JAFFNA TAMIL

Phonology and Morphology

S. SUSEENDIRARAJAH

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University of Jaffna Publication

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First Edition 1993

© **University of Jaffna Publication**
Thirunelvely, Sri Lanka

ISBN: **955 – 9194 – 03 – 8**

Printers : *Mahathma Printing Works*,
Earlalai, Jaffna, Sri Lanka

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Preface

Today Jaffna peninsula in Sri Lanka is fairly well known to people in several parts of the world due to the present political conditions in Sri Lanka. Another factor for Jaffna becoming widely known is the recent migrations of Jaffna Tamils to different parts of the world.

Jaffna peninsula is the most northern part of Sri Lanka, whose total area is about 950 square kilometres. There are several small islands adjoining the peninsula, whose total area is about 137 square kilometres. The use of the name 'Jaffna' came into vogue during the British rule. Before that, the name 'Jaffanapatam' prevailed among westerners, and its use is attested in early documents. The Tamil name of the peninsula is Y a a l̲ p p a a ṇ a m, and it has become Yaapane in Sinhala.

Tamils have lived for centuries in the northern and eastern provinces of Sri Lanka, and Tamil has been the predominant language in both these provinces. Sri Lanka Tamils consider these two provinces their traditional homeland.

In Sri Lanka, Tamil has been in close contact with Sinhala for long. Sinhala, one of the modern Indo - Aryan languages, is the major language in Sri Lanka, and it had, in course of time, become Dravidianized in some ways due to the influence of Tamil and Malayalam. Tamil borrowings, particularly lexical, are abundant in Sinhala.

There are several varieties of Tamil, geographical as well as social, within Sri Lanka. The variety of Tamil described in this book is that spoken in the Jaffna peninsula. The Jaffna variety of Tamil has some claim to being a

prestige dialect with approximately 700,000 speakers, and its history goes back very many centuries. It differs markedly from the Indian Tamil and other varieties in Sri Lanka. It has several archaisms and innovations.

In the past, Jaffna played a very important role in the development of Tamil studies. Scholars from Jaffna contributed significantly to the advancement of studies in Tamil literature, grammar, and Saiva Siddhanta. Some of them gained recognition as pioneers in certain branches of Tamil studies.

The present book, perhaps first of its kind on Jaffna Tamil, was written during the period October 1987 – September 1988, when I was in the University of Edinburgh, U. K. on a Commonwealth Academic Staff Fellowship. At Edinburgh, Professor R. E. Asher showed great interest in Jaffna Tamil, and urged me to write this book. But, regrettably, I could not reach my target, and this book remains incomplete without syntax. I hope to have it as part two of this work sometime in the future.

In writing this book, I have used the structured questionnaire that appeared in Lingua 42 (1977), 1 – 72, for descriptive studies of languages. But the descriptions are not exactly in the order of the questions found therein. Professor R. E. Asher's work on the Indian variety of Tamil, titled Tamil (North Holland Publishing Company - Amsterdam, 1982) was very useful in writing this book.

In working on the dialects of Tamil, I have greatly benefited from the initial training I had in research under many eminent teachers at the Annamalai University, South India. Herein, I wish to record my profound sense of gratitude to Professor T. P. Meenakshisundaran, Professor M. Shanmugampillai, Professor S. Agesthialingom and Professor S. V. Shanmugam.

Subsequently, over the years I gained new experience in collaborating with Professor James W. Gair (Cornell University, U. S. A.) and Professor W. S. Karunatillake (University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka) in research on Tamil. I have had very useful discussions on Jaffna Tamil with Professor R. E. Asher. He has obliged me with a foreword to this book. I should express my indebtedness to all of them. Needless to say, they are not to be blamed for the faults that remain in the final version.

I am grateful to the Association of Commonwealth Universities for granting me a Fellowship that enabled me to write this book in its present form. I should thank the Publications Committee of the University of Jaffna for accepting my work for publication. I owe a special word of thanks to our Vice Chancellor, Professor A. Thurairajah for writing an introduction to this book.

I must record my appreciation of the work done by the Mahathma Printers, Erlalai. Most printers in Jaffna were hesitant to print this book, because of difficulties in obtaining paper, diacritic marks, electricity, etc., in the present war situation. However, Mahathma Printers have done their best inspite of several limitations. Certain adjustments had to be made in accommodating diacritic marks. For instance, more space had to be provided between letters in words, particularly when diacritic marks occurred. The press couldn't print the Tamil materials in italics, because they were not sufficiently available.

I am grateful to G. Robert for preparing the maps. I would express my thanks to Ratnamalar, Subathini, Sivarani and Jeyagowri who helped me with the correction of proofs.

Finally, members of my family too deserve my thanks for enduring the agony of the war in Jaffna when I was away in Edinburgh. They decided not to call me back abruptly.

S. Suseendirarajah

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December 1993

Foreword

For some centuries - one might almost say, since time immemorial - Tamil has been the most widely studied and the most frequently described of all the Dravidian languages. It is nevertheless only in the second half of the twentieth century that there have been serious attempts to provide full and objective accounts of the colloquial language. Moreover, such descriptions as have been produced have most typically been of dialects spoken in Tamil Nadu with the varieties prevalent in Sri Lanka being somewhat neglected. This is unfortunate, given the wide range of idiosyncratic features that are to be found in Tamil as spoken in informal contexts in, for instance, Jaffna and Batticaloa. There can be no doubt that there would be profound interest among Tamil scholars, both in South Asia and elsewhere, in reliable data on Sri Lankan Tamil dialects. It is also likely that the availability of such data would have a significant impact on work in the field of comparative Dravidian linguistics.

No scholar is better equipped to provide the much needed description of Jaffna Tamil than Dr. S. Suseendirarajah, whose intimate knowledge of the dialect is combined with a firm background in linguistics. From knowledge of his material gained when we had the pleasure of his attachment

to the Department of Linguistics at the University of Edinburgh in 1987 – 88, I am confident this first volume of his descriptive grammar, dealing with the phonology and morphology, will be seen as a major contribution to the field of Tamil linguistics. We shall look forward eagerly to the publication of a second volume on syntax.

R. E. Asher, DLitt, FRSE, FKSA, FRAS
Vice – Principal and
Professor of Linguistics

The University of Edinburgh
Scotland, UK
21 July 1993

Introduction

JAFFNA TAMIL by Prof. S. Suseendirarajah is a work giving a synchronic description of the Tamil language as spoken in the Jaffna peninsula. The dialect has its own peculiarities probably due to its lesser exposure to South Indian and other influences. The author points out that it differs markedly from the Indian and other varieties in Sri Lanka. He also notes that it has several archaisms and innovations. A closer study of these peculiarities could lead to further valuable findings.

The present volume limits itself to the phonology and morphology of the dialect studied. A further volume on syntax would complete the description.

I hope that this book will be welcomed by all interested in the descriptive grammar of spoken Tamil.

Prof. A. Thurairajah
Vice - Chancellor

University of Jaffna
1993 . 11 . 10

1. PHONOLOGY

Distinctive segments

The distinctive phonological segments in the speech of the monolinguals speaking Tamil only are as follows: k, c, ṭ, t̲, p, r, ṅ, ñ, ṇ, n, m, y, v, R, l, ḷ, i, ii, u, uu, e, ee, o, oo, a, aa, ai, au, and in loan words b, s, ṣ; æ. In addition to these the following segments occur in the speech of the bilinguals speaking Tamil and English - that too in loans mostly from English : g, j, ḍ, b, h, f, z.

Realisation of segmental elements plosives and affricates

(1) k

[k] voiceless dorso-velar plosive in utterance initial position and in the medial position of a word after R and s: e.g. k a ṭ a y 'shop' *[k a ɣ a i]*, t̲eRku 'south' *[t̲ e t k ɪ̯]*, paaskaran 'personal name' *[p a : s k a r a n]*

[k:] long voiceless dorso - velar plosive as the realisation of the intervocalic sequence - kk - : e.g. akkaa 'elder sister' *[a k : a ɪ]*

[x] voiceless dorso - velar fricative in intervocalic position: kaakam 'crow' *[k a : x a m]*. Also in the medial position of a word after a consonant other than ṅ, R or s : kalki 'name of a Tamil weekly' *[k ɛ l x i]*, ko ḷ k a y, 'policy' *[k o ɭ x a i]*, m a a r k a ḷ i 'December' *[m ɛ ɪ r x a ɭ i]*

[g] voiced dorso-velar plosive occurs medially in the sequence - ṅk- : p a ṅ k u 'share' *[p a ṅ g ɪ̯]*

(2) c

[ᵛc] voiceless palatal affricate in utterance initial position. In the speech of some people it freely varies with voiceless apico-alveolar sibilant in some words: c a t t i 'vessel' [ᵛc a ṭ : i], cari 'right' [ᵛc ɛ d i] ~ [s ɛ d i]

[$\overset{v}{c}$] voiceless palatal affricate when preceded by a retroflex plosive, r or R : k a ṭ c i 'party' [k a ṭ $\overset{v}{c}$ i], v i i l̤ c i 'down - fall' [v ɪ̯ : l̤ $\overset{v}{c}$ i], muyaRci 'effort' [m u y ɛ t $\overset{v}{c}$ i] k u l̤ i r c i 'coolness' [k u l̤ i r $\overset{v}{c}$ i]

[c.$\overset{v}{c}$] voiceless palatal affricate (with the stop element slightly prolonged) when doubled : paccay 'green' [p ɛ c . $\overset{v}{c}$ *a* i]

[s] voiceless apico-alveolar sibilant medially between vowels : paci 'hunger' *[* p ɛ s i *]*

[j] voiced palatal affricate medially after n : p a ñ c u 'cotton' *[* p ɛ ñ j ɪ̯ *]*. Voicing is not heavy.

(3) ṭ

[ṭ] voiceless retroflex plosive medially before c : a a ṭ c i 'rule' *[a :* ṭ $\overset{v}{c}$ i *]*

[ṭ:] long voiceless retroflex plosive as the realisation of the intervocalic sequence -ṭ ṭ- : p a ṭ ṭ u 'silk' *[* p *a* ṭ : ɪ̯ *]*

[ɽ] voiced sublamino - post alveolar flap in intervocalic position : p a ṭ a m 'picture' *[* p *a* ɽ *a* m *]*. In some words it freely varies with the voiced retroflex plosive : t̲ a ṭ a y 'obstacle' *[* t̲ *a* ɽ *a* i *]* ~ *[* t̲ *a* ḍ *a* i *]*

[ḍ] voiced retroflex plosive in the sequence - ṇ ṭ , -m ṭ- : v a ṇ ṭ u 'beetle' *[* v *a* ṇ ḍ ɪ̯ *]*, e m ṭ a n 'cunning person' *[* e m ḍ *a* n *]*. The word e m ṭ a n is a loan - word but occurs in the speech of all (monolinguals and bilinguals) alike.

(4) t̲

[t̲] voiceless lamino - dental plosive (i) utterance initially : t̲ a m p i 'younger brother' *[* t̲ *a* m b i *]*,

(ii) in the sequence - t̲ m -, - k t̲ - : p a t̲ m a a 'personal name' *[* p a t̲ m *a* : *]*, p a k t̲ i 'piety' *[* p *a* k t̲ i *]*

[t̲:] long, voiceless lamino - dental plosive as the realisation of the intervocalic sequence - t̲ t̲ - : p a t̲ t̲ u 'ten' *[* p *a* t̲ : ɪ̯ *]*

[ð] voiced inter-dental fricative in intervocalic position and in the sequence - y t̲ -, - r t̲ - : a t̲ u 'that' *[a* ð ɪ̯ *]* aytu 'sparseness' *[a* i ð ɪ̯ *]*, t̲ e e r t̲ a l 'election' *[* t̲ e : r ð *a* l *]*. In the speech of some people it is a voiced inter-dental plosive.

[d̲] voiced lamino - dental plosive in the sequence - n t̲ - : p a n t̲ u 'ball' *[* p *a* n̲ d̲ ɪ̯ *]*

(5) p

[p] voiceless bilabial plosive in utterance initial position and in the sequence - Rp -, - cp -, - l̤ p - : puu 'flower' *[* p u : *]*, keRpanay 'pregnancy' *[* k e t p ɛ n *a* i *]*, a a c p a t̲ t̲ i r i 'hospital' *[a* : s p *a* t̲ : i r i *]*, k a a l̤ p u 'prejudice' *[* k *a* : l̤ p ɪ̯ *]*. After a retroflex p is slightly long.

[p:] long voiceless bilabial plosive as the realisation of the intervocalic sequence -pp-: appam 'hoppers' *[a* p : *a* m *]*.

[β] slightly voiced bilabial fricative intervocalically and in the sequence -rp-, -lp-: a a p a t̲ t̲ u 'danger' *[a* : β *a* t̲ : ɪ̯ *]*, maarpu 'chest' *[* m ɛ : r β ɪ̯ *]*, iyalpu 'nature' *[* i y ɛ l β ɪ̯ *]*.

[b] voiced bilabial plosive in the sequence -mp-, -np-, - ṇ p -: kampu 'stick' *[* k *a* m b ɪ̯ *]*, anpu 'affection' *[* ɛ n b ɪ̯ *]*, p a ṇ p u 'culture' *[* p *a* ṇ b ɪ̯ *]*. Voicing is not so heavy as in the Indian Tamil.

(6) R

[R] voiced apico alveolar trill occurs word-initially, and intervocalically : Racci 'meat' *[* R ɛ c . $\overset{v}{c}$ i *]*, Rakku 'unload' *[* R *a* k : ɪ̯ *]*, Rappar 'rubber' *[* R *a* p : ɛ r *]*, kaRi 'curry' *[* k *a* R i *]*, poRi 'trap' *[* p o R i *]*, kuuRay 'bridal sari' *[* k u : R *a* i *]*.

[t] voiceless alveolar plosive in the sequence of another consonant : meeRku 'west' *[m e : t k ̪]*, keRpany 'pregnancy' *[k e t p ɛ̱ n a i]*, muyaRci 'effort' *[m u y a t ɕ̱ i]*

[t:] long alveolar plosive as the realisation of the intervocalic sequence - RR - veRRi 'victory' *[vet:i]*, paRRu 'affection' *[p ɛ̱ t: ̪]*, oRRai 'single' *[o t : a i]*, maRRa 'other' *[m ɛ̱ t : ə]*. Words with medial - RR - are not many. Medial - RR - in words in the high variety is realised as -t̲t̲- in several words in the spoken Tamil

(7) g

[g] voiced dorso - velar plosive word - initially and word-finally in loans from English : geem 'game' *[g e : m]*, mag 'mug' *[m a g]* (only in the speech of bilinguals)

(8) j

[ʲʤ] voiced palatal affricate (i) word - initially : juuri 'jury' *[ʲʤ u : r i]* (ii) intervocalically: kaju 'cashew nut' *[k a ʲʤ ̪]*. In the speech of monolinguals initial j in loans is realised as y or c depending the word. Medial j is either s or c.

[j.ʲʤ] voiced palatal affricate with the stop element prolonged as the realisation of medial - jj - perhaps only in one word: bajji 'a savoury' *[b a j . ʲʤ i]*

(9) ḍ

[ḍ] voiced retroflex plosive in word - initial position: ḍaappu 'attendance register' *[ḍ a : p : ̪]*, ḍ a a k k o t̲t̲ a r 'doctor' *[ḍ a : k : o t̲ : ɛ̱ r]*

(10) b

[b] voiced bilabial plosive in word-initial and in intervocalic position: baaba 'barber' *[b a : b ə]*, bil 'bill' *[bil]*

Fricatives

(1) h

[h] voiceless glottal fricative in word-initial position - only in the speech of bilinguals: h i n t̲i 'Hindi' *[h i n ḍ̲ i]*

(2) f

[f] voiceless labio-dental fricative in word - initial and word - medial position: foom 'form' *[fo:m]*, kofi 'coffee' *[kofi]*

(3) z

[z] voiced lamino - fricative word - initially, only in loans from English: zuu 'zoo' *[z u :]*

Nasals

(1) ṅ

[ṅ] voiced - velar nasal. Word - initially only when reference is made to the letter ṅ : ṅa a n a a 'the letter ṅ'. Word - medially it always occurs with k, - ṅk - : p a ṅk u 'share' *[p a ṅ g ̪]*

[ṅ:] long voiced velar nasal occurs only in the high variety of Tamil only in two words : i ṅ ṅ a n a m 'in this way' *[i ṅ : ɛ̱ n a m]*, a ṅ ṅ a n a m 'in that way' *[a ṅ : ɛ̱ n a m]*

(2) ñ̃

[ñ̃] voiced lamino - palatal nasal occurs only in a couple of words word-initially: ñ̃ a a p a k a m 'memory' *[ñ̃ a : β a x a m]*. Word - medially it occurs only in the sequence - ñ̃ c -: a ñ̃ c u 'five' *[ɛ̱ ñ̃ ʲʤ ̪]*

[ñ̃ :] long voiced lamino palatal only in two words (perhaps borrowed in recent times from the high variety): v i ñ̃ ñ̃ a a n a m 'science' *[v i ñ̃ : a : n a m]*, a ñ̃ ñ̃ a a n a m 'ignorance' *[ɛ̱ ñ̃ : a : n a m]*

(3) ṇ

[ṇ] voiced retroflex nasal (i) in the intervocalic sequence - ṇṭ -, - ṇm -: vaṇṭu 'beetle' *[v a ṇ ɖ ∓]*, aaṇmay 'valour' *[a : ṇ m a i]* (ii) word-finally: aaṇ 'male' *[a : ṇ]*, peṇ 'female' *[p e ṇ]*

[ṇ:] long voiced retroflex nasal as the realisation of the intervocalic sequence - ṇṇ -: taṇṇi 'water' *[t a ṇ : i]*

[ṇ] voiced retroflex nasal flap in intervocalic position: kaṇippu 'judgement' *[k a ṇ i p : ∓]*

(4) n

[n] voiced apico-alveolar nasal (i) word-initially: naan 'I' *[n a : n]* (ii) intervocalically cani 'saturday' *[ʧ ɛ n i]* (iii) word-finally teen 'honey' *[t e : n]* (iv) in the sequence - nm -, - nr -: tanmay 'nature' *[t ɛ n m a i]*, enray 'my' *[e n d a i]*

[n:] long voiced apico - alveolar nasal as the realisation of the intervocalic sequence - nn -: annam 'swan' *[ɛ n : a m]*, kannay 'side as in a game' *[k ɛ n : a i]*

[n̲] voiced lamino - dental nasal in the intervocalic homorganic sequence - nt : pantu 'ball' *[p a n̲ d̲ ∓]*

(5) m

[m] voiced bilabial nasal occurs (i) word - initially : maṇ 'soil' *[m a ṇ]* (ii) intervocalically umi 'husk' *[u m i]* (iii) in the intervocalic sequence - mp -, - tm -, - nm -, - ṇm -, - ḷm -, -mṭ , rm : kampu 'stick' *[k a m b ∓]*, pat̲ maa 'personal name' *[p a t̲ m a :]*, nanmay 'benefit' *[n ɛ n m a i]*, aaṇmay 'valour' *[a : ṇ m a i]*, taḷmay 'humility' *[t a : ḷ m a i]*, emṭan 'cunning person' *[e m ɖ a n]*, oormam 'fortitude' *[o : r m a m]*-. emṭan is a loan-word.

