

Simplification of Tamil Grammar for Internet

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It needs no introduction to say that the world has become small due to the invention of the computer and the Internet. Language teaching in this context is to be reviewed as for as teaching Tamil is concerned. Many attempts have been made to teach Tamil as second language through print, audio and video media. However, the preparation of materials to teach Tamil as second language through computer with multimedia features is yet to take momentum. There are a very few materials prepared which have not taken into account the needs of the learners. In this context, this paper has a major role to play as far as the teaching of Tamil grammar is concerned. Tamil grammar needs a revision to be applied for preparation of materials. This paper tries to bring out some of the features.

The allophonic distribution of the stops, namely, the vallinam is to be standardized. The rule is as follows:

/K/ is pronounced as [k] word initially and when double in the middle
[g] after nasals
[h] between vowels

the final distribution is to be modified as either as [h] or as [g] mainly because in most of the satellite TV channels one can observe this change. Further more, many of the Tamil dialects also have this feature.

/c/ is pronounced as [c] or [s] word initially
[c] when double in the middle
[j] after nasals
[s] between vowels

Most of the southern dialects of Tamilnadu use [c] word initially and the northern dialects use [s] in that place.

This is the case with the inter-vocal /D/, /d/, and /p/. These are to be modified.

The pronunciation variations of /-RR-/ , as /-RR-/ and /-TR-/ are to be reconsidered.

Such irregularities in Tamil in pronunciation are to be reviewed.

In morphology, there are a lot of features, which are to be simplified.

The present tense markers used are /-kir-/ and /-kinru-/ invariably, where the marker

/-kinr- / is the only marker which can come when the subject of the sentence is /avai/

'they [neuter]' as in

avai varukinRana. 'They come.'

The present tense marker should be only /-kir- / for subjects other than /avai/.

The past tense markers are the next area of confusion for a second language learner. There are no fixed rules for the distribution of the markers, though there are a few available. For example,

The weak verbs take the following markers:

/-in-/ verbs ending in -PPu, -NPu, -(c) VVDu, -(c) VVRu, -(c) VVcu, -(c) VVru, etc.

/-t-/ verbs ending in -zu, -Du, --N, -n, and -y

/-nd-/ verbs ending in -Vvy, -r, -l,-L,-z,-I, -ai

The strong verbs take /-tt-/ and /-nd-/ for -a ending verbs.

The irregular verbs are to be listed and given in the programme. This kind of simplification of the past tense markers is yet to take full shape.

The pronoun avai is used as avaikaL also, which is yet to be recognized by the Tamil teachers. This simplifies the declension also.

Avai+ ai > avaRRai whereas avaikaL +ai > avaikaLai which follows normal sandhi rule.

The pronoun avar 'He' should be taken into the pronouns. This should not be used to mean 'they'. Accordingly, the PNG marker /-aar/ would be used only with the subject avar 'He'. This means that there will be the following pronouns in the third person : avan 'He', aval 'She', avar 'He singular honorific', avarkaL 'They', atu 'It', and avai 'They neuter'. This will be applicable in all places where this pronoun is used.

Sentences like the following should be treated as archaic:

MaaNavar vantandar to mean maLavarkaL vantaarkaL 'The students came'

Vijayan vantanan to mean Vijayan vantaan 'Vijayan came'

The passive construction is yet to be recognized by the grammar. This construction though a modern one has found a place in the language of administration and science.

Arasaal oor aNai kaTTappaDukiRatu ' A dam is being constructed by the Government.'

The verbal noun derivations are yet to be studied thoroughly, though there are a few sporadic studies available. There are about forty markers in Tamil to derive verbal nouns, such as vaLar

- vaLarcci 'growth', paDi - paDippu 'education', ezutu - ezuttu writing/letter vaa - varavu 'income', col - col 'word', vaRu - vaRumai 'poverty', vaazvu - vaazkkai 'life', etc. This area still remains untouched.

In this age of fast communication the direct and indirect speech as in English are yet to be formalized. The constructions such as

"naan naaLai un viiTtukku varuveen " enRu conneen.

I said, "I shall come to your house tomorrow".

This sentence may have the following counterpart as indirect sentence.

Naan naaLai un viiTtukku varuvataaka conneen.

In Tamil this is an adverbial construction whose exact structural equivalent may not be indirect speech. This area of confusion should be decided now.

Another area for simplification is the use of saariyai 'link morphemes'. The sentences like the following are very common, but to be simplified.

Naan viiTtukku pooneen
Naan viiTTiRku pooneen " I went home"
Naan marattai veTTineen
Naan marattinai veTTineen 'I cut the tree'

Some of the sandhi or puNarcci rules are to be simplified, since most of them are very archaic. For example,

MuL = ceDi > muTcedi
Kal + cuvar > kaRcuvar
Pul + nuni > punnuni
Meel + nilai > meenilai

The following are some of the examples, which need a study to explain the process involved.

CiRReRumpu when divided becomes ciRumai + eRumpu
Nannuul > nanmai + nuul

This kind of making the first part of the compound word as a noun is very difficult to understand as well as to explain the sandhi involved.

The use of /alla, allan, allaL, etc./ are to be reviewed. It would be more appropriate to do away with these forms.

The doubling of / k,c,t,p / in certain contexts is now a days a myth in many places and in others they are redundant. As every body knows they were used when it was a spoken language as well as in poetry to keep the pronunciation in tact and to find out the word boundary.

Conclusion

In the context of internet and spreading of learning Tamil worldwide, it is necessary to simplify the Tamil grammar and usages. This paper tried to point out a few features which are to be simplified. However, a thorough study of the same will definitely lead to a fruitful exercise.