

## **A Discourse Analysis on the Communal Identity of the Sri Lankan Telugu Community (Sri Lankan Romani People)**

S.V.Wijeratne<sup>a\*</sup>, R.M. Wijayawardhana<sup>b</sup>, D.N. Ukwatte<sup>c</sup>, B.S.Dilrukshi<sup>d</sup>  
University of Sri Jayewardenepura<sup>ad</sup>, Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation<sup>b</sup>,  
Saegis Campus<sup>c</sup>  
\*wvishmi@yahoo.com

The Language Policy of Sri Lanka considers ‘Sinhala’ and ‘Tamil’ as the National Languages and English as the ‘Link Language’ of the Nation (Official Languages Policy). Compartmentalizing only these ‘two’ as the National Languages of our country inadvertently subdue the existence of diverse language communities that dwell in the island.

Research on language and identity indicates that the languages that we learn affect our notion of identity (Byram, 2006). This paper looks at how ‘Telugu’; a native language of India, has unique language characteristics and its role in creating the identity of the Sri Lankan Romani community. The Sri Lankan Romani community which traces its roots from India centuries ago, proves the existence of a language style that is different to the main stream languages. This paper thus aims at identifying how such a community is attempting to preserve their language characteristics whilst the socio-political context functions on main stream languages. While this paper traces similarities and differences between “Telugu” and mainstream languages, the primary aim of engaging in such a study based on a discourse analysis of “Telugu” is to highlight the existence of this unique community in the small yet linguistically diverse island nation of Sri Lanka.

**Keywords:** compartmentalization; Telugu; discourse analysis; identity; culture; extinction.