[m:] long voiced bilabial nasal as the realisation of the intervocalic sequence -mm-: ammi 'grinding stone' *[a m : i]*.

Liquids

(1) r

[t] voiceless alveolar plosive word - initially mostly in loan - words : raacaa 'king' *[t a : s a :]*, raaman 'Rama - name' *[t a : m a n]*, reṇṭu 'two' *[t e ṇ ɖ ∓]*.

[d] voiced alveolar plosive (i) in intervocalic position: oru 'one' (adj.) *[o d ∓]*, pori 'fry' *[p o d i]* (ii) in the sequence -nr-: enray 'my' *[e n d a i]*. Voicing is quite light.

[ṙ] short trill or a flap when it does not occur immediately after the first syllable: cakoot̲ari 'sister' *[ʧ a x o : ɣ a ṙ i]*, caat̲t̲iri *[ʧ a : t̲ : i ṙ i]*.

[r] an alveolar trill word-finally or word medially before another consonant: avar 'he, honorific' *[a v ɛ r]*, kaṇṇir 'tears' *[k a ṇ : i r]*, poorvay 'cover' *[p o : r v a i]*, caarmanay 'easy chair' *[ʧ ɛ : r m ɛ n a i]*. Long alveolar trill is heard due to sandhi operation in certain types of morphemes (verb): oorren 'I run' *[o : r : e n]* (ooṭu+ren); t̲eerram 'we search' *[t̲ e :r : a m]* (t̲eeṭu + ram); ceerren 'I join' *[ʧ e : r : e n]* (ceer+ren).

Both r and R have plosive quality and R is taken under plosive.

(2) l

[l] voiced apico-alveolar lateral occurs (i) word-initially (in loan-words): laṅkay 'Lanka' *[l a ṅ k a i]*, laapam 'profit' *[l a : β a m]* (ii) inter-vocalically: pali 'sacrifice' *[p ɛ l i]*, puli 'tiger' *[p u l i]*, (iii) finally : vaal 'tail' *[v a : l]*. paal 'milk' *[p a : l]*, (iv) medially in the sequence -lp -, -lk-, -lv-:

iyalpu 'nature' [i y ɛ l β ∓] kalki 'a weekly magazine' [k ɛ l x i], t̲oolvi 'defeat' [t̲ o : l v i].

Monosyllabic words (only nouns) with short vowel ending in - l in the high variety have become - u ending words in spoken Tamil. kal 'stone' in the high variety is kallu in spoken Tamil. Also see nel 'paddy' > nellu, pal 'teeth'> pallu. But nil 'stay' > nil; vil 'sell' > vil.

[l :] long voiced apico - alveolar lateral occurs as the realisation of the intervocalic sequence - ll - : nalla 'good' [n ɛ l : ə], pallu 'teeth' [p ɛ l : ∓]

(3) ḷ

[ḷ] voiced retroflex lateral occurs (i) word-initially in one loan word: ḷaacci 'drawer' (ii) intervocalically: k aḷi 'paste' [k a ḷ i], p iḷa y 'error' [p ∓ ḷ a i], (iii) word - finally : vaaḷ 'sword' [v a : ḷ], t̲ e eḷ 'scorpion' [t̲ ə : ḷ] (iv) in the intervocalic sequence -lp-, -ḷk-, -ḷm-, -ḷv : iyalpu 'nature' [i y ɛ l β ∓], koḷkay 'policy' [k o ḷ x a i], t̲ aa ḷ m ay 'humility' [t̲ a : ḷ m a i], v e eḷ v i 'animal sacrifice' [v ə : ḷ v i].

Monosyllabic words (only nouns) with short vowel ending in -ḷ in the high variety have become - u ending words in Jaffna spoken Tamil. Other consonantal ending words in the high variety do not take an - u finally when used in speech: m u ḷ 'thorn'> m u ḷ ḷu, e ḷ 'gingely' > e ḷ ḷ u but k a ṇ 'eye' > k a ṇ.

In the speech of bilinguals [ḷ] occurs initially in cluster with another consonant in loans from English: gḷa a s 'glass' [gḷa : s]

[ḷ :] long voiced retroflex lateral occurs as the realisation of intervocalic sequence - ḷ ḷ - : k a ḷ ḷ u 'toddy' [k a ḷ : ∓] m u ḷ ḷ u 'thorn' [m u ḷ : ∓].

Semivowels / approximants

(1) y

[v] voiced dorso - palatal semivowel occurs (i) word - initially : yaman 'God of death' [y a m a n], yaar 'yard' [y ɛ : r], (ii) intervocalically : kaayam 'wound' [k ɛ : y a m], payan 'benefit' [p ɛ y ɛ n], (iii) word - finally : kay 'hand' [k a i], paay 'mat' [p ɛ : y], (iv) as the first element of word - medial consonant clusters : a y t̲ u 'spareness' [ɛ y ɣ ∓].

Words with initial y are mostly loans.

In words ending in - aay the final y may optionally be dropped. When this happens the aa has the same phonetic quality [ɛ :] that it would have if the y is still there. It is thus different from a final aa where no y existed in the first place. The following pairs of words would bring out the difference :

vaay 'mouth'	vaa 'come'
[v ɛ : y] ~ [v ɛ :]	[v a :]
t̲ a a y 'mother'	t̲ a a 'give'
[t̲ ɛ : y] ~ [t̲ ɛ :]	[t̲ a :]
caay 'lean'	caa 'death'
[ᶜ ɛ : y] ~ [ᶜ ɛ :]	[ᶜ a :]

In the speech of some speakers the final [ɛ :] in the variant form of these words may be heard as [æ :].

Final y may also be dropped following ee :

peey 'ghost' [p e : y] ~ [p e :]
meey 'graze' [m e : y] ~ [m e :]
t̲ e e y 'rub' [t̲ e : y] ~ [t̲ e :]

[y ː] long voiced dorso - palatal approximant as the realisation of intervocalic -yy- : ayyaa 'sir' *[ɛ̆ y : a :]*, koyyaa 'a kind of fruit' *[k o y : a :]*.

[v] voiced labio - dental approximant occurs *(i)* word-initially : vaa 'come' *[v a :]*, v a ṇ ṭ u 'beetle' *[v a ṇ ɖ ∓]*, *(ii)* intervocalically : avan 'he' *(* non honorific) cevi 'ear' *[ᵛc ə v i]* *(iii)* as the second element in word - medial consonant clusters : ṯ o y v u 'a disease, asthma' *[ṯ o y v ∓]*, ṯ o o l v i 'defeat' *[ṯ o : l v i]*, veervay 'sweat' *[v e : r v a i]*

[v :] long voiced labio - dental approximant as the realisation of the intervocalic sequence -vv- : kavvu 'to take a thing with mouth' *[k a v : ∓]*, avvay 'personal name' *[a v : a i]*, vavvaal 'bat' *[v a v : a : l]*.

[ᶻc] voiced retroflex approximant does not occur in Jaffna Tamil speech. However, a distinction is made orthographically between *[l̤]* and *[ᶻc]* in written Tamil.

Syllabics

Vowels

Oral monophthongs

All vowels preceded or followed by nasal consonants have the colouring of nasality but only very lightly. Similarly when retroflex consonants follow, vowels get the colouring of this consonant lightly and may be somewhat centralised.

(1) **a**

[ɛ̆] lower mid front unrounded vowel occurs before alveolar consonants *(r, n, l)*, palatal consonants (c, ñ, y) and before R when it is double or followed immediately by another consonant : nari 'fox' *[n ɛ̆ d i]*, pani 'dew' *[p ɛ̆ n i]*, valay 'net' *[v ɛ̆ l a i]*, paci 'hunger' *[p ɛ̆ s i]*

k a ñ c i 'rice gruel' *[k ɛ̆ ñ j i]*, ayyaa 'sir' *[ɛ̆ y : a :]*, paRRu 'affection' *[p ɛ̆ t : ∓]*, kaRpu 'chastity' *[k ɛ̆ t p ∓]*.

[a] low central vowel occurs in other environments : appa 'then, so' *[a p : a]*, a ṯ u 'that' *[a ɣ ∓]*. p a ṭ a m 'picture' *[p a ˤ a m]*. Word - final *[a]* freely varies with higher mid central vowel *[ə]* (with lips unrounded) in several words : appa 'so' *[a p : a]* ~ *[a p : ə]*.

(2) **aa**

[ɛ̆ :] long low front vowel before y and r : naay 'dog' *[n ɛ̆ : y]*, aar 'who' *[ɛ̆ : r]*, paar 'look' *[p ɛ̆ : r]*.

[a :] long low central unrounded vowel occurs in other environments : aaṭ u 'goat' *[a : ˤ ∓]*, kaakam 'crow' *[k a : x a m]*, appaa 'father' *[a p : a :]*.

(3) **i**

[∓] high central unrounded vowel before retroflex consonants (ṭ, ṇ, l̤), ᵛš and before a single R when immediately followed by a vowel : i ṭ iyap pam 'string hoppers' *[∓ ˤ i y a p : a m]*, k i ṇ ṇ a m 'vessel' *[k ∓ ṇ : a m]*, k i l̤ i 'parrot' *[k ∓ l̤ i]*, v i ᵛš ṇ u 'God Vishnu' *[v ∓ ᵛš ṇ ∓]*, kiRukku 'scribble' *[k ∓ R ∓ k : ∓]*, niRay 'weight' *[n ∓ R a i]*.

[i] high front vowel occurs in other positions : ilay 'leaf' *[i l a i]*, vilay 'price' *[v i l a i]*, cinna 'small' *[ᵛc i n : a]*, ini 'hence forth' *[i n i]*.

(4) **ii**

[∓ :] long high central unrounded vowel occurs before retroflex consonants (ṭ, ṇ, l̤) and R before a vowel : i i ṭ u

'mortgage' [ɨ̱ : ɣ̣ ɨ̱], v i i ṇ 'vain' [v ɨ̱ : ṇ], n i i ḷ a m 'length' [n ɨ̱ : ḷ a m], kiiRu 'incise' [k ɨ̱ : R ɨ̱].

[i :] long high front unrounded vowel in other environments : iir 'nit' [i : r], iikku 'rib of palm leaf' [i : k : ɨ̱], t̲ i i v u 'island' [t̲ i : v ɨ̱], t̲ a m p i i 'brother (vocative)' [t̲ a m b i :].

(5) u

[u] high back rounded vowel occurs in the first syllable of a word : umi 'husk' [u m i], kulay 'bunch' [k u l a i].

[ɨ̱] high central unrounded vowel in any other syllable: a ṭ u k k u 'arrange' [a ɣ̣ ɨ̱ k : ɨ̱], k a a ṭ u 'forest' [k a : ɣ̣ ɨ̱].

(6) uu

[u :] long high back rounded vowel occurs word-initially, medially and finally : uur 'village' [u : r], k u u ṭ a y 'basket' [k u : ɣ̣ a i], puu 'flower' [p u :].

(7) e

[ə] higher mid central vowel (unrounded) occurs before retroflex consonants (ṭ , ṇ, ḷ), p, k, m, v, ṅ and R followed by a vowel : e ṭ u 'take' [ə ɣ̣ ɨ̱], e ṇ ṇ a y 'oil' [ə ṇ : a i], v e ḷ i 'open space' [v ə ḷ i], eppa 'when' [ə p : a], vekkam 'bashfulness' [v ə k : a m], vempal 'prematurely ripe fruit' [v ə m b a l], evay 'who (plural)' [ə v a i], veṅkaayam 'onion' [v ə ṅ g ɛ : y a m], veRu 'hate' [v ə R ɨ̱].

[e] mid front short vowel in other environments : eli 'rat' [e l i], veRRi 'victory' [v e t t i].

(8) ee

[ə :] higher mid central long vowel occurs before retroflex consonants (ṭ , ṇ, ḷ), p, k, m, v, ṅ š and R followed by a vowel : e e ṭ u 'ola manuscript' [ə : ɣ̣ ɨ̱], e eṇi 'ladder' [ə : ṇ i], m e e ḷ a m 'drum' [m ə : ḷ a m], eeppam 'belching' [ə : p : a m], t̲ eekku 'teak' [t̲ ə : k : ɨ̱] veempu 'margosa' [v ə : m b ɨ̱], t̲ e e v a y 'need' [t̲ ə : v a i], t̲ eeṅkaay 'coconut' [t̲ ə : ṅ g ɛ : y], t̲ e e R u 'piece' [t̲ ə : R ɨ̱].

[e :] mid front unrounded long vowel occurs in other environments initially, medially and finally : een 'why' [e : n], veer 'root' [v e : r], avanee 'he, emphatic' [a v a n e :].

(9) o

[o] mid back rounded vowel initially and medially : oḷi 'ray' [o ḷ i], k o t i 'flag' [k o ɣ̣ i]

(10) oo

[o :] mid back rounded long vowel occurs word-initially, medially and finally : oolay 'palm leaf' [o : l a i], kooyil 'temple' [k o : y i l], noo 'pain' [n o :], poo 'go' [p o :].

(11) æ

[æ] front low vowel occurs in a few loans from English: b æ ṅ k 'bank' [b æ ṅ k].

In the speech of monolinguals and some bilinguals [ɛ :] pronounced without the y in word-final sequence - aay in Tamil words is heard as [æ].

Diphthongs

The Tamil letters ai and au are alternantly written as ay and av. The occurrence of au is infrequent. It occurs in a few personal names. In the speech of monolinguals only av occurs. For instance the monolinguals would pronounce the personal name Gowri only as *[k a v u R i]*.

In the present analysis ai is treated as ay wherein a will have the phonetic quality *[a ~ ɛ]*.

Restrictions of phonological segments to loan words

In the speech of the monolinguals loan words with foreign sounds have been maximally assimilated to the native phonological system. For instance punal 'funnel' *[p u n ɛ l]*, i ñ c i p p a ṯ ṯ a r 'inspector' *[i ñ j i p : a ṯ : ɛ r]*, k o o ṭ u 'court' *[k o : ʈ ɸ]*, ciRaappar 'shroff' *[ʧ ɸ R a : p : ɛ r]*. Even foreign personal names have been assimilated : laccumi 'Lakshmi' *[l a c ʧ ɸ m i]*, innaaci 'Ignatius' *[i n : a : s i]*, kappiRiyal 'Gabriel' *[k a p : ɸ R i y ɛ l]*.

This situation is different from the Indian where monolinguals use loan - words with sounds foreign to Tamil in their day to day speech.

Any word with initial g, j, ḏ, ṯ, ḍ, b, l, ḷ or medial - gg -, - jj -, - ḏ ḏ -, - ḍ ḍ -, - bb - or final k, g, c, j, p, b is a loan - word. Similarly the presence of ʃ, h, f, z in any position of a word and the presence of s word - finally will indicate that the word is foreign.

Most of the words beginning in r or R are loan-words. A couple of native words begin in r or R having lost an

initial vowel, mostly i : r e ṇ ṭ u 'two' *[t ə ṇ ḍ ɸ]*, Rakku 'unload' *[R a k : ɸ]*. These words are written and pronounced with an initial i in the high variety.

A consonant cluster word - initially or word - finally would indicate that the word is foreign. Words of this type occur only in the speech of bilinguals.

Vowels occurring only in loan words

The occurrence of æ before nasal is foreign to Tamil. It occurs in the English loan 'bank'. Monolinguals have this word assimilated as v a ṅ k i 'bank' *[v a ṅ g i]*

Restriction of phonological segments by grammatical categories

Restriction by word - classes

In the speech of the monolinguals loan - words (maximally assimilated) occur only in the word class of nouns. The numeral laccam 'lakh' is an exception. Bilinguals may use words belonging to other word - classes depending their code-switching.

Borrowings are invariably in their root - form. But native suffixes are added to them : kaar 'car' k a a r k a ḷ 'cars', ravun 'town' ravunilay 'in the town'.

Phonotactics

Word - final consonants

The following consonants occur word - finally : r, ṇ, n, m, y, l ḷ.

Loans from English ending in consonants like k, c, t take a final u in the speech of the monolinguals : 'break' piReekku, 'watch' vaaccu, 'ticket' rikkeRRu.

nitial consonants

All consonants except ṉ occur word - initially. The initial occurrence of ṭ and ḷ is restricted to loan - words only.

Words with initial ṭ, ṅ, ñ, y, R, l, and ḷ are not many. ṅ occurs initially but only in one word: ṅ a a n a a 'the letter ṅ'. y does not occur initially before front vowels or o in native words. ḷ occurs only in one word: ḷ a a c c i 'drawer'. r, R and l occur initially both in native and loan - words. Their initial occurrence in native words is due to the loss of an initial vowel usually i which is retained in the high variety of Tamil: i r a ṇ ṭ u 'two' (high variety) > r e ṇ ṭ u (spoken); iRakku 'unload' > Rakku, i l a n t a y 'a kind of tree' > l a n t a y. v does not occur word - initially before back vowels in native words. It may occur in this position in loan - words: v o o ṭ ṭ u 'vote'.

Distribution of consonant clusters

Native words do not have initial or final consonant clusters.

In the speech of bilinguals consonant clusters occur word - initially and finally in loan - words from English: skuul 'school', bReek 'break', milk 'milk'. In the speech of the monolinguals such borrowings are assimilated to the native phonological system by adding a vowel initially or finally depending on the position of the cluster and sometimes inserting a vowel in between the medial cluster: iskuul 'school', piReekku 'break'.

Possible consonant clusters: initially and finally

All the possible clusters in English would occur in the speech of bilinguals who usually use a large number of English words in their Tamil speech.

Word - medial consonant clusters

Word - medial consonant clusters occur in both native words and loan words. Here only the clusters occurring in native words are given: kk, cc, ṭṭ, ṭc, t t, pp, RR, Rk, Rc, Rp, ṅk, ñc, ṇṇ, ṇṭ, ṇm, n t, nn, np, nR, nm, mm, mp, yy, y t, yp, vv, rr, rp, r t, rc, rm, rv, ll, lp, lv, ḷḷ, ḷk, ḷc, ḷm, ḷv. Examples: akkaa 'elder sister', paccay 'green', p a ṭ ṭ u 'silk', k a ṭ c i 'party', p a t t u 'ten', appaa 'father', veRRi 'victory', t e R k u 'south', muyaRci 'effort', keRpanay 'pregnancy', a ṅ k a y 'there', p a ñ c u 'cotton', a ṇ ṇ a y 'elder brother', p a ṇ ṭ i 'pig', aaṇmay 'valour', p a n t u 'ball', t e n n a y 'coconut tree', anpu 'affection', t a m p i y i n R a y 'younger brother's', t a n m a y 'nature', ammaa 'mother', ampu 'arrow', payya 'slowly', a y t u 'sparsely', kaypu 'bitter', vavvaal 'bat', oorraan 'he is running', maarpu 'chest', a y a r t i 'forgetfulness', k u ḷ i r c i 'coolness', oormam 'fortitude', veervay 'sweat', villu 'bow', iyalpu 'nature', t o o l v i 'defeat', p a ḷ ḷ u 'a kind of verse', k o ḷ k a y 'policy', v i i ḷ c i 'down - fall', t a a ḷ m a y 'humbleness', v e e ḷ v i 'animal sacrifice'.

