnanasetu Journals** for quality-focused scholarly publication.

- ✓ Peer-Reviewed Journals
- ✓ DOI Assignment
- ✓ Open Access Publishing
- ✓ Academic Visibility
- ✓ Timely Editorial Processing

We Also Publish

-  Edited Books
-  Scholarly Monographs
-  Conference Proceedings
-  Academic Journals

For more details:

Press	jnanasetupress.com	support@jnanasetupress.com
Repository	jnanaseturepository.com	editor@jnanaseturepository.com
Journals	jnanasetujournals.com	editor@jnanasetujournals.com