Words like p a k t i 'devotion', p a t m a a 'personal name', k a š ṭ a m 'difficulty', v i š ṇ u 'God Vishnu' occur commonly in the speech of a vast majority of speakers. These are borrowings from Sanskrit.

Some rural monolinguals with little literacy pronounce k a š ṭ a m and v i š ṇ u as k a y i ṭ ṭ a m and v i ṭ ṭ u ṇ u respectively.

The words kaypu and k u ḷ i r c i are written with three - consonant clusters in the high variety of Tamil as kayppu and k u ḷ i r c c i.

In the Jaffna dialect of Tamil, inflected forms of nouns and verbs seldom create clusters that are not found within a word.

Distribution of vowels

Word - final vowels

All vowels occur word - finally except e, o and the diphthong au.

The short vowels i, u, e and a occur word - finally in a large number of words.

The long vowels occur word - finally but in root forms they occur mostly in monosyllabic words and such words are not many. ii occurs word - finally in ii 'fly', pii 'excreta', t̲ i i 'fire', cii 'an expression indicating negation, disapproval, disgust', nii 'you, impolite'; uu occurs only in one word, puu 'flower'. It also occurs in an onomatopoeic word : cuu indicating 'excess'. ee occurs word - finally with several words as an emphatic or as an interrogative marker. ee is also heard word - finally when y is dropped in the final sequence - eey. aa occurs word - finally in monosyllabic forms like vaa 'come', t̲ a a 'give', caa 'death', maa 'flour'. A couple of polysyllabic kin terms have aa word finally : akkaa 'elder sister', ammaa 'mother', appaa 'father', t̲ a a t̲ t̲ a a 'grand father', etc. Also aa occurs word - finally as an interrogative marker with words : avanaa 'is he', oo occurs word - finally with only two monosyllabic words : poo 'go', noo 'pain'. Also it occurs as an interrogative marker (indicating slight doubt) with words : avanoo 'is he' (with slight doubt). In phrases like veyyiloo veyyil 'it is very hot', k u l̤ i r oo k u l̤ i r 'it is very cold', oo occurs word - finally indicating 'excess'.

Also long vowels occur in vocatives : t̲ a m p i i 'oh younger brother', appuu 'oh father', mannanee 'oh king' (in restricted contexts), mannaa 'oh king'. The root of the last two forms is mannan 'king'.

Word - initial vowels

The vowels a, aa, i, ii, u, uu, e, ee, o, oo all occur word - initially : akkaa 'elder sister', a a l̤ 'person', ilay 'leaf', iir 'nit', uppu 'salt', uur 'country', eli 'rat', een 'why', o n̤ t̤ u 'one', oom 'yes'.

Sequences of syllabic vowels

In general, there are no sequences of syllabic vowels in Jaffna Tamil. But sometimes sequences of syllabic vowels are heard in the speech of rural monolinguals due to the loss of a consonant.

Word - medially ua, uua, oou, ooa, ooaa are heard as sequences : a t̲ u a l̤ 'they, non - human', puuaracu 'a kind of tree', p o o u t̲ u 'it is going', pooan 'I won't go', pooaan 'he won't go'. In the second word the glide v is dropped. In all other words the consonant k is dropped.

Word - finally uua, ooa and ooaa are heard : kuua 'to whistle', pooa 'to go', pooaa 'she won't go'. In the first word the consonant v is dropped. In the other two, k is dropped When questioned about these words, the speakers would pronounce the consonant too.

Suprasegmentals

Degrees of length

There are two degrees of contrasting length in vowels and consonants : short versus long.

Vowels

There are five contrasting pairs of short and long vowels: a/aa, i/ii, u/uu, e/ee, o/oo : a t̤ i 'beat', a a t̤ i 'July'; t̲ i n 'eat', t̲ i i n 'food'; k u t̤ a y 'umbrella', k u u t̤ a y 'basket'; keli 'greedy', keeli 'fun'; k o t̤ i 'flag', k o o t̤ i 'crore'.

Semivowels

The semivowels y and v contrast in duration : ayar ' thin layer of skin on a healing wound ', ayyar ' a caste title '; avay ' they, human ', avvay ' personal name '. Minimal pairs for the contrast of y and v in their duration are not many in the language.

Liquids

There is contrast between l / ll and ḷ / ḷḷ : pali 'sacrifice', palli ' house lizard '; p a ḷ i ' sin ', p a ḷḷ i 'woman belonging to Palla caste '.

Nasals

Nasals ṉ / ṉṉ, n / nn and m / mm also contrast : a ṉ a y ' accommodate a being ', a ṉ ṉ a y ' elder brother '; cani ' Saturday ', canni ' coma '; amay ' take shape ', ammay ' small pox '.

In the speech [$\tilde{n}$:] occurs only in two words and it is difficult to find a contrastive minimal pair for $\tilde{n}$ / $\tilde{n}\tilde{n}$.

Fricative

In speech [s :] occurs only in two words : bassilay ' in the bus ', kissilay ' echo form of bassilay '. The monolinguals use the form vacu [v *a* s $\mp$] instead of bas. The locative form of vacu is vacuvilay.

Stops and affricates

Examples for contrast between k / kk, c / cc, ṭ / ṭṭ, t̲ / t̲t̲ and p / pp : m a k a ḷ ' daughter ', m a k k a ḷ ' people '; pacay ' paste ', paccay ' green '; v a ṭ i ' filter ', v a ṭ ṭ i 'interest'; v i t̲ a y ' seed ', v i t̲ t̲ a y 'knowledge'; capay ' assembly ', cappay ' flat '.

Stress

Stress is not phonemic in Jaffna Tamil. However, the monolingual speakers have a phonetic stress. They usually pronounce words in isolation with a stress in the first syllable of the word.

In an utterance having a number of words, a particular word may be stressed, usually on the first syllable to indicate emphasis. The stress may be accompanied by a slight high pitch. Sometimes the stress can be on a syllabic segment, and in such instances the segment would be pronounced slightly longer. If a long vowel is involved in the segment, it would be made still longer. Geminated consonants may be also pronounced longer to indicate stress.

Intonation

Only some of the intonation patterns are described here. To date no systematic work has been made on the intonation patterns in Jaffna Tamil.

Statement type of utterances are characterised by a falling intonation.

↘
naan pooRen
' I am going '

Interrogative utterances built around a ' question – word ' such as een ' why ' have the same intonation as that of the statement type.

↘
nii een pooRaay
' Why are you going? '

But, if it indicates 'surprise', the intonation will rise at the end.

nii een pooRaay
'*Why* are you going?'

Interrogative utterances with the question marker - aa in the last word of the utterance allowing a 'yes' or 'no' answer have a rise - fall on the question marker.

avan ippa paṭikkiRaanaa
'Does he study now?'

It is possible to have the question marker on a non-final word in the sentence. In such an instance, the rise - fall will be on the question marker. There will be a fall at the end of the word.

avar naaḷaykku koḷumpukkaa pooRaar
'Is he going to *Colombo* tomorrow?'

A declarative sentence can be used as a 'yes - no' question utterance. This type of utterance starts with relatively a low pitch, and the pitch gradually rises high. The whole utterance is usually uttered in a quicker sequence.

nii neeRRu vantaay
'Did you come yesterday?'

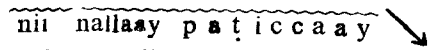
Imperative sentences are usually uttered with a falling intonation.

iñcay vaa 'Come here'

Exclamatory utterances are usually uttered with a mid - level tone :

enna vaṭivaana viiṭu
'What a beautiful house this (is)'

Utterances conveying a sarcastic sense have a drawl in every word in the utterance. Pitch level will be more or less the same throughout the utterance. This type of sarcastic utterance has a sustained terminal, finally falling down slowly.



nii nallaay paṭiccaay
'You studied well' (in the negative sense)

Contrary - to - fact utterances have a different pattern. The utterance starts with a relatively low pitch, rises to the mid high level and then falls down. It occurs with sustained terminal.

niipaṭṭaṇam poonaay

The meaning of this utterance is, 'you said that you would not go to town, but, having said so, you had gone'.

Assimilation

There are instances of progressive assimilation : among past tense markers -cc- and - ñc - are realisations of the basic markers - t t - and - nt - when preceded by a stem ending in a front vowel or palatal consonant : aṭu-tt-en 'I accommodated', aṭi-cc-en 'I beat'. There is only one word ending in - y whose past tense marker undergoes the progressive assimilatory process : (maḷay) pey-t-utu 'it rained' > pe-ñc-utu. Both forms peytutu and peñcutu are in use.

Regressive assimilation takes place when a word ending in – m is followed by a word beginning in k – or c – in certain types of constructions: p a ḷ a m + caaRu is realised as [p a ḷ a c . c̬ a : R ∓] or [p a ḷ a n̬ c̬ a : R ∓] depending the meaning (or casal relation) of the words.

2. NOUN MORPHOLOGY

Inflection

Noun inflection

Means used to express functions of noun phrases

The basic means of expressing the function of a noun phrase is the use of a bound suffix (" case ending "). Bound suffixes are also used in derivational processes, and as markers of plurality. The order of these suffixes is derivational – number – case.

The different cases in Jaffna Tamil are exemplified by the following two paradigms for the singular of p e ṭ i y a n 'boy' and m a r a m 'tree'.

Nominative	p e ṭ i y a n	m a r a m
Accusative	p e ṭ i y a n a y	m a r a t̲ t̲ a y
Dative	p e ṭ i y a n u k k u	m a r a t̲ t̲ u k k u
Instrumental	p e ṭ i y a n a a l a y	m a r a t̲ t̲ a a l a y
Comitative	p e ṭ i y a n o o ṭ a y	m a r a t̲ t̲ o o ṭ a y
Locative	p e ṭ i y a n i l a y	m a r a t̲ t̲ i l a y
Referential	p e ṭ i y a n i ṭ ṭ a y	— —
Ablative	p e ṭ i y a n i l a y i r u n t̲ u	m a r a t̲ t̲ i l a y i r u n t̲ u
	p e ṭ i y a n i ṭ ṭ a y i r u n t̲ u	— —
Genitive	p e ṭ i y a n i n r a y	m a r a t̲ t̲ i n r a y

The dative case ending – u k k u has an alternant -k k u occurring after vowels : a p p a a 'father' a p p a a k k u, a m m a a 'mother' a m m a a k k u.

When - u m is added to the locative case ending - i l a y, the locative ending has a variant - i l : o r u i ṭ a ṯṯ i l a - y u m ~ o r u i ṭ a ṯṯ i l u m 'in no place', 'no where'.

Referential case ending - i ṭṭ a y has an alternant - ṭṭ a y occurring only with nouns ending in - a a : a p p a a 'father' a p p a a ṭṭ a y.

Genitive case ending - i n r a y can be added to any stem. It has an alternant - r a y occurring with nouns ending in - n and also with human nouns ending in - r : m u r u k a n 'Murugan' m u r u k a n i n r a y ~ murukanray.

Genitive has - u ṭ a y a also as a suffix particularly with pronouns : e n n u ṭ a y a 'my'. - a ṭ a y is a variant of u ṭ a y a : u ṅ k a ṭ a y 'your'.

The locative marker - i l a y occurs with both animates and inanimates : a v a r i l a y p i ḷ a y i l l a y 'There is no fault in him'; a v a y i l a y a a r a a r v a r u v i n a m 'Who will come among them'; k a l l u k u u r a y i l a y v i ḷ u n - ṯṯ u ṯṯ u 'Stone fell on the roof'. The locative marker occurs in comparative and superlative expressions too : k a ṇ ṇ a n i l (paakka) i v a n k e ṭṭ i k k a a R a n 'He is clever than Kannan'; e l l a a r i l u m/ellaarilayum (paakka) i v a r ṯ a a n n a l l a v a r 'Of all, he is the best person', e l l a a ṯṯ i l u m/ e l l a a ṯṯ i l a y u m (paakka) i n ṯ a n i R a m ṯ a a n n a l l a ṯ u 'Of all, this colour is the best'.

Only animate nouns inflect for referential case. The referential case is usually used with verbs of 'asking' or 'taking' : m a a m a a ṭṭ a y k e e ḷ u ṅ k o o 'Ask uncle', k a ṇ ṇ a n i ṭṭ a y m a a m p a ḷ a m e ṭ u k k a l a a m 'We can buy mangoes from Kannan', a v a r i ṭṭ a y c o l l u ṅ k o o 'Tell him'. Possession and goal of motion

too may be expressed by using the referential case : a v a r i ṭṭ a y k a a c u i r u k k u 'He has money', k a ṇ ṇ a n i ṭṭ a y p o o ṅ k o o 'Go to Kannan'.

The ending that corresponds to - i ṭṭ a y in literary Tamil is - i ṭ a m.

With some verbs either the referential - i ṭṭ a y or the accusative - a y can be used without any difference in meaning : m a a m a a ṭṭ a y k e e ḷ u ṅ k o o 'Ask uncle', m a a m a a - v a y k e e ḷ u ṅ k o o 'Ask uncle'. Similarly, either - ṭ ṭ a y or the dative - u k k u can be used without any difference in meaning : a v a r i ṭṭ a y c o l l u ṅ k o o 'Tell him', a v a r u k k u c c o l l u ṅ k o o 'Tell him'. Instances of contrasts are : a v a a k u ḷ a n ṯ a y i ṭṭ a y k u ṭ u ṯṯ a a 'She gave (something) to the child', a v a a k u ḷ a n ṯ a y a y k k u ṭ u ṯṯ a a 'She gave the child', a v a r i ṭṭ a y m a a m p a ḷ a m i l l a y 'He has no mangoes', a v a r u k k u m a a m p a ḷ a m i l l a y 'There aren't mangoes (left) for him'.

The locative marker - i l a y and the referential marker - i ṭṭ a y may give the same meaning in some instances: a n ṯ a k k a a c u a v a r i l a y i r u k k a ṭṭ u m 'Let that money be with him', a n ṯ a k k a a c u a v a r i ṭṭ a y i r u k k a ṭṭ u m 'Let that money be with him'; a n ṯ a p p o R u p p a y a v a r i l a y v i ṭ a v e e ṇ ṭ a a m 'Don't leave that responsibility with him / on him', a n ṯ a p p o R u p p a y a v a r i ṭṭ a y v i ṭ a v e e ṇ ṭ a a m 'Don't leave that responsibility with him / on him'. (Here too, some speakers may feel a subtle difference in sense between the use of - i l a y and - i ṭṭ a y. The use of - i ṭṭ a y may give a more 'specific' sense about the noun (location), whereas, the use of - i l a y may give a general sense. On the

other hand, there are instances where sharp contrast could be seen between these two cases : avarilay veelay illay 'He is not the man to get the work through', avarittay veelay illay 'He has no work to offer'. The first example is an (idiomatic) expression commonly occurring in Jaffna Tamil.

For animate nouns, the ablative is expressed either with -ilay iruntu or -ittay iruntu. The use of -ilay iruntu is, however, infrequent.

In some contexts -ilay iruntu and -ittay iruntu can make a difference in meaning and cause a contrast: taay takappanilay iruntu pillaiyal ellaarum vatantiyayp parappiinam 'All from parents to children are spreading the rumour', taay takappanittay iruntu pillaiyal ellaarum vatantiyayp parappiinam 'All the children are spreading the rumour from their parents'.

With verbs such as etu 'take, get' and vaanku 'buy, receive, accept, take' the person from whom something is taken or received can appear in either the referential case + iruntu (i. e. ablative) or merely the referential case: avar naalaykku ennattay (iruntu) kaacu vaankuvar 'He will get money from me tomorrow'.

It is possible to analyse iruntu as a postposition, instead of setting up a separate case as ablative.

The oblique form (of nouns that have a separate form before case endings) and the nominative form of nouns that do not have separate oblique form too may occur as genitive: maattuvaal 'tail of cattle', kannan katay 'Kannan's shop', petti muuti 'lid of box'.

Some adjectival forms too occur as genitive : mara ucci 'top of tree' (marattinray ucci, maratturucci 'top of tree' are other possibilities).

Postpositions

Postpositions, some of which also occur as conjunctions or as adverbs, are used to express a wide range of syntactic and semantic functions. Some of them are bound, and others are free forms. They follow a number of different case forms. Postpositions (i) following a nominative : ceentu 'together', muulam 'through, with, by means of', varaykkum / varay 'upto, until', varayilay 'at about' (ii) following an accusative: cuRRi 'around', paRRi 'about, concerning', tavira 'except for' (iii) following a dative : meelay 'on, above', kiilay 'beneath', munnaalay 'before, in front of', munnukku 'before, in front of', pinnaalay 'after, behind', pinnukku 'afterwards, behind', -aaka 'for' (benefactive), ullay 'inside', pakkattilay 'in the vicinity of', etiray 'opposite', atiyilay 'at the bottom of'.

Ways in which different syntactic functions are expressed

The subject noun, or pronoun of an intransitive or of a transitive verb is usually in the nominative case. But a small set of defective verbs have to be considered exceptions to this general statement. The commonest of these defective verbs are veent- 'want, need', teri- 'know', puri- 'understand', piti- 'like', kitay- 'be available, obtain', vali- 'pain, hurt, ache'.

Three of these, veent-, kitay- and puri- may be said to have a nominative subject, because their arguments comprise an NP in the dative, and an NP in the nominative case. The nominative case NP can be a member of the non rational or rational class, but it is dominantly nonrational class.

eṅkaḷukku nalla caappaaṭu veeṇum
'We need good food'

eṅkaḷukku nalla cineekit̲ar veeṇum
'We need good friends'

eṅkaḷukku iñcay nalla caappaaṭu kiṭaykkumaa
'Can we get good food here?'

uṅkaḷukku nalla maappiḷay kiṭayccaar
'You got a good bridegroom'

eṅkaḷukku int̲ap paaṭam puriyeellay
'We don't understand this lesson'

Of the other three verbs, t̲eri- has an NP (the person who knows) in the dative, and the other NP in the accusative if it is animate, and in nominative if it is inanimate:

aruḷukku maamaavayt̲ t̲eriyaat̲u
'Arul does not know uncle'

eṅkaṭay piḷḷayaḷukkuk koḷumpu t̲eriyaat̲u
'Our children do not know Colombo'

The verb piṭi- has an NP (the person who likes) in the dative, and the other NP in the locative (freely varying with the accusative) if it is animate, and in nominative if it is inanimate:

avaḷukkut̲ t̲ampiyilay piṭikkaat̲u
avaḷukkut̲ t̲ampiyayp piṭikkaat̲u
'She does not like younger brother'

avaḷukkut̲ t̲oocay piṭikkaat̲u
'She does not like dosai'

The verb vali- has an NP in the dative and the other NP (which is invariably an inanimate one) either in the nominative or in the accusative case, the nominative form being more dominant in use.

enakkut̲ t̲alay valikkut̲u
enakkut̲ t̲alayay valikkuṭu
'I have a head ache'

enakku vayiRu valikkut̲u
enakku vayit̲t̲ay valikkut̲u
'I have a stomach ache'

Another type of sentence where the verb does not have a surface subject in the nominative case is as follows:

enakkuk kaaccalaayk kiṭakku
'I have fever'

Subject of copular construction

The subject of a copular construction is a nominal in the nominative case.

Direct object

A human noun form occurring as a direct object will always have the accusative suffix -ay:

appaavayk kuuppiṭṭen
'I called father'

t̲aṅkacciyayp peeca veeṇṭaam
'Don't scold younger sister'

If the accusative suffix is deleted in the above second sentence, it would give a totally different meaning:

t̲aṅkacci peeca veeṇṭaam
'Let younger sister not speak'

An animate noun other than human may or may not have the accusative suffix depending on the intended meaning :

maaṭṭayk kaṭṭu
'Tether the cow'

viiṭṭayp paaṯṯuk koḷ
'Look after the house'

avan maaṭu kaṭṭuRaan
'He is tethering the cow'

avan maaṭu kaṭṭuRaanaa
'Is he tethering the cow?'

nii pooy aaṭu meey
'Go and graze the goats'

maaṭu vaaṅku
'Buy a cow'

If the accusative suffix is deleted in the above first sentence, it would form a compound, maaṭu kaṭṭu and mean 'tethering of cow'. Usually the second sentence is not uttered without the accusative suffix. But, if someone were to say it, it would give the same meaning as the one with the accusative suffix.

All other sentences above could occur with accusative suffix, but, they would give a different meaning – the object noun would be particularized.

avan maaṭṭayk kaṭṭuRaan
'He is tethering the *cow*'

avan maaṭṭayk kaṭṭuRaanaa
'Is he tethering the *cow*?'

nii pooy aaṭṭay meey
'Go and graze the *goat*'

maaṭṭay vaaṅku
'Buy *the cow*'

Generally for inanimate nouns the accusative marker is not suffixed, unless one wants to particularize or emphasize the object noun.

eṅkaḷukku oru viiṭu paar
'Look for a house for us'

avar anta viiṭu vaaṅkiRaar
'He is buying that house'

eṅkaḷukku oru viiṭṭayp paar
'Look a *house* for us'

avar anta viiṭṭay vaaṅkiRaar
'He is buying that *house*'

In Jaffna Tamil, the noun viiṭu 'house' plus the accusative suffix followed by either the verb poo 'go' or vaa 'come' give the dative meaning : viiṭṭay pooRen 'I am going home', viiṭṭay vaaṅkoo 'Come home'.

Indirect object

The indirect object noun is usually in the dative case.

maamaa eṅkaḷukkuk kaacu tantaar
'Uncle gave us money'

The verbs kuṭu 'give', taa 'give' and collu 'say, tell' can have an indirect object noun, both in dative and referential case.

unray kaaRay avarukkuk kuṭu
'Give your car to him' (change of ownership)

unray kaaRay avariṭṭay kuṭu
'Give your car to him'

aṯay enakkuṯ ṯaa
'Give that to me' (change of ownership)

aṯay ennaṭṭay ṯaa
'Give that to me'

aṯay maamaakkuc collu
'Tell that to uncle'

aṯay maamaaṭṭay collu
'Tell that to uncle'

The dative case is used when a change of ownership is involved, and when giving takes place without a clear change of ownership the referential case is used. There is no such difference of meaning with regard to the verb collu.

Object of comparison

The object of a comparison will be in the accusative followed by viṭa, kaaṭṭilum, paakka, paakkilum 'than'.

koḷumpu yaaḻpaaṇaṯṯay viṭap pericu
'Colombo is bigger than Jaffna'

The locative case optionally followed by um or / and paakka is also used for comparison.

ennil (paakka) avan uyaram
'He is taller than me'

ennilum (paakka) avan uyaram
'He is taller than me'

Object of equation

There are two equative markers: poolay 'like, similar to' and maaṯiri 'like, similar to, manner'. The object of an equation will be either in the nominative or in the accusative case, if the equative marker is poolay:

cellayyaa poolay murukanum
nallaayp paṭippar

cellayyaavayp poolay murukanum
nallaayp paṭippar
'Murugan too will do well in studies like Chelliah'

maaṯiri can be used as an adjective of comparison. That with which something is compared will be in the direct case:

ṯampikku vaaṅkinaṯu maaṯiri
enakku oru caṭṭay vaaṅkuṅkoo
'Buy me a shirt like the one bought for younger brother'

maaṯiri can also form manner adverbials, that is, 'in such a manner, in such a way'. In this usage maaṯiri will be preceded by an adjective or verbal adjective:

naaṅkaḷ anṯa veelayay inṯa
maaṯiric ceyyalaam
'We can do that work in this manner'

naaṅkaḷ anṯa veelayayp ponnar
ceyṯa maaṯiric ceyyalaam
'We can do that work in the manner Ponnar did it'

Complement of copular construction

In copular sentences with nominal complement, Jaffna Tamil makes a difference between the defining and the role

type. A noun in the role type can optionally be preceded by oru 'one', whereas a noun in the defining type cannot be preceded.

avar (oru) vaattiyaar
'He is a teacher'

avan manitan
'He is a man'

In the identity type, the subject of the construction can be either (i) a noun or a pronoun, or (ii) a neuter pronoun (atu, itu or utu).

avan ponnan
'He is Ponnan'

itu ponnan
'This is Ponnan'

The complements of aaku 'become' are also nouns in the nominative case.

Subject - complement

The form of a subject complement would be in the nominative case:

avar vitaanayaar aakkappattu ippa rentu varucam
'It is two years since he was made the village headman

Object - complement

Object complements are usually in the nominative case

naaṅkaḷ avarayt talayvar aakkinam
'We made him the president'

Objects governed by adjectives

Certain predicative adjectives can govern nouns. The noun in such cases is usually comitative or locative (but never the referential - ittay).

unray piḷḷayaḷootay avar anpaay irukkiRaar

unray piḷḷayaḷilay avar anpaay irukkiRaar

'He is affectionate towards your children'

avar tampiyootay cariyaana koopamaay irukkiRaar

avar tampiyilay cariyaana koopamaay irukkiRaar

'He is very angry with younger brother'

avan veelayaakkaḷootay rampak kaṇṭippaay irukkiRaan

avan veelayaakkaḷilay rampak kaṇṭippaay irukkiRaan

'He is very stern with workers'

Agent in passive / pseudopassive / impersonal constructions

In a passive construction, the agent would be a noun in the instrumental case (suffix is - aalay):

anta veelay avaraalay ceypatum
'That work will be done by him'

Means of expressing nonlocal semantic functions: Benefactive

The benefactive is expressed by the postposing of - aaka or - eṇṭu to a noun or pronoun in the dative case.

itayk kamalaakkaaka vaaṅkinen
'I bought this for Kamala'

itayk kamalaakkeṇṭu vaaṅkinen
'I bought this for Kamala'

The use of -aaka can convey the meaning of 'on behalf of' too depending on the context of speech.

itay kamalaakkaaka vaaṅkinen
'I bought this on behalf of Kamala'

Source

Source is usually expressed by the use of the ablative case: -ttay iruntu for animate nouns (freely varying with -ilay iruntu in some constructions) and -ilay iruntu for non-animates.

eṅkaḷukku makanittay iruntu innum tavaal oṇṭum vareellay
'We haven't yet received any letter from son'

avarittay iruntu oṇṭum aRiya muṭiyaatu
avarilay iruntu oṇṭum aRiya muṭiyaatu
'We can't find out anything from him'

eṅkaṭay makan koḷumpilay iruntu neeRRu vantiṭṭaar
'Our son has come from Colombo yesterday'

It is also possible to express source by the use of the instrumental case in constructions involving travel from one place to another. The use of the instrumental is very dominant in the speech of some speakers.

eṅkaṭay makan koḷumpaalay neeRRu vantiṭṭaar
'Our son has come from Colombo yesterday'

Instrumental

Instrumental is usually expressed by the case ending -aalay.

marattayk kattiyaalay veṭṭinaan
'He cut the tree with a knife'

Negative instrumental is expressed by the use of illaama (l):

katti illaama(l) veṭṭa muṭiyaatu
'It is not possible to cut without a knife'

Comitative

Comitative is expressed by the case ending -ooṭay. Sometimes -kuuṭa is combined with -ooṭay and the combination gives the sense of 'along with':

aṅkay appaavooṭay pooṅkoo
'Go there with father'

aṅkay appaavooṭay kuuṭap pooṅkoo
'Go there along with father'

Nagative comitative is expressed by the use of illaama (l):

aṅkay appaa illaama(l) taniyap poonen
'I went there alone without father'

Circumstance

Circumstance is usually expressed by the comitative suffix -ooṭay:

uuttayk kayyooṭay nikkiRa peṭiyan ponnan
'The boy with dirty hands is Ponnan'

veeṭṭi caalvayooṭay vantavar taan ponnar

'The person who came in dhoti and shawl was indeed Ponnar'

The second sentence above can give another meaning too : 'The person who brought dhoti and shawl was indeed Ponnar'.

An alternative way of expressing circumstance is by the use of participle construction :

paṭṭu veeṭṭi uṭutta oruvar pooRaar

'A person dressed in silk dhoti is going'

Negative circumstance is expressed by using an appropriate verb with -aama (1) :

caṭṭay pooṭaama(l) pooRaar

'He is going without (wearing) a shirt'

Possessive

Possessive in noun phrases is usually expressed by the genitive suffix :

ivaa enray ṭaṅkacci

'She is my younger sister'

iṭu raṭṭinaṭṭinray kaar

'This is Ratnam's car'

Quality

Quality is expressed by an abstract noun followed by -aana or -uḷḷa :

kuṇamaana peṭiyan

kuṇamuḷḷa peṭiyan

'boy of (good) character'

irakkamuḷḷa manitan

'man of compassion'

Negative quality is expressed by an abstract noun followed by illaaṭa (the relative participle of the negative verb illay) or by keṭṭa (the participle of the verb keṭu 'spoil') :

kuṇaṅ keṭṭa peṭiyan

'boy without character'

(literally, boy with spoilt character)

irakkamillaaṭa manitan

'man without compassion'

Reference quality is expressed by the genitive case suffix :

anṭa manitanray yookkiyam

'the integrity of that man'

Quantity

It is as in Indian Tamil (see R. E. Asher, Tamil 1982 : 113).

Material

It is as in Indian Tamil (see R. E. Asher, Tamil 1982 : 114) except in the figurative sense.

The expression of material in a figurative sense usually involves the device of compounding :

kal neñcu

'a heart of stone'

pon manam

'a heart of gold'

Manner

Manner is expressed either by a comitative case form or by the adverbialising suffix -aay or by -aaka. The use of -aaka is, however, infrequent.

avan anta veelayay nalla
ucaarootay ceytaan
'He did that work with a lot of enthusiasm'

avan anta veelayay nalla
ucaaraayc ceytaan
'He did that work very enthusiastically'

avan anta veelayay nalla
ucaaraakac ceyyiRaan
'He is doing that work very enthusiastically'

Negative manner is expressed by using illaama (l):

avan anta veelayayk
koñcamum ucaar illaamal ceyyiRaan
'He is doing that work without even a little enthusiasm'

Cause

Cause is usually expressed by the instrumental case form :

avanray perumayaalay
avan kettaan
'He was ruined because of his pride'

kannan lantanukkup
poonataalay nallaayp paticcaar
'Kannan studied well because of his going to London'

Purpose

Purpose is expressed by a nominal in the dative case :

unkatay aayutankalay
enray veelaykkup paaviccanaan
'I did use your instruments for my work'

Function

Function is expressed by the adverbialising suffix -aay:

peenayay uuciyaay paaviccen
'I used the pen as a needle'

Reference

Reference is expressed by adding the postposition paRRi to a noun in the nominative or accusative case (a human pronoun will be always in the accusative).

enkatay naatu paRRi
avarukkuc connen
enkatay naattayp paRRi
avarukkuc connen
'I told him about our country'

atu paRRik keekka veentaam
atayp paRRik keekka veentaam
'Don't ask about that'

Essive

Essive is expressed by the use of the adverbialising suffix - aay

tampi kolumpilay
taakkottaraay veelay ceyyiRaar
'Younger brother is working as a doctor in Colombo'

Translative

Translative is usually expressed by a noun in the nominative case or by the use of the adverbialising suffix - aay. The choice depends on the verb that follows. For instance, if the following verb is a a k k u 'make', the noun will be in the nominative case; if the following verb is either n i y a m i 'appoint', or v a y 'place', or t e r i 'elect' the noun will have the suffix - a a y.

a v a r a y c a ṅ k a t t a l a y v a r a a k k i n a m
'We made him the president of the society'

a v a r a y c a ṅ k a t t a l a y v a r a a y
n i y a m i c c a m
'We appointed him the president of the society'

a v a r a y c a ṅ k a t t a l a y v a r a a y t e r i ñ c a m
'We elected him the president of the society'

Part - whole

Part - whole relationships are usually expressed by possessive noun phrases wherein the noun referring to the whole will mostly have the genitive case suffix :

n a a y i n r a y t a l a y
'the head of a dog'

m a r a t t i n r a y n u n i
'top of a tree'

Expressions like m a r a t t u nuni, mara nuni are also possible.

Partitive

Partitive numeral

Partitive numerals follow nouns in the locative case. A classifier, peer follows the partitive numeral when reference is made to human nouns.

m a a m p a ḷ a t t i l a y p a t t u
'ten of the mangoes'

n a a y i l a y r e ṇ ṭ u
'two of the dogs'

p e ṭ i y a ṅ k a ḷ i l a y m u u ṇ ṭ u p e e r
'three of the boys'

Nonpartitive numerals

Nonpartitive numerals precede the noun they modify.

m u u ṇ ṭ u p e ṭ i y a ṅ k a ḷ
'three boys'

Partitive quantifiers

Partitive quantifiers follow nouns in the locative case.

m a a m p a ḷ a t t i l a y k o ñ c a m
'some of the mangoes'

n a a y i l a y c i l a t u
'a few of the dogs'

p e ṭ i y a ṅ k a ḷ i l a y c i l a r
p e ṭ i y a ṅ k a ḷ i l a y c i l a p e e r
'some of the boys'

Nonpartitive quantifiers

Nonpartitive quantifiers precede the noun they modify. They are not specially marked.

c i l a p e ṭ i y a ṅ k a ḷ
'some boys'

k o ñ c a p p e e r
'a few persons'

poottalilay koñca ennay irukku
'There is some oil in the bottle'

Partitive negative quantifiers

Partitive negative quantifiers occur in the following sequence depending on the type of the noun involved :

(i) plural human noun in the nominative + oruvar + um + illay / verb with marker of negation

peṭiyaṅkaḷ oruvarum vareellay
'None of the boys came'

veelayaakkaḷ oruvarum pookeellay
'None of the workers went'

veelayaakkaḷ oruvarum aṅkay illay
'None of the workers is there'

(ii) singular nonhuman noun + oṇṭu + um + illay / verb with marker of negation

kaṭay oṇṭum tiRakkeellay
'None of the shops is open'

(iii) mass noun + a minimising quantifier like koñcam + um + illay / verb with marker of negation

avar paal koñcamum vaaṅkeellay
'He did not buy a drop of milk'

In (i) instead of oruvar the question word aar 'who' or evar 'who' too may occur. Similarly in (ii) instead of oṇṭu the question word etu 'which' too may occur. But their occurrence is infrequent.

The nonhuman noun (ii) may sometimes occur in the plural.

A partitive sense is also possible with the question word enta 'which' placed before the noun irrespective of the type. When enta occurs the numeral oruvar / oṇṭu is dropped. The noun form will be usually in the singular (but gives plural sense) :

entap peṭiyanum vareellay
'None of the boys came'

entak kaṭayum tiRakkeellay
'None of the shops is open'

If the speaker intends to emphasize the noun, he may have it in the locative case :

peṭiyaṅkaḷilay oruvarum vareellay
'Among the boys none came'
(This can suggest that in another category, say among girls, some came.)

kaṭayilay oṇṭum tiRakkeellay
'Among the shops none is open'

paalilay koñcamum vaaṅkeellay
literally, 'Of the milk, not a drop was bought'

inta ariciyilay naan koñcamum avanukkuk kuṭukkeellay
'In this rice I did not give him any'

Nonpartitive negative quantifiers

A nonpartitive negative quantifier occurs as follows :

oru + noun in the nominative + um + illay / verb with marker of negation

oru peṭiyanum vareellay
'Not a single boy came'

oru kaṭayum tiRakkeellay
'Not a single shop is open'

Instead of oru, koñcam occurs with mass noun:

koñcap paalum vaaṅkeellay
'Not a drop of milk was bought'

Zero quantifier too occurs with mass nouns:

poottalilay eṇṇay illay
'There is no oil in the bottle'

Price

Usually the dative case is used to express the price paid for a thing:

intap puttakattayp pattu
ruupaaykku vaaṅkinen
'I bought this book for ten rupees'

Sometimes the locative case is used when the speaker expresses the upper limit of the price which he would pay for a thing:

nuuRu ruupaayilay oru
ciilay eṭuppam
literally, 'Let us by a sari worth one hundred rupees'

Value

For value expressed as an attribute of a noun, usually an adjectivalised form of peRumaṭi 'worth' is used. The adjectival suffix is either -aana or -uḷḷa:

avaa muppataayiram ruupaay
peRumaṭiyaana vayiram
vayccirukkiRaa
'She has a diamond worth thirty thousand rupees'

aayiram ruupaay peRumaṭiyuḷḷa
maṇikkuuṭu
'a clock worth a thousand rupees'

Distance

Distance covered is expressed by the noun denoting the distance (like mayil 'mile', yaar 'yard', etc.) either in the nominative or in the dative case:

naan avanay oru mayilukku
viṭṭuṭ turattinen
'I chased him after for a mile'

naan avanay oru mayil
viṭṭuṭ turattinen
'I chased him after for a mile'

naaṅkaḷ pattu mayil naṭantam
'We walked ten miles'

naaṅkaḷ pattu mayilukku naṭantam
'We walked ten miles'

With some verbs the use of noun in the dative case is dominant, and with others the use of noun in the nominative case is dominant. However, the use of both cases is acceptable.

Sometimes the form tuuram 'distance' may be postposed to the noun phrase. When it is postposed, it alone (not the noun indicating the distance) occurs either in the nominative or in the dative case:

naan avanay oru mayil
tuurattukku viṭṭuṭ turattinen
'I chased him after for a mile'

Extent

For extent expressed as an attribute of a noun, commonly an adjective form of a noun containing the feature 'extent' is used (e. g. uyara 'high', niiḷa 'long', akala 'wide') :

paṯṯaṭi uyarac cuvar
'a wall ten feet high'

paṯṯaṭi niiḷac cuvar
'a wall ten feet long'

oru aṭi akalac cuvar
'a wall one foot wide'

Alternatively, an adjectivalised form of a noun containing the feature 'extent' is also used. The adjectival suffix is either -aana or -uḷḷa:

paṯṯaṭi uyaramuḷḷa cuvar
'a wall ten feet high'

naalaṭi akalamaana meecay
'a table four feet wide'

Concessive

Concessive is expressed by adding -um to a conditional form of verb with final -aal or to a past participle form :

avar kaacu taṯaalum naan anta veelay ceyyen
'I won't do that work even if he gives me money

naaṅkaḷ puṯṯimaṭi colliyum avan tiruṇteellay
'Even though we advised him, he did not improve'

Inclusion

Inclusion is usually expressed by means of the past participle of the verb ceer 'join together (with)'. The noun included will be in the accusative case :

aruḷayum ceeṯṯu naalu peer
'four persons including Arul'

An alternative way of expressing inclusion is by using the form uḷpaṭa 'inclusive of' with that which is included. That which is included will then be in the nominative case :

aruḷ uṭpaṭa naalu peer
'four persons including Arul'

Exclusion

Exclusion is expressed by the use of either the postposition tavira or by the use of one of the following past participle forms : taviṯ ṯu, vilakki, niikki, viṭṭu. When tavira occurs the noun may be either in the nominative case or in the accusative case. When a past participle is used, the noun will be in the accusative case.

maṇi tavira ellaarum vanṯinam
maṇiyayṯ tavira ellaarum vanṯinam
'All came except Mani'

maṇiyay viṭṭu aaRu peer varuvinam
'Six persons will come excluding Mani'

Addition

Addition is usually expressed by adding innum 'still, additionally' to a noun in the comitative :

maṇiyoo ṭay innum muuṇṭu peer varuvinam
'Three people will come in addition to Mani'

Some speakers may use meelaṯikamaay, the adverbial form of meelaṯikam:

iñcay irukkiRa paṯṯup
pooṯṯalooṭay meelaṯikamaay
aaRu poottal veeṇum
'We need six more bottles in addition to the ten bottles that are here'

In an expression like the above one, the form innum 'yet, more' can optionally occur preceding either meelaṯikamaay, aaRu or veeṇum.

The combination of the coordinator - um..... - um and innum can indicate some kind of addition:

maṇiyum innum naalu peerum vantinam
'Mani and four more people came

Vocative

In addressing someone by name the ordinary direct case form may be used. Sometimes, the final vowel of the name or term of address is lengthened. When a name ends in a consonant, the consonant is dropped, and the remaining vowel is lengthened.

Nominative	Vocative	
ponnan	ponnan	'Ponnan'
	ponnaa	
maṇi	maṇi	'Mani'
	maṇii	
maamaa	maamaa	'uncle'
	maamaa[:]	

There is no single vocative particle regularly used to precede a vocative form. There are, however, a number of

particles used for the purpose of drawing the attention of the addressee. Some of them are: ṭeey, aṭa, eṭa (only for males); ṭiyeey, aṭi, eṭi (only for females). These are used only with inferiors in rank. Forms like iñcaarappaa, keeṭṭuṯeey are common for males and females, and are used with persons who are very familiar.

Citation and label forms

The normal citation form for a verb is the singular imperative form. Nominalised form of a verb is also used. A couple of verbs are nominalised by adding - al to the infinitive form: kuṭukkal 'giving', vaaṅkal 'taking, accepting'. Others are nominalised by adding -aṯu to the tense base form of a verb: cey + iR + aṯu ceyyiRaṯu 'doing', poo + R + aṯu 'going'. The normal citation form for a noun is the nominative singular.

The nominalised forms in - al or - aṯu seldom occur on notices, shop fronts, etc. Instead, usually the high variety forms are used. For instance, a notice like 'eggs are available here for sale' will appear on notices in Tamil on shop fronts as iṅkee muṭṭay viRpanaykku uṇṭu.

Local semantic functions
General location

General location is expressed by the locative case ('at rest'); the nominative or the dative case ('motion to'); the instrumental or the ablative case ('motion from').

When 'motion to' is involved, place names ending in —m may occur either in the nominative or dative case. All other nouns occur in the dative case.

tampi ippa koḷumpilay irukkiRaar
'Younger brother is now in Colombo'

naan aṭutta aaṇṭu citamparam
pooven
naan aṭutta aaṇṭu
citamparattukkup pooven
'I will go to Chidambaram next year'

naaṅkaḷ aṭutta maatam
koḷumpukkup pooRam
'We are going to Colombo next month'

maamaa naaḷaykkuk
koḷumpaalay vaaRaar
maamaa naaḷaykkuk
koḷumpilay iruntu vaaRaar
'Uncle is coming from Colombo tomorrow'

For motion past, the past participle of taaṇṭu 'pass', or kaṭa 'cross' is used:

inta bas mallaakattayk
kaṭantu pookum
'This bus will go past Mallakam'

A noun in the dative case followed by either aṅkaalay 'that side' or antappakkam 'that side' will also give the sense 'beyond' the location indicated by the noun:

inta bas mallaakattukku
aṅkaalay pookaatu
'This bus won't go beyond Mallakam'

Proximate location

Proximate location is expressed by the postposing of either pakkattilay or kiṭṭa or arukilay, usually following a dative case form:

eṅkaṭay viiṭṭukkup pakkattilay
oru kooyil irukku
'There is a temple near our house'

anta marattukkuk kiṭṭap
pooka veeṇṭaam
'Don't go near that tree'

antac cuvarukku arukilay
oru paampu irukku
'There is a snake near that wall'

There is a difference in the degree of nearness indicated by these three forms: arukilay indicates very close proximity, pakkattilay fairly close proximity and kiṭṭa indicates close proximity.

Motion near to is expressed by the postposing of pakkattaalay (instrumental form of pakkam 'side') to a noun in the dative case:

uurvalam eṅkaḷinray
uurukkup pakkattaalay pooccutu
'The procession passed near to our village'

Interior location

Interior location in a place is expressed by the use of the locative case ending -ilay:

avar viiṭṭilay irukkiRaar

'He is in the house'

Interior location inside something and motion into are expressed by using uḷḷay 'inside' after a noun in the dative case :

avar viiṭṭukkuḷḷay irukkiRaar

'He is inside the house'

avar viiṭṭukkuḷḷay poonaar

'He went inside the house'

Motion from within is expressed by either the instrumental case or the ablative case followed by the postposition veḷiyilay or veḷiyay 'outside'.

avar viiṭṭaalay veḷiyilay vantaar

'He came out of the house'

vaattiyaar vakuppilay iruntu
veḷiyay vantaar

'The teacher came out of the class room'

For motion through, either vaḷiyaay 'by way of' or uḷḷaalay is used. When vaḷiyaay is used the preceding noun governed by it will be in the nominative case, and for uḷḷaalay the noun will be in the dative case :

uurvalam eṅkaṭay uur
vaḷiyaayp pooccutu

'The procession went through our village'

uurvalam eṅkaṭay uurukku
uḷḷaalay pookum

'The procession will go through our village'

Exterior location

Location outside is expressed by the use of either veḷiyaalay or veḷiyay following a noun in the dative case :

anta meecayay aRaykku
veḷiyaalay koṇṭaaṅkoo

'Bring that table outside the room'

cayikkiḷay viiṭṭukku
veḷiyay vaykkaatay

'Don't keep the cycle outside the house'

Location upto is expressed by using either varay or varaykkum or maṭṭum following a noun in the nominative case.

naan iñcay iruntu
mannaar varay poonen

'From here, I went upto Mannar'

Location away from within is usually expressed by using viṭṭu veḷiyay following a noun in the accusative case :

veelaykaaRan viiṭṭay viṭṭu
veḷiyay pooṭṭaan

'The servant has gone away from home'

Movement past exterior location is expressed by the same means as general location.

Anterior location

Anterior location is expressed by means of having munnaalay, munnukku, munpuRaṭṭilay, munpakkaṭṭilay, munpuRamaay, or munpakkamaay following a noun in the dative case:

eṅkaṭay viiṭṭukku munnaalay oru per.iya veeppa maram nikku

'There is a big margosa tree in front of our house'

uṅkaḷukku munnukku aar iruntatu

'Who was seated in front of you?'

viiṭṭukku munpuRattilay ṭoottam irukku

'There is a garden in front of the house

uṅkaṭay viiṭṭukku munpakkattilay enna irukku

'What is there in front of your house?'

eṅkaṭay viiṭṭukku munpuRamaay oru viiṭu kaṭṭalaam

'You can build a house in front of our house'

antak kaṭaykku munpakkamaay oru kaaṇi vaaṅkuvam

'Let us buy a land in front of that shop'

Motion to in front of is expressed by munnaalay or munnukku or munpakkattukku or munpuRamaay or munpakkamaay following a noun in the dative form:

avan viiṭṭukku munnaalay poonaan

'He went in front of the house'

The forms in -aay may give the sense 'toward', 'by the front of' too

The instrumental or the ablative case is used to express motion from in front of:

avar viiṭṭu munpakkattaalay vantu koṇṭirukkiRaar

'He is coming from in front of the house'

kamalaa viiṭṭukku munpakkattilay iruntu vaaRaa

'Kamala is coming from in front of the house'

ponnar ṭooṭṭa munpakkattaalay pooRaar

'Ponnar is going from in front of the garden'

Note that the noun preceding is usually either in the oblique form or in the dative. Sometimes an adjectival form of the noun (as in the last example above) too can occur.

Motion past in front of is expressed as follows:

ponnar ṭooṭṭa munpuRattay ṭaaṇṭip poonaar

'Ponnar went past the front of the garden'

ponnar ṭooṭṭa munpuRattukku aṅkaalay poonaar

'Ponnar went beyond the front of the garden'

Posterior location

Posterior location (at rest) is usually expressed by the postposing to a noun of pinnukku or pinnaalay or pinpuRattilay or pinpakkattilay or pinpuRamaay or pinpakkamaay:

eṅkaṭay viiṭṭukkup pinnaalay kana maamaram nikkuṭu

'There are many mango trees behind our house'

Motion to behind is expressed by pinnukku or pinnaalay or pinpakkam or pinpakkattukku or pinpuRattukku or pinpuRamaay or pinpakkamaay:

kulantay viittukkup pinnukkup pookutu

'The child is going behind the house'

Motion from behind is expressed by pinnukku iruntu or pinnaalay iruntu or pinpakkattukku iruntu or pinpakkattilay iruntu or pinpakkattaalay or pinpuRattukku iruntu or pinpuRattilay iruntu or pinpuRattaalay or pinpuRam iruntu or pinpakkam iruntu:

kulantay viittukkup pinnaalay iruntu pookutu

'The child is going from behind the house'

Motion past behind is expressed by either pinpakkattay or pinpuRattay followed by taanti or katantu.

maatukal viittup pinpuRattayt taantip pookutu

'The cows are going past behind the house'

The expressions pinpakkattukku ankaalay or pinpuRattukku ankaalay will give the sense 'beyond behind'.

Superior location

The postposition meelay is added to a noun in the dative case to express superior location.

viittukku meelay oru pattam paRakkutu

'A kite is flying above the house'

Motion to above is expressed by using meelay meelay:

pileen viittukku meelay meelay pookutu

'The plane is going up and up above the house'

The word meelay may be used only once but the sense will be ambiguous:

pileen viittukku meelay paRantu pookutu

'The plane is flying above the house'

'The plane is flying (to) above the house'

Motion from above is expressed by the use of the ablative case:

enkatay viittukku meelay iruntu pileen pattentu uyarap pooccutu

'All of a sudden the plane went up from above our house'

Motion past is expressed by using the past participle of taantu 'pass over' or kata 'cross' with a noun in the accusative:

antap pileen enkatay viittayt taantip pooccutu

'That plane passed over our house'

Superior – contact location

Jaffna Tamil does not make a distinction between superior and superior - contact location. Only the context of speech can indicate whether there is contact or not.

Inferior and inferior - contact location

Jaffna Tamil does not distinguish inferior and inferior - contact situation. For both, the postposition kiiḻay is used following a noun in the dative case.

intap paḻam marattukkuk
kiiḻay kiṭantutu
'This fruit was under the tree'

paampu kaṭṭilukkuk kiiḻay pookutu
'The snake is going under the bed'

paampu kaṭṭilukkuk
kiiḻaalay varukutu

paampu kaṭṭilukkuk kiiḻay
iruntu varukutu
'The snake is coming from under the bed'

kiiḻay can also be used in a metaphorical sense:

avar uṅkaḻukkuk kiiḻay
veelay ceyyiRaaraa
'Is he working under you?'

Lateral location

Lateral and lateral - contact are both expressed by the postposing of pakkattilay or arukilay 'in the vicinity', 'close to' to a noun in the dative case:

tampi ammaakkup pakkattilay
niṉtukoṇṭiruntaan

'Younger brother was standing beside mother'

pantu uṅkaḻukkup pakkattilay
irukku
'The ball is beside you'

The adverbialised form of ooram 'edge' too can give the sense of 'beside' when the noun concerned is inanimate:

pantu veeli ooramaay kiṭakku
'The ball is beside the fence'

avar veeli ooramaay nikkiRaar
'He is (standing) beside the fence'

The comitative case form too may give the sense 'beside':

avar veeliyooṭay nikkiRaar
'He is (standing) beside the fence'

Motion to beside is expressed by using pakkattukku following a noun in the nominative:

tampi kaar pakkattukkup poonaan
'Younger brother went beside the car'

The adverbialised form of pakkam too can indicate motion to beside:

avan cayikkiḷ pakkamaayp poonaan
'He went beside / toward the cycle'

The form aṭikku following a noun (inanimates only) in the nominative too can give the sense 'beside'.

tampi kaaRaṭiyilay nikkiRaan
'Younger brother is standing beside the car'

avan kaaRaṭikkup pooRaan

'He is going beside the car'

Motion from and motion past are expressed as follows:

avan kaar pakkaṯṯilay iruntu vaaRaan

avan kaar pakkaṯṯaalay vaaRaan

avan kaaRaṭiyilay iruntu vaaRaan

avan kaaRaṭiyaalay vaaRaan

'He is coming from beside the car'

avan kaaRukkup pakkaṯṯaalay vaaRaan

'He is coming by the side of the car'

avan kaaRayṯ taaṇṭi vaaRaan

'He is coming past the car'

The first four sentences have the same meaning. The second sentence may give the sense, 'He is coming by the side of the car' too.

Citerior location

A noun in the dative case followed by the proximate pronoun inta 'this' and by the locative form of pakkam 'side' indicates citerior location:

paḷḷikkuuṭam cantikku intap pakkaṯṯilay irukku

'The school is on this side of the junction'

cantaykku intap pakkaṯṯukku vaaṅkoo

'Come to this side of the market'

cantaykku intap pakkaṯṯilay iruntu ooṭaṯ tuvaṅkuvam

'Let us start running from this side of the market'

Alternatives to pakkaṯṯukku are pakkam and pakkamaay. An alternative to pakkaṯṯilay iruntu is pakkam iruntu.

Ulterior location

A noun in the dative case followed by the remote demonstrative anta 'that' and by the locative form of pakkam indicates ulterior location:

paḷḷikkuuṭam cantikku antap pakkaṯṯilay irukku

'The school is on that side of the junction'

cantaykku antap pakkaṯṯukku vaaṅkoo

'Come to that side of the market'

cantaykku antap pakkaṯṯilay iruntu ooṭaṯ tuvaṅkuvam

'Let us start running from that side of the market'

A noun in the dative followed by aṅkaalay or aṅkaalukku can indicate ulterior location:

paḷḷikkuuṭam cantikku aṅkaalay/ aṅkaalukku irukku

'The school is on that side of the junction'

An alternative to pakkaṯṯukku is pakkamaay.

Motion past is expressed by the pastparticiple form of taantu or kata as in earlier instances.

Medial location

There are three forms itay, natu and matti that may be used to indicate medial location. These forms can mean 'between', 'among' and 'in the centre'. Of these, itay is used to indicate medial location between two entities, and at times for location among three or more. The other two are used to indicate location only among three or more entities.

Medial location at rest is expressed by a noun in the dative or genitive followed by the locative of either itay, natu or matti.

antа rentu marattukku itayilay oru kiṇaRu irukku

'There is a well between those two trees'

rentu katayinray mattiyilay oru kiṇaRu irukku

'There is a well between the two shops'

The noun in question may occur in its adjectival form or in its oblique form too:

niiṅkaḷ antа rentu viittu mattiyilay / itayilay / natuvilay innum oru viitu kattalaam

'You can build another house in between those two houses'

Motion to and from are expressed as follows:

antа maraṅkaḷinray itaykkup pooṅkoo

'Go to between those trees'

maraṅkaḷukku itayilay iruntu veḷiyay vaaRaan

maraṅkaḷinray itayilay iruntu veḷiyay vaaRaan

'He is coming out from among trees'

Motion past through may be expressed by the use of uutaaka or ullaalay:

maraṅkaḷukku uutaakap pooRaan

'He is going through trees'

Circumferential location

Circumferential location is expressed by the postposing of cutti (past participle form of the verb cuttu 'surround') to a noun in the accusative case.

naaṅkaḷ viittayc cutti matil kattap pooRam

'We are going to build a wall around the house'

Some speakers may use cuttivara instead of cutti alone.

maṇi viittayc cuttivara ootuRaan

'Mani is running round the house'

Citerior - anterior location

Citerior – anterior location (at rest) is usually expressed by the postposing of etiray or etirily or etiraaka or etiraay or etirpakkattilay or etirpuRattilay to a noun in the dative.

The forms usually used to express ' in front of ' may be also used to express citerior – anterior location.

kooyilukku etiray muuntu
kaṭay irukku

' There are three shops opposite the temple '

Motion to, from and past are expressed as follows :

kooyilukku etiray poonaal
maṇiyinray viiṭṭukkup pookalaam

' You can go to Mani's house if you go opposite the temple '

avan kooyilukku etirilay
iruntu vantaan

' He came from opposite the temple '

Motion past long object (in direction of its length)

Motion through a long (hollow) object in the direction of its length is expressed by vaḷiya or vaḷiyaay (vaḷi 'way') or muulam 'through' or uuṭaaka (uuṭu 'means') or uḷḷalay (uḷ, uḷḷay 'in'). When uḷḷaalay is used the noun will be in the dative case. With all other forms the noun will be in the nominative case.

tanni kucinikkuk kuḷaay
vaḷiya varukutu

' The water comes to the kitchen through a pipe '

tanni kuḷaaykku uḷḷaalay
toṭṭikkup pookutu

' The water goes to the tub through a pipe '

For motion along an edge or border of something ooramaay (ooram 'edge' + aay) is usually used :

maḷayt tanni viiti ooramaay
pookutu

' The rain water is flowing along the edge of the street '

When the motion takes place on the upper surface of an object meelay or meelaalay is used :

antap paalattukku meelay
lori pookalaam

' A lorry can go on that bridge '

inta nilattukku meelaalay
naṭakka veeṇṭaam

' Don't walk over this floor '

Motion past long object (at right angles to its length)

Motion across a long object can be expressed by the use of the postposition kuRukkay or kuRukkaalay following a noun in the dative case :

inta veḷikkuk kuRukkay naalu
mayil poonaal kaṭal teriyum

' If you go four miles across this open space sea will be visible '

intta aattukkuk kuRukkaalay oru
aṇay kaṭṭap pooyinam

'They are going to build a dam across this river'

Motion past a long object at right angles to its length is expressed by the past participle of ṯaaṇṭu or kaṭa 'cross':

maṇi Rooṭṭayṯ ṯaaṇṭip poonaan
'Mani went across the road'

Other directional locations

Location in terms of directions (north, south, etc.) is expressed by the postposing of the accusative form of the directional marker to a noun in the dative case. The directions are vaṭakku 'north', ṯerku 'south', kiḻakku 'east' and meerku 'west'.

anṯak kaṭay kooyilukkuk
kiḻakkay irukku

'That shop is to the east of the temple'

Location to the left or the right is usually expressed by the postposing of iṭaṯu pakkam ~ iṭap pakkam and valaṯu pakkam ~ valap pakkam appropriately to a noun in the dative or genitive case.

avar enakku iṭaṯu pakkam
iruntaar

avar enray iṭaṯu pakkam iruntaar

'He sat on my left'

An alternative of pakkam is pakkaṯṯilay.

avar enakku iṭaṯu
pakkaṯṯilay iruntaar

In certain contexts, pakkaṯṯukku can be yet another alternate form:

neeray pooy iṭaṯu pakkam /
pakkaṯṯilay / pakkaṯṯukku
ṯirumpuṅkoo

'Go straight and turn to your left'

Location in time

The commonest types of question about times of day are usually expressed as follows:

enna neeram
neeram enna
eṯṯinay maṇi
maṇi eṯṯinay
poḻuṯu enna

'What is the time?'

The time of day is usually expressed by the appropriate numeral indicating the time optionally followed by the word maṇi 'hour' when minutes are not involved in the expression:

ippa neeram aaRu (maṇi)

'Now the time is six o' clock'

ippa neeram aaReekaal (maṇi)

'Now the time is quarter past six'

When minutes are involved, the word maṇi does not occur – merely the appropriate numerals are exprsesed.

ippa neeram eeḻu paṯinañcu

'Now the time is seven fifteen'

ippa neeram aaRu ampatu

'Now the time is six fifty'

Some speakers may use the words maṇi and nimiśam appropriately to express the hour and the minutes precisely:

ippa neeram aaRu maṇi

ampatu nimiśam

'Now the time is six o' clock (and) fifty minutes'

When the time at which something done is expressed, the numeral indicating the time will be in the dative case:

naaḷaykkuk kaalamay

eṭṭukkup poovam

'Let us go tomorrow morning at eight'

naaḷaykkuk kaalamay

eṭṭu maṇikku poovam

'Let us go tomorrow morning at eight o' clock'

avan neeRRu aaRu

iruvatukkuṭ taan vantaan

'He came yesterday only at six twenty'

avan neeRRu aaRu maṇi

iruvatu nimiśattukkuṭ taan vantaan

'He came yesterday only at six twenty'

Note that when the word maṇi or nimiśam occurs in the expression, it alone will be in the dative. If both occur in an expression only the word nimiśam will be in the dative.

Period of day

Expressions indicating a part of the day occur either in the nominative or in the locative case. There is a difference in

meaning between the use of these two case forms. When the locative case is used, it implies that it is the proper and usual or possible time for doing something. The direct case, however, implies a specific time on a specific day:

pinneerattilay vaaṅkoo

'Come in the evenings'

naaṅkaḷ kooyilukkup

pinneerattilay pookalaam

'We can go to the temple in the evenings'

pinneeram vaaṅkoo

'Come this evening'

naaṅkaḷ naaḷaykkup

pinneeram kooyilukkup poovam

'Let us go to the temple tomorrow evening'

Broadly, the parts of the day are as follows: kaalamay 'morning', mattiyaanam '(around) mid-day', pinneeram 'evening', raattiri ~ raa 'night', iravaykku 'night'.

The form raattiri or raa is used only to refer to past time, and may be preceded by an expression like neeRRu 'yesterday' or muntanaaḷ 'the day before yesterday'. The form iravaykku is used only in context of future time. And note that it is in the dative case:

avar raattiri vantaar

'He came last night'

avar iravaykku varuvar

'He will come tonight'

Day of the week

The days of the week are: ñaayiRRukkiḻamay, tiṅkakkiḻamay, cevvaaykkiḻamay, puṯankiḻamay, viyaaḻakkiḻamay, veḷḷikkiḻamay, canikkiḻamay. These have alternative forms: ñaayiRu, tiṅkaḷ, cevvaay, puṯan, viyaaḻan, veḷḷi, cani.

Like the parts of a day, these forms too can occur either in the nominative or in the locative with the same semantic distinction :

naan iñcay tiṅkaḷ varuven
'I will come here on (next) Monday'

naan iñcay tiṅkaḷilay varuven
'I will come here on Mondays'

In Jaffna Tamil, the form kiḻamay can indicate both the day and the week. Its use to indicate day is, however, restricted :

inṯaykku enna kiḻamay
'What day is today?'

vaaRa kiḻamay avar varuvar
'He will come next week'

Another word commonly used to indicate day is naaḷ

inṯaykku enna naaḷ
'What day is today?'

enṯa naaḷ avar vanṯavar
'On what day did he come?'

enṯaykku avar vanṯavar
'On what day did he come?'

enṯaykku occurs as an alternative for enṯa naaḷ. An expression like enṯak kiḻamay vanṯavar is seldom used, for, it will be very ambiguous : 'what day' or 'what week'.

Month of the year

Month - names are given usually with reference to the lunar calendar. They are as follows: cittiray (April-May), vaykaaci (May - June), aani (June - July), aaṭi (July - August), aavaṇi (August - September), puraṭṭaaṭi ~ puraṭṭaaci (September - October), ayppaci (October - November), kaaṯṯikay (November - December), maarkaḻi (December - January), ṯay (January - February), maaci (February - March), paṅkuni (March - April).

The same set of month - names in Tamil is used whether one is referring to the western calendar or the traditional lunar calendar. For official purposes, the months are as the present day English months, i. e. ṯay is January, maaci February, etc. Speakers may make a distinction as iṅkiḷḷisukku ~ avaṅkaḷukku 'for English ~ for them' and eṅkaḷukku 'for us'. Names of months can be used with a locative marker or followed by maacam ~ maaṯam with or without a locative marker :

avar ṯayyilay laṇṭanukkup poonRaar

avar ṯay maaṯam lantanukkup poonRaar

avar tay maatattilay
lantanukkup pooRaar

'He is going to London in January'

To express days of the month ordinal numerals (formed with -aam) followed by teeti are used. Some speakers may use teeti in the locative case. In order of sequence, the day follows the month :

naaṅkaḷ vaaRa maatam pattaam
teeti lantanukkup pooRam

'We are going to London on the
tenth of next month'

mutal teeti is an alternate form for mutalaam teeti.

Year

Speakers make reference to a year A. D. usually by the last two digits of the number followed by the locative suffix :

naaṅkaḷ aRuvatilay iñcay vantam

'We came here in 60'

The Hindu era is also followed but only in reference to rituals, religious ceremonies and traditional astrology.

Festivals

Locative expressions of time referring to festivals usually consist of the name of the festival followed by either naaḷ 'day' in the locative case or by the form aṇṭu 'that day' :

poṅkal naaḷilay kaṭay
tiRantu irukkumaa

'Will the shops be open on the Pongal day?'

tiipaavaḷi aṇṭu maamaa
iñcay varuvar

'Uncle will come here on the Dipavali day'

Some speakers may use the form tinattaṇṭu (tinam 'festive occasion' + aṇṭu 'that day'), instead of aṇṭu alone.

poṅkal tinattaṇṭu vaaṅkoo

'Come on the Pongal day'

Seasons

Seasons fall into two broad divisions, kooṭay 'hot season' and maari 'cold season', 'rainy season'. The word kaalam 'time' is sometimes used with these two names. veyyil kaalam 'sunny period' is an alternate form for kooṭay; maḷay kaalam 'rainy season' and kuḷirkaalam 'cold season' are alternate forms for maari. Locative time expression of these forms have the locative suffix added :

kooṭayilay kaalamay pattumaṇikkup
piRaku toottattilay veelay ceyya
muṭiyaatu

'During the hot season it is not possible to work
in the garden after ten o' clock in the morning'

Frequentative

Frequentative time expressions are usually formed by having the time noun in question between o v v o r u ..... um :

o v v o r u m a ṇ i t̲ t̲ i y a a l a m u m
p i ḷ e e n i r u k k u
' There is a plane every hour '

o v v o r u n a a ḷ u m m a a m a a v a r u v a r
' Uncle will come daily '

a v a r o v v o r u t̲ a y y u m
l a ṇ ṭ a n u k k u p p o o v a r
' He goes to London every January '

Some of the nouns may optionally take the locative suffix and give the same meaning :

o v v o r u t̲ i ṅ k a ḷ i l u m m a a m a a
i ñ c a y v a r u v a r
(literally, Uncle comes here on every Monday)
' Uncle comes here every Monday '

a v a r o v v o r u t̲ a y y i l u m
l a ṇ ṭ a n u k k u p p o o v a r
(literally, He goes to London in every January)
' He goes to London every January '

But not

* o v v o r u m a ṇ i t̲ t̲ i y a a l a t̲ t̲ i l u m
p i ḷ e e n i r u k k u
* o v v o r u n a a ḷ i l u m m a a m a a v a r u v a r

An alternative way of forming frequentative time expressions is by adding - t̲ o o R u m 'every' to a general time expression.

a v a n i ñ c a y n a a ḷ t̲ o o R u m v a n t̲ a a n
' He came here daily '

a v a n i ñ c a y n a a ḷ t̲ o o R u m v a a R a a n
' He comes here daily '

p i ḷ e e n n a a ḷ t̲ o o R u m i r u k k u
' There is a plane daily '

m a a r i t̲ o o R u m m a r a ṅ k a ḷ v i ḷ u m
' Trees fall during every rainy season '

Punctual – future

The sense of punctual - future can be expressed by using the locative, the instrumental or the dative case form of a time - noun following the numeral indicating the duration of the interval envisaged. u ḷ ḷ a y 'in' is postposed to the dative case form :

n a a n r e ṇ ṭ u m a ṇ i t̲ t̲ i y a a l a t̲ t̲ i l a y
t̲ i r u m p i v a n t̲ i ṭ u v e n
' I shall come back in two hours '

n a a n r e ṇ ṭ u m a ṇ i t̲ t̲ i y a a l a t̲ t̲ a a l a y
t̲ i r u m p i v a n t̲ i ṭ u v e n
' I shall come back after two hours '

n a a n r e ṇ ṭ u m a ṇ i t̲ t̲ i y a a l a t̲ t̲ u k k u
u ḷ ḷ a y t̲ i r u m p i v a n t̲ i ṭ u v e n
' I shall come back within two hours '

Note that the use of different case markers convey subtle differences in meaning.

Punctual - past

The sense of punctual - past is expressed by adding m u n n a a l a y 'before', m u n n a m 'before' or m u n ṯ i 'before' to a noun phrase (consisting of numeral + time noun) in the dative case :

m u u ṇ ṯ u m a ṇ i ṯ ṯ i y a a l a ṯ ṯ u k k u
m u n n a a l a y a v a n c a n ṯ a y k k u p
p o o n a a n

m u u ṇ ṯ u m a ṇ i ṯ ṯ i y a a l a ṯ ṯ u k k u
m u n n a m a v a n c a n ṯ a y k k u p
p o o n a a n

m u u ṇ ṯ u m a ṇ i ṯ ṯ i y a a l a ṯ ṯ u k k u
m u n ṯ i a v a n c a n ṯ a y k k u p p o o n a a n

'He went to the market three hours ago'

When longer period of time is expressed in terms of years, the form k a a l a m 'time', 'period' may be used in the dative following the adjectival form of v a r u ś a m 'year' :

i r u v a ṯ u v a r u ś a k a a l a ṯ ṯ u k k u m u n ṯ i
'twenty years ago'

Duration

Duration of an action in the past or future is expressed by the numeral indicating the period of action followed by the time - noun in the nominative :

a v a r k o ḷ u m p i l a y a a R u v a r u ś a m
i r u n ṯ a a r

'He was in Colombo for six years'

m a a m a a l a ṇ ṭ a n i l a y a a R u m a a ṯ a m
i r u p p a r

'Uncle will be in London for six months'

Duration of an action in the present tense is also expressed in the same way, but the adverbialising suffix - aay may be optionally added to the time noun :

a v a r k o ḷ u m p i l y a a R u v a r u ś a m
i r u k k i R a a r

a v a r k o ḷ u m p i l a y a a R u v a r u ś a m a a y
i r u k k i R a a r

'He has been in Colombo for six years'

Some speakers may use the time noun in its adjectival form followed by k a a l a m. A sentence where - aay occurs will have the alternate form with the time noun in its adjectival form followed by k a a l a m a a y. Note that the adverbialising suffix - aay is added to k a a l a m :

a v a r k o ḷ u m p i l a y a a R u v a r u ś a
k a a l a m i r u k k i R a a r

a v a r k o ḷ u m p i l a y a a R u v a r u ś a
k a a l a m a a y i r u k k i R a a r

'He has been in Colombo for six years'

The extent of time that someone spent or would spend in a place is usually expressed by the appropriate numeral followed by the time noun in the nominative or dative :

naaṅkaḷ iñcay oru kiḻamaykku vantirukkiRam

'We've arrived here for a week'

naaṅkaḷ iñcay oru kiḻamy iruppam

naaṅkaḷ iñcay oru kiḻamaykku iruppam

'We will be here for a week'

The use of the dative form is more dominant.

Similarly the extent of time within which an action is done may be expressed by using either the nominative or the dative case :

naan neeRRu oru maṇittiyaalam aṅkay veelay ceyten

'I worked there for an hour yesterday'

naan neeRRu oru maṇittiyaalattukku aṅkay veelay ceyten

'I worked there for an hour yesterday'

Anterior – duration

Anterior - duration, both past and future, are expressed by the postposition varaykkum ~ varay 'until', 'as far as', 'up to' following a word or phrase referring to the point or period of time in question in the nominative case :

poona tiṅkaḷ pinneeram aaRu maṇi varaykkum avar iñcaytaan iruntaar

'He was indeed here until last Monday evening six o' clock'

vaaRa tiṅkaḷ varay oṇṭum naṭavaatu

'Until next Monday nothing will happen'

Posterior – duration

Posterior - duration, both past and future, are expressed by the ablative case form of a noun phrase referring to the point or period of time in question :

tiṅkaḷilay iruntu oṇṭum naṭakkeellay

'Nothing has happened since Monday'

tiṅkaḷilay iruntu naan iñcay iruppen

'I will be here from Monday onwards'

Also consider the following types of constructions

tiṅkaḷ toṭakkam oṇṭum naṭakkeellay

'Nothing has happened from Monday onwards'

tiṅkaḷukkup piRaku oṇṭum naṭakkeellay

'Nothing has happened after Monday

Anterior - general

Anterior - general is expressed by the use of m u n t i 'before', m u n n a m 'before', m u n n u k k u 'before', m u n n a a l a y 'before' or m u t a l 'prior to' following a noun phrase in the dative case. The verb is usually marked for perfective aspect :

p o o n a t i ṅ k a ḷ u k k u m u n t i n a a n
i ñ c a y v a n t i ṭ ṭ e n

p o o n a t i ṅ k a ḷ u k k u m u n n a a l a y n a a n
i ñ c a y v a n t i ṭ ṭ e n

p o o n a t i ṅ k a ḷ u k k u m u t a l n a a n
i ñ c a y v a n t i ṭ ṭ e n

'I came here previous to last Monday'

Posterior - general

Posterior - general is expressed by using p i R a k u 'afterwards' or p i n n a a l a y 'after' following a noun phrase in the dative case :

p u t a n u k k u p p i R a k u a ṅ k a y p o o v e n

'I will go there subsequent to Wednesday'

Expressions with numerals indicating the period may have alternative expressions with the time noun in the instrumental case :

a p p a a m u u n ṭ u m a a t a t t u k k u p
p i R a k u v a r u v a r

a p p a a m u u n ṭ u m a a t a t t a a l a y v a r u v a r

'Father will come after three months'

Point in period

Reference to a point in a period in the past or future is expressed by using the appropriate numeral followed by the time noun in the dative case and u ḷ ḷ a y. In some types of constructions the time noun can also be in the locative, but then u ḷ ḷ a y won't follow :

p o o n a o r u m a ṇ i t t i y a a l a t t u k k u
u ḷ ḷ a y ṭ a a k k o t t a r p a t t u
v a r u t t a k k a a R a r a y c c o o ṭ i c c a a r

'The doctor examined ten patients within the last (past) one hour'

p o o n a o r u m a ṇ i t t i y a a l a t t i l a y
ṭ a a k k o t t a r p a t t u v a r u t t a k k a a R a r a y c
c o o ṭ i c c a a r

'The doctor examined ten patients in the past one hour'

r e ṇ ṭ u m a ṇ i t t i y a a l a t t u k k u u ḷ ḷ a y
v a n t i ṭ u v e n

'I will return within two hours'

r e ṇ ṭ u m a ṇ i t t i y a a l a t t i l a y v a n t i ṭ u v e n

'I will return in two hours'

a v a r p o o n a p a t t u n a a ḷ u k k u ḷ ḷ a y
i ñ c a y v a n t a v a r

'He had come here within the past ten days'

But not

* a v a r p o o n a p a t t u n a a ḷ i l a y
i ñ c a y v a n t a v a r

Number marking system and its nature

Most count nouns can potentially have different forms for singular and plural. Mass nouns like taṇṇi 'water', kaattu 'wind' are never used in plural.

Extent to which number-marking system is obligatory

Human nouns are always marked for number if the reference is to more than one:

neeRRu naalu maniciyaḷ
iṉcay vantinam
'Four women came here yesterday'

vaattimaarukku ini nalla campaḷam kuṭupaṭumaam

'It seems that teachers will be paid good salary hereafter'

The plural of nonhuman nouns is commonly unexpressed, particularly when a numeral precedes. Usually the singular form is used with either singular or plural sense. In general, Tamil speakers use the plural in the nonhuman category only when they wish to emphasize plurality, that is, when a number of units are involved.

Nouns referring to foodstuffs, fruits, etc. do not generally occur in the plural even if a number of units of the same variety are referred to. Note that these are the nouns which may be replaced by the singular form itu 'this', atu 'that' and utu 'that' even when plural in sense:

avay maaṭu vaaṅkap pooyinamaa
'Are they going to buy a cow?'
'Are they going to buy cows?'

avay pattu maaṭu vaaṅkap pooyinamaam
'It seems they are going to buy ten cows'

naaṅkaḷ naaḷaykkuk kaay kaRiyaḷ vaaṅka veeṇum
'We must buy vegetables tomorrow'

Manner of realisation of number distinctions

The basic form of the noun or the stem itself indicates the singular. Plural is formed by adding the plural suffix to singular forms. The plural markers are several, and they are mostly lexically conditioned. It may be, however, possible to give a partial phonological conditioning for their occurrences.

The distribution of the lexically conditioned allomorphs of the plural suffix may be shown in different classes as follows:

Class I	**plural marker - kaḷ**
peṇ 'female'	peṇkaḷ 'females'
aaṇ 'male'	aaṇkaḷ 'males'
peṭiyan 'boy'	peṭiyaṅkaḷ 'boys'
maram 'tree'	maraṅkaḷ 'trees'
viiṭu 'house'	viiṭukaḷ 'houses'

Word-final -n and -m are realized as ṅ before k. When -kaḷ occurs with nouns ending in -u, the k in -kaḷ is very often dropped in speech leading to -uaḷ.

Class II	plural marker – avay
tiivaaḷ	tiivaaḷavay
'lady from an island'	'ladies from an island'
pannaalayaaḷ	pannaalayaaḷavay
'lady from the village called Pannaalai'	'ladies from the village called Pannaalai'
ponnampalam	ponnampalamavay
'personal name – Ponnambalam'	'Ponnambalam and his family or people'

Note that personal names too occur in plural in this dialect of Tamil.

Class III	plural marker – aḷ
pettay 'girl'	pettayaḷ 'girls'
piḷḷay 'child'	piḷḷayaḷ 'children'
miinkaaRi 'woman who sells fish'	miinkaaRiyaḷ 'women who sell fish'
kay 'hand'	kayyaḷ 'hands'

Final -y in a monosyllabic form with a short vowel doubles when a suffix beginning in a vowel follows.

Class IV	plural marker - ukaḷ
maan 'deer'	maanukaḷ 'deer'
nuḷḷaan 'small reddish ant'	nuḷḷaanukaḷ 'small reddish ants'
vaan 'van'	vaanukaḷ 'vans'

In this class only nonhuman nouns occur. In speech the k in -ukaḷ is sometimes dropped.

Class V	plural marker - maar
ẽnciniyar 'engineer'	ẽnciniyarmaar 'engineers'
kiḷaakku 'clerk'	kiḷaakkumaar 'clerks'
maneeccar 'manager'	maneeccarmaar 'managers'
ṭaakkoṯṯar 'doctor'	ṭaakkoṯṯarmaar 'doctors'

In this class usually professional terms and borrowings from English occur.

Class VI	plural marker – avay ~ -maar
ammaan 'uncle'	ammaanavay ammaanmaar 'uncles'
maccaan 'cousin'	maccaanavay maccaanmaar 'cousins'
taṅkacci 'younger sister'	taṅkacciyavay taṅkaccimaar 'younger sisters'
tooḷi 'friend (female)'	tooḷiyavay tooḷimaar 'friends (female)'

a y y a r	a y y a r a v a y
'Hindu priest'	a y y a r m a a r
	'Hindu priests'

Class VII plural marker - a l̤ ~ -avay~ - maar

c i n e e k i t̲ i	c i n e e k i t̲ i y a l̤
'friend (female)'	c i n e e k i t̲ i y a v a y
	c i n e e k i t̲ i m a a r
	'friends (female)'
c a k o o t̲ a r i	c a k o o t̲ a r i y a l̤
'sister'	c a k o o t̲ a r i y a v a y
	c a k o o t̲ a r i m a a r
	'sisters'

Class VIII plural marker - r

c i n e e k i t̲ a n	c i n e e k i t̲ a r
'friend'	'friends'
p a a t̤ t̤ u k k a a R a n	p a a t̤ t̤ u k k a a R a r
'singer'	'singers'
e ṉ ṉ a y k k a a R a n	e ṉ ṉ a y k k a a R a r
'oil - seller'	'oil - sellers'

The - r ending plural forms in this class can also occur as masculine singular honorific forms. The concord with the finite verb would, however, indicate whether a form is singular honorific or epicene plural: if a finite verb with inflections of epicene plural occurs as predicate of the subject c i n e e k i t̲ a r, then c i n e e k i t̲ a r is plural as in c i n e e k i t̲ a r v a n t̲ i n a m 'Friends came'. If c i n e e k i t̲ a r has concord in a finite verb inflected to masculine honorific singular, then c i n e e k i t̲ a r is honorific singular as in c i n e e k i t̲ a r v a n t̲ a a r 'Friend (honorific) came'.

Number - marking of foreign words

Foreign words have been assimilated into the language, particularly in the speech of the monolinguals, and usually such words take the Tamil number markers to form plural:

v a a n 'van'	v a a n u k a l̤ 'vans'
e ñ c i n i y a r	e ñ c i n i y a r m a a r
'engineer'	'engineers'

Bilinguals, speaking Tamil and English, may use the plural form of English words (as they occur in English) in their mixed speech of Tamil and English:

n a a l̤ a y k k u r e ṇ ṭ u *[m i n i s t ə : s]*
y a a l̤ p a a ṇ a t̲ t̲ i l a y p e r i y a *[s k u u l s∓ k k∓]*
p o o y i n a m
'Tomorrow two ministers are going to the big schools in Jaffna'

Noun classes: their labels and meaning

In Tamil there are two major classes of nouns: human and nonhuman. Human nouns are further classifiable into two sub classes: masculine and feminine.

One can usually predict whether a noun is human or nonhuman by its meaning. If a noun or pronoun refers to a human being, it is human. If a noun refers to anything else it is nonhuman (some exceptions must be made for nouns referring to gods which can be either human or nonhuman). Thus nouns referring to animals and other beings, except humans, are nonhuman.

Gender in many of the nouns is lexically conditioned, and is definable syntactically in terms of concord : a masculine noun which occurs as subject of a sentence has concord with a finite verb inflected with masculine gender suffix. Examples of human nouns in the past tense are :

veelaykaaRan vantaan
'The servant (male) came (nonhonorific)'

veelaykaaRaṅkaḷ vantaaṅkaḷ
'The servants (males) came (nonhonorific)'

veelaykaaRi vantaaḷ
'The servant (female) came (nonhonorific)'

veelaykaaRiyaḷ vantaaḷavay
'The servants (females) came (nonhonorific)'

maamaa vantaar
'Uncle came (honorific)'

maami vantaa
'Aunt came (honorific)'

contakkaaRar vantinam
'Relations came' (epicene plural)

The corresponding anaphoric pronouns are : avan, avaṅkaḷ, avaḷ, avaḷavay, avar, avaa, avay.

There are a few nouns in which the masculine and feminine genders can be morphologically determined in terms of suffixes. There is no indication of gender in the non-human except in the demonstrative and interrogative pronouns where -tu occurs.

The distribution of the allomorphs of the gender suffix may be shown in different classes :

Class 1

(a) masculine – an	feminine – aḷ
avan 'he'	avaḷ 'she'
ivan 'he'	ivaḷ 'she'
uvan 'he'	uvaḷ 'she'
evan 'who (male)'	evaḷ 'who (female)'
(b)	**feminine – i**
kuruṭan 'blind man'	kuruṭi 'blind woman'
vicaran 'mad man'	vicari 'mad woman'
cekiṭan 'deaf man'	cekiṭi 'deaf woman'
talayvan 'leader (male)'	talayvi 'leader (female)'
cineekitan 'friend (male)'	cineekiti 'friend (female)'
tuṇayvan 'assistant (male	tuṇayvi 'assistant (female)'
(c)	**feminine – atti**
piraamaṇan 'brahmin (male)'	piraamaṇatti 'brahmin (female)'

naṭṭuvan	naṭṭuvaṯṯi
'male in the drum - beater community'	'female in the drum - beater community'

(d) feminine - cci

kaṭṭayan	kaṭṭaycci
'short man'	'short woman'
peṭiyan 'boy'	peṭicci 'girl'
peeyan 'fool (male)'	peecci 'fool (female)'

Class II

(a) masculine - aan feminine - aaḷ

kaṭṭuvanaan	kaṭṭuvanaaḷ
'male from the village of Kadduvan'	'female from the village of Kadduvan'
piRaṯṯiyaan	piRaṯṯiyaaḷ
'male from a different place'	'female from a different place'

(b) feminine - aaṯṯi

vaṇṇaan	vaṇṇaaṯṯi
'washer - man'	'washer - woman'
ṯaṭṭaan	ṯaṭṭaaṯṯi
'goldsmith (male)'	'goldsmith (female)'

(c) feminine - aaṭṭi

ciimaan 'lord'	ciimaaṭṭi 'lady'

viṯṯuvaan	viṯṯuvaaṭṭi
'learned man'	'learned woman'

Class III

masculine - van feminine - ṯṯi

kucavan	kucaṯṯi
'male in pot maker community'	'female in pot maker community'
kuRavan	kuRaṯṯi
'tribal man'	'tribal woman'
ciṅkaḷavan	ciṅkaḷaṯṯi
'Sinhalese man'	'Sinhalese woman'
oruvan 'one man'	oruṯṯi 'one woman'

Class IV

In this class some community names indicate masculine gender too :

feminine - ṯṯi

paṇṭaaram	paṇṭaaraṯṯi
'male belonging to a community whose profession is conch blowing'	'female belonging to a community whose profession is conch blowing'

paṇṭaaram has paṇṭaari as an alternate form to indicate masculine.

feminine - cci

ceṭṭi	ceṭṭicci
'male belonging to Ceṭṭi community'	'female belonging to Ceṭṭi community'

There are a couple of forms that are common to both masculine and feminine: v i y a a p a a r i 'trader', n o o y a a ḷ i 'patient', p a a v i 'sinner'.

Pronouns

Pronouns can occur in answer to questions of the type, 'Who is that?'. Normally, the pronoun is followed by t̲a a n and the reply may also optionally contain the name of the speaker:

Spkr. A. a a r a t̲u 'Who's that?'

Spkr. B. a t̲u n a a n (t̲a a n) (m a ṇi)
'that' 'I' emphatic Mani

'That's I, (Mani)'

Jaffna Tamil speakers usually use a t̲u in replying.

Inclusion v. exclusion distinction

Jaffna Tamil does not make a distinction between inclusive and exclusive plural pronouns in the first person.

Degrees of proximity in the third person pronouns

proximate	i-		
intermediate	u-		
remote	a-		
i v a n	u v a n	a v a n	'he'
i v a ḷ	u v a ḷ	a v a ḷ	'she'
i v a y	u v a y	a v a y	'they (human)'

Forms of pronouns

	nominative	nominative + -aa
1st person singular	n a a n	n a a n a a
1st person plural	n a a ṅ k a ḷ	n a a ṅ k a ḷ a a
2nd person singular (non hon.)	n i i	n i i y a a
2nd person singular (intermediate hon.)	n i i r	n i i r a a
2nd person singular (hon.)	n i i ṅ k a ḷ	n i i ṅ k a ḷ a a
2nd person plural	n i i ṅ k a ḷ	n i i ṅ k a ḷ a a
3rd person singular (masculine)	a v a n	a v a n a a
	i v a n	i v a n a a
(non hon.)	u v a n	u v a n a a
3rd person plural (mas.) (non hon.)	a v a ṅ k a ḷ	a v a ṅ k a ḷ a a
	i v a ṅ k a ḷ	i v a ṅ k a ḷ a a
	u v a ṅ k a ḷ	u v a ṅ k a ḷ a a
3rd person singular (fem.) (non hon.)	a v a ḷ	a v a ḷ a a
	i v a ḷ	i v a ḷ a a
	u v a ḷ	u v a ḷ a a
3rd person plural (fem.) (non hon.)	a v a ḷ a v a y	a v a ḷ a v a y a a
	i v a ḷ a v a y	i v a ḷ a v a y a a
	u v a ḷ a v a y	u v a ḷ a v a y a a
3rd person singular (mas.) (hon.)	a v a r	a v a r a a
	i v a r	i v a r a a
	u v a r	u v a r a a

3rd person singular (fem.) (hon.)	avaa	avaavaa
	ivaa	ivaavaa
	uvaa	uvaavaa
3rd person plural (epicene)	avay	avayaa
	ivay	ivayaa
	uvay	uvayaa
3rd person singular (neuter)	atu	ataa
	itu	itaa
	utu	utaa
3rd person plural (neuter)	atukaḷ	atukaḷaa
	itukaḷ	itukaḷaa
	utukaḷ	utukaḷaa

Noun declensions : case formation

For many nouns, case endings are added directly to the nominative case form. For others, the noun changes its form when the endings are added. This changed form is called the oblique base. These changes are generally quite regular and follow the rules below :

1. Nouns ending in -m replace -m by -tt-.
   paḷam 'fruit' paḷatt-

2. Nouns ending in -ṭu double the -ṭu to -ṭṭu when not preceded by a single short syllable.
   viiṭu 'house' viiṭṭu-

3. Nouns ending in -Ru replace -Ru by -ttu.
   cooRu 'rice' coottu-

3. VERB MORPHOLOGY

Voice

Passive

The passive construction is productive in the Jaffna dialect of Tamil. It is formed by adding paṭu to the base of a transitive verb : tavaal eḻutuppaṭukutu 'A letter is being written'; anta veelay ceypaṭum 'That work will be done'; kaacu kuṭupaṭṭutu 'Money was given'. In this type of construction an agent in the instrumental case is understood, and usually it is not overtly expressed.

The passive is also formed by adding the auxiliary verb uṇ 'eat' to the following seven verbs, out of which one is intransitive, and others are transitive : vaaṭu 'wither', oṭṭu 'paste', taṭṭu 'knock', veṭṭu 'cut', koṭṭu 'pour', uuttu 'pour' and puuṭṭu 'lock'. kay veṭṭuṇṭutu 'Hand got cut'. In these forms uṇ can freely vary with paṭu except with the verb vaaṭu. kaal veṭṭuppaṭṭutu 'Leg got cut'.

Means of decreasing the valency of a verb

The means of decreasing the valency of a verb are very limited in this language. Intransitive verbs, for instance, are not made from a transitive verb by not indicating the subject of the transitive. But there are a couple of verbs that can be used as transitive, and also in a sort of passive sense. Examples : eṭṭu 'reach', viḷaṅku 'understand'.

naan antap paḷattay eṭṭinen
'I reached that fruit'

antap paḷam eṭṭiccuṯu
'That fruit was reached'

vaaṯṯiyaar conna paaṭaṯṯay viḷaṅkinen
'I understood the lesson taught by the teacher'

vaaṯṯiyaar conna paaṭam viḷaṅkiccuṯu
'The lesson taught by the teacher was understood'

In this construction the agent noun phrase will be in the dative.

antap paḷam enakku eṭṭiccuṯu
'That fruit was reached by me'

Means of increasing the valency of a verb
Means of forming causatives

The valency of a verb could be increased (from intransitive to transitive, and from transitive to causative) by adding a causative marker to the root of a verb.

Causativisation is a productive process in Jaffna Tamil.

Causative verbs are formed by adding -vi to the root of weak verbs and -ppi to the root of strong verbs: cey 'do' + vi ceyvi 'cause someone to do'; aṭi 'beat' + ppi aṭippi 'cause someone to beat'.

Usually -vi or -ppi is added to a transitive verb. A couple of intransitive verbs too take a causative marker exceptionally: aḷu 'cry' + vi aḷuvi 'cause someone to cry'; eeRu 'climb' + vi eeRuvi 'cause someone

to climb'. The verb naṭa 'walk' takes -ṯṯu and gives causal meaning. Similarly iru 'be, sit' + ṯṯu iruṯṯu 'cause to be' also gives causal sense.

A couple of verbs take double causative markers: cey 'do' + vi + ppi ceyvippi 'cause (someone) to cause (another) to do', teeṭu 'search' + vi + ppi teeṭuvippi 'cause (someone) to cause (another) to search', naṭa 'walk' + ṯṯu + vi naṭaṯṯuvi 'cause (someone) to cause (something) to happen'.

The causative marker -vi freely varies as -ii with verbs that take -in- for past tense: eḻuṯuvi ~ eḻuṯii 'cause (someone) to write'.

An alternative way of forming causatives is by the addition of one of the following verbs to the infinitive form of a transitive or intransitive verb: vay 'place', cey 'do', paṇṇu 'do'.

avaa enray ṯampiyayk koṇṭu eḻuṯa vaccaa

avaa enray ṯampiyayk koṇṭu eḻuṯac ceyṯaa

avaa enray ṯampiyayk koṇṭu eḻuṯap paṇṇinaa
'She caused my younger brother to write'

avan aṅkay niṇṭaan
'He stayed there'

avanay aṅkay nikka vaccen

avanay aṅkay nikkac ceytan

avanay aṅkay nikkap paṇṇinen

'I caused him to stay there'

Of these, the use of vay is more common than cey and paṇṇu. The use of causative in -vi or -ppi is more common than any others.

In the causative constructions the person who performs the action is in the accusative case followed by koṇṭu.

Also, there are numerous pairs of verbs in which one is a transitive and the other an intransitive verb. In some of them, the transitives and intransitives differ in their root form, whereas in others the difference is in the tense marker.

tiruntu	tiruttu
'improve'	'improve something
tirumpu	tiruppu
'turn'	'turn something'
curuṅku	curukku
'shrink'	'shrink something'
aaṭu	aaṭṭu
'swing'	'swing something'
uruku	urukku
'melt'	'melt something'
eeRu	eettu
'go up'	'lift something up'

nimir	nimittu
'be erect'	'straighten something'
piraḷ	piraṭṭu
'turn'	'turn something'
nanay	nanayiRen
'wet'	'I am getting wet'
	nanakkiRen
	'I am wetting (something)'

There are a few similar pairs in which both are transitives: viḷaṅku 'understand' viḷakku 'explain'. Such pairs are very limited in the language.

Ditransitive verb made causative

A ditransitive verb can be made causative by postposing the past participle of vay to the noun phrase referring to the causee:

naan enakkuc caappaaṭu camaccen

'I cooked food for me'

veelaykaaRanay vaccu enakkuc caappaaṭu camaccen

'I got a servant to cook food for me'

Some speakers use the causative form of the verb:

veelaykaaRanay vaccu enakkuc caappaaṭu camappiccen

'I got a servant to cook food for me'

Instead of the form v a c c u, the past participle of k o l (k o n t u) or p i t i (p i t i c c u) too may be used:

v e e l a y k a a R a n a y k k o n t u e n a k k u c
c a a p p a a t u c a m a c c e n

v e e l a y k a a R a n a y p p i t i c c u e n a k k u c
c a a p p a a t u c a m a c c e n

Sometimes an indirect command is used instead of this type of causative.

n a a n a p p a a k k u t t a v a a l e l u t i n e n
'I wrote a letter to my father'

n a a n t a m p i y a y a p p a a k k u t
t a v a a l e l u t a c c o n n e n
'I told younger brother to write a letter to father'

Reflexive verb form

When k o l is used following a past participle, it will have the sense 'to do for oneself'.

n a l l a a y c a a p p i t t u k k o l l u ṅ k o o
'Eat well (for yourself)'

o v v o r u n a a l u m v a n t u k o l l u ṅ k o o
'Come daily (for yourself)'

In some sentences past participle + k o n t u may give the broad sense 'while doing the action (indicated by the past participle)' or 'simultaneously'.

e n n a a l a y p a t i c c u k k o n t u
v e e l a y c e y y a m u t i y a a t u
'I cannot work while studying'
t a t i y a y p p i t i c c u k k o n t u v e t t u ṅ k o o
'Hold the stick and cut it'

Tenses

Morphologically there are three different tenses in Jaffna Tamil, and they may be termed 'past', 'present' and 'future'. But these tense forms do not have one to one correlation with past, present and future time. Consider the following:

(i) A: k e t i y a a y c e y y u ṅ k o o
'Do it quickly'

Even when action is not over or not begun, one may say:

B: i t o o c e y t e n /

i t o o c e y t i t t e n
'Here, I have done it'

(ii) n a a n n a a l a y k k u c e t t e n
I tomorrow dead
'I will be dead tomorrow'

(iii) n e e R R u i n t a n e e r a m a ṅ k a y
yesterday this time there
n i k k i R a a r
he is
'Yesterday he was there at this time'

(iv) a v a r n a a l a y k k u a ṅ k a y n i k k i R a a r
he tomorrow there he is
'He will be there tomorrow'

(v) a v a r m u n t i n a l l a a y k k u t i p p a r
he before well would drink
'Earlier he drank heavily'

(vi) avar ippa aṅkay nallaayk
he now there well
kuṭippar
would drink
'Now he will be drinking there heavily'

Use of formally distinguished tenses

Universal time reference

Usually, the future tense form is used to make generic statements or statements referring to all time:

pacu paal ṯarum
cow milk would give
'Cow gives milk'

avar muntik kuṭippar
he before would drink
'Earlier he drank'

avar ippa kuṭippar
he now would drink
'Now he drinks'

avar inik kuṭippar
he henceforth would drink
'Hereafter he would drink'

Reference to present time

Reference to present time action and action in progress is usually made by present tense forms:

avar ippa koḷumpilay irukkiRaar
'He is now in Colombo'

Reference to past time

Reference to past time is usually made by past tense forms:

avar neeRRu iñcay vanṯaar
'He came here yesterday'

In some simple constructions the use of the lexical items munnam 'before' and munṯi 'before' makes a distinction between a recent past and a distant past. When used as time adverbs without a noun, munnam refers to more recent time, whereas, munṯi refers to the more distant past:

vaaṯṯiyaar iñcay munnam vanṯaar
'The teacher came here just a shortwhile ago'

vaaṯṯiyaar iñcay munṯi vanṯaar
'The teacher came here before'.

Reference to future time

Reference to future time is made by (i) present tense forms, (ii) future tense forms, (iii) infinitive + poo 'go', (iv) infinitive + ninay 'think', (v) infinitive + paar 'look', and (vi) infinitive + (eṇṯu) + iru 'be'.

If the speaker is certain about the action indicated by the verb, he would generally use the present tense form. If not certain (relatively), he would use the future tense form.

avar naaḷaykkuk koḷumpukkup
pooRaar
'He is going to Colombo tomorrow'

avar naaḷaykkuk koḷumpukkup poovar

'He will go to Colombo tomorrow

An infinitive + poo (in present tense) is used to refer to an event that is about to take place in the future:

avar viiṭu kaṭṭap pooRaar

'He is going to build a house'

This construction conveys an element of intention too.

An infinitive + paar (in present tense) is used to indicate one's effort to do an action in the future:

avar viiṭu kaṭṭap paakkiRaar

'He is trying to build a house'

An infinitive + ninay 'think' (in present tense) is used to indicate one's plan to do an action in the future:

avar viiṭu kaṭṭa ninaykkiRaar

'He is planning to build a house'

An infinitive + (eṉṭu) + iru 'be' (in present tense) is used to express one's intention to do something in future:

avar viiṭu kaṭṭa eṉṭu irukkiRaar

'He intends building a house'

In this type of construction eṉṭu is sometimes dropped.

The future tense form in Jaffna Tamil may also be used to indicate ability.

enray t̲ampi malayaaḷam vaacippar

'My younger brother can read Malayalam'

With the first person plural subject the future tense form may indicate the sense of optative: poovam 'Let us go', caappiṭuvam 'Let us eat'.

Aspect

Perfect aspect

Perfect aspect is formed with the past participle of a verb + the auxiliary verb iru 'be'. It is pluperfect or present perfect or future perfect depending the tense to which the auxiliary iru is inflected. iru takes person and number endings to agree with the subject.

Pluperfect

The pluperfect is the past participle of a verb + the past form of iru:

kaliyaaṇa eḷuṯṯukku munnamee ciiṯanam ivvaḷavu eṇṭu colliyiruṇṯen

'Even before the registration of marriage, I had said that the dowry would be this much'

viṯṯiyum kuuṭṭaṯṯukku vanṯiruṇṯaar

'Vithi too had come for the meeting'

One common use of the pluperfect is to indicate the completion of an action in the past commonly suggesting

that the action took place before something else occurred. However, the use of pluperfect is not very common in Jaffna Tamil. Instead, the ordinary past tense of the verb is more commonly used.

Present perfect

The present perfect is the past participle of a verb + the present tense form of iru.

naan toocay caappiṭṭirukkiRen
'I have eaten dosai'

naan laṇṭanukkup pooyirukkiRen
'I have gone to London'

tampi peṭṭikkuḷḷay iruṇṭa kaacay eṭuttirukkiRaar
'Younger brother has taken the money that was in the box'

kaṭaykkuc ciini vantirukku
(literally, 'Sugar has come to the shop')
'There is sugar in the shop'

koḷumpilay iruntu kaalamay veḷikkiṭṭa piḷḷayaḷ ippa taan iñcay vantirukkinam
'Children who set out from Colombo this morning have come here only now'

The present perfect indicates (i) that someone has the experience of doing something (first two examples), (ii) that an action has been completed before the time of speaking.

Sentences like,

maḷay peytirukku
'It has rained'

paampu pooyirukku
'A snake has gone'

naaṅkaḷ viiṭṭilay illaata neeram aaroo vantirukkinam
'Some one has come when we were not at home'

may be taken as indicating a suppositional and / or a factual sense depending on extra linguistic factors.

Future perfect

The future perfect is formed with the past participle of a verb + the future tense form of iru.

maamaa iñcay nikkiRaar eṇṭu

terinciruntaal neeRRu vantiruppen
'I would have come yesterday, had I known that uncle was here'

avar cootinay paas paṇṇi iruppar
'He might have passed the examination'

The future perfect indicates (i) that an action could have taken place in the past but did not (first example), (ii) probability (second example).

There are a couple of verb forms that appear to be perfective in their structure, but in actual use they may not function as perfectives. One such form is the compound verb kaattiru (kaattu + iru) 'await'. The perfective form of kaattiru is kaattiruntiru-:

naan maamaakku ettinayoo naal
kaattiruntirukkiRen

'I have waited for uncle several days'

maamaa eṅkaḷukkuk
kaattiruntiruppar

'Uncle would have awaited for us'

The past perfective form of this verb does not occur in the language.

Aspect as different ways of viewing the duration of a situation

Aspects that are formally distinguished

The most commonly used perfective form is made of past participle + the auxiliary viṭu. viṭu may occur in any form that the sentence requires. As a 'full' verb viṭu means 'leave', 'give up'.

avan ellaa veelayum oru
maṇittiyaalattilay ceytu viṭṭaan

'He has done all the work in an hour'

vaattiyaar iñcay vantu viṭṭu
viiṭṭukkup poonaar

'The teacher went home after coming here'

Usually the v of viṭu is dropped in speech. If the past participle ends in u, the u is also dropped, and if it ends in i, a 'y' is inserted.

naaḷaykku vantituṅkoo

'Surely come tomorrow'

naan colliyiṭṭen

'I have already told'

Perfective of definiteness usually conveys (i) emphasis or certainty; or, (ii) the completion of an action.

Perfective of intent

Jaffna Tamil uses pooṭu moreorless in the same sense of viṭu as explained above. But pooṭu is stronger in sense than viṭu, and often indicates more certainty or full completion.

avan ellaa veelayum oru
maṇittiyaalattilay ceytu pooṭṭaan

'He has done all the work in an hour'

nii iñcay vantu pooṭṭu maamaaṭṭay
pooka veeṇṭaam

'Don't go to uncle after coming here'

Unlike viṭu, pooṭu occurs only with certain verbs. It does not occur with all intransitives. For instance, it does not occur with kalaṅku 'agitate', whereas viṭu occurs:

taṇṇi kalaṅkiyiṭṭutu

'Water is agitated'

* taṇṇi kalaṅkippooṭṭutu

But in sentences like,

kuḷantaykkup paciccuppooṭṭutu

'Child is hungry'

naaṅkaḷ kooyilukkup pookalaam,
tooñcu pooṭṭu vaaṅkoo

'We can go to the temple, come after a head-bath'

ivvaḷavu neeram aṅkay niṇṭu poottu ippa taan vaaRaan

'He is just coming after staying there all this time'

avar cariyaay aḷutu poottaar

'He had cried a lot'

poo ṭu occurs with intransitive verbs.

Perfective of 'own action'

The perfective of 'own action' is formed by adding the auxiliary poo to the past participle form of an intransitive verb. poo may occur in any form that the sentence requires:

kuttuviḷakku nuuntu pooccu(tu)

'The oil lamp got extinguished'

malarinray kaliyaaṇam kuḷampip pooccu

'Malar's marriage got messed up'

This perfective indicates that the action of the verb takes place 'on its own', and also adds a negative sense, that is, the speaker does not want the action to happen, or, is unhappy about it.

Consider the following two conversations to understand the sense of past participle + poo better:

I. A: kuḷirutu. cuṭac cuṭak kooppi koṇṭaaṅkoo

'It is cold. Please bring (some) hot coffee'

B: intaaṅkoo kooppi

'Here (your) coffee'

A: itenna, aaRippooccutu

'What is this?. It is cold'

(Usually viṭu (as in aaRiyiṭṭutu) won't be used in this context)

II. A: kooppi koṇṭaaṅkoo

'Please bring (some) coffee'

B: intaaṅkoo kooppi

'Here (your) coffee'

A: itenna cariyaay cuṭukuṭu

'What is this?. It is very hot'

B: illay aaRiyiṭṭutu kuṭiyuṅkoo

'No, it is cold, drink'

(Change of state appears to be common for both viṭu and poo - 'aaRiyiṭṭutu' and 'aaRippooccu'. The action as in aaRiyiṭṭutu need not have taken place on its own — someone else too could have caused it unlike in aaRippooccutu, where the action could not have been caused by someone else.)

Jaffna Tamils usually use the past participle of an appropriate verb + poo to curse someone:

aḷiñcu poo 'May you be ruined'

In such cursing the sense 'on your own' (niiyaay) is implied.

Perfective of impatience

Perfective of impatience is formed with the past participle of a verb + t u l a y. The full verb t u l a y (common root for transitive and intransitive) means 'lose'.

a n t a k k a a c a y k k u ṭ u t t u t t u l a y u ṅ k o o
'Please give that money (and finish off)'

n a a n k a ṇ ṇ a n a y e p p i ṭ i y o o
p a ṭ i p p i c c u t t u l a y k k i R e n
'I will somehow educate Kannan (and finish off)'

This perfective indicates a sense of impatience or disgust on the part of the speaker.

Sometimes the auxiliary v i ṭ u is added to a past participle + the past participle of t u l a y:

a n t a v i i ṭ ṭ a y m a k a ḷ u k k u k k u ṭ u t t u t
t u l a y c c i ṭ u ṅ k o o
'Give that house to daughter (and finish off)'

Another way of expressing impatience is to add the transitive t i i r 'finish', 'exhaust' to a past participle. The sense conveyed by t i i r is not so strong as that of t u l a y.

a p p a a c o n n a v e e l a y a y c c e y t u
t i i t t e n
'I finished off doing the work assigned by my father'

e e t o o c o l l u R a t a y e l l a a m c o l l i t t i i r
'Finish off saying what ever you want to say'

When the infinitive of the intransitive t i i r precedes v e e ṇ u m, it makes the obligation indicated by the past participle stronger, and it does not convey any sense of impatience or disgust: n i i p o o y t t i i r a v e e ṇ u m 'You must go'.

Perfective of excess

The auxiliary t a ḷ ḷ u is added to a past participle of a transitive to convey the sense "excess" in an action.

a p p a a k a a c a y c e l a v a ḷ i c c u t
t a ḷ ḷ i R a a r
'Father is spending the money lavishly'

a k k a a p u ḷ u k i t t a ḷ ḷ i R a a
'Elder sister is boasting too much'

A couple of intransitives too take t a ḷ ḷ u:

k u ḷ a n t a y a ḷ u t u t a ḷ ḷ u t u
'The child is crying intensively'

In some contexts t a ḷ ḷ u conveys a notion of disposing of something:

i n i e n n a c e y y i R a t u, i n t a k
k a a ṇ i y a y k k u ṭ u t t u t t a ḷ ḷ u v a m
'Now, what to do? Let us give away this land'

u n t a p p a ḷ a ṅ k a a R a y u ṅ k a ḷ u k k u e e n
v i t t u t t a ḷ ḷ u ṅ k o o
'Why do you want that old car? Sell it away'

Sometimes an element of unwillingness may be present in this sense.

Perfective of utility

Past participle of a transitive + the auxiliary vay indicates prior action (action in advance) for future utility or benefit :

paalukkuk kaacayk kuṭuṯṯu vayyuṅkoo
'Give money (in advance) for milk'

naaṅkaḷ koḷumpukkup pooRaṯukku ippavee kaaRukkuc colli vayppam
'Let us book the car now itself for us to go to Colombo'

maamaa vaṅkiyilay kaacu pooṭṭu vaykkiRaar
'Uncle is depositing money in the bank (for future benefit)'

The auxiliary vay is sometimes pronounced as vey. The "full" verb vay means 'put', 'place', 'set aside'.

Habitual aspect

The most common way of expressing habitual action in Jaffna Tamil is by adding the appropriate pronoun to the present verbal adjective to agree with the subject of the sentence.

ponnar ṯaccu veelay ceyyiRavar
'Ponnar does carpentry'

naan ovvoṟu naaḷum kooyilukkup pooRanaan
'I go to temple daily'

The final a of the present verbal adjective is dropped before pronouns beginning in a.

The habitual usually indicates an action done habitually or consistently in the present. But it may also be used with past meaning where the context (such as a past adverb) indicates past time.

naan munṯi maamaa viiṭṭay pooRanaan
'I used to go to uncle's house before'

cuppar muntic cariyaayk kuṭikkiRavar
'Cuppar used to drink heavily before'

Another common way of expressing habitual action is by adding the auxiliary vaa to the past participle of a verb. vaa may be in any form as the sentence requires.

aravinṯan kaṇakku nallaay ceyṯu vanṯaar
'Aravindan was (habitually) doing well in arithmetic'

avar ovvoru naaḷum kooyilukkup pooy vaaRaar
'He goes to the temple daily'

naaṅkaḷ ellaarum ini ovvorunaaḷum cuuriyanayk kumpiṭṭu varuvam
'Let us hereafter habitually worship the sun daily'

The future form may give past meaning if the context indicates past time.

ponnar munṯi ovvoru naaḷum kooyililay ṯeevaaram paaṭi varuvar
'Earlier Ponnar used to sing devotional songs in the temple daily'

The form k o ṇ ṭ u may occur optionally between the past participle and the auxiliary v a a.

a r a v i n t a n k a ṇ a k k u n a l l a a y c e y t u
k o ṇ ṭ u v a n t a a r

'Aravindan was (habitually) doing well in arithmetic'

The present tense form may be also used to indicate habitual action in the present.

i p p a a r a v i n t a n k a ṇ a k k u n a l l a a y
c e y y i R a a n

'Now Aravindan is (habitually) doing well in arithmetic'

ṭ a a k k o t t a r R a v i v a ḷ a k k a m a a y
o v v o r u t i ṅ k a ḷ u m i ñ c a y v a a R a a r

'Dr. Ravi habitually comes here on every Monday'

The future tense form of the verb may be also used to indicate habitual action especially when the reference is to past time.

n a a n p a ṅ k a ḷ u u r i l a y p a ṭ i k k e e k k a y
o v v o r u n a a ḷ u m y o o k a p p i y a a c a m
c e y v e n

'When I was studying in Bangalore, I used to do yoga exercises daily'

Habitual action in the past may be also expressed by the present verbal noun + i l l a y, followed by the quotative particle e n ṭ u, followed by the past form of i r u 'be'.

n a a n k o ḷ u m p i l a y k u ṭ u m p a t t o o ṭ a y
i r u k k e e k k a y p o t u v a a y y a a ḷ p a a ṇ a m
p o o R a t i l l a y e n ṭ u i r u n t e n

'When I was in Colombo with my family, I generally intended not to go to Jaffna'

Habitual action in the future time may be also expressed with the future tense form of a verb or with infinitive + p o o 'go'.

i n i ṭ a a k k o t t a r R a v i o v v o r u n a a ḷ u m
i ñ c a y v a r u v a r

'Hereafter Dr. Ravi will (habitually) come here daily'

i n i ṭ a a k k o t t a r R a v i o v v o r u n a a ḷ u m
i ñ c a y v a r a p p o o R a a r

'Hereafter Dr. Ravi is going to come here daily'

Progressive form of a verb in all three tenses too can give habitual sense.

i n i m e e l i ñ c a y ṭ a a k k o t t a r o v v o r u
n a a ḷ u m p i n n e e r a t t i l a y
v a n t u k o ṇ ṭ i r u p p a r

'Hereafter the doctor will be coming here daily in the evening'

Negative habitual aspect is indicated by adding i l l a y 'no' to the present verbal noun.

m a a m a a e ṅ k a ṭ a y v i i t t a y v a a R a t i l l a y

'Uncle does not come to our house'

The negative habitual has a variant formed by adding l l a y to the present verbal adjective instead of the present erbal noun.

m a a m a a e ṅ k a ṭ a y v i i t t a y v a a R e e l l a y

'Uncle does not come to our house'

The final a in verbal adjectives + i in illay gives ee.

The negative habitual aspect may be also indicated by using an infinitive + future negative marker maaṭṭ-.

appaa eṯukkum kavalayp paṭa
maaṭṭaar
'Father won't worry for anything'

The negative habitual is generally used with present sense, but it may also be used with past or future meaning where the context (such as an adverb) indicates past or future time.

A negative formed by adding illay directly to a sentence with a present verb may also indicate negative habitual sense.

makan paṭikkiRaar illay
'My son does not study'

This type of construction conveys an implication that the speaker feels that the action should have taken place.

Progressive aspect

Progressive aspect is indicated with past participle of a verb + the imperfective auxiliary koṇṭiru. koṇṭiru may occur in any tense, past, present or future.

poona varucam naan koḷumpilay
veelay ceyṯu koṇṭirunṯen
'Last year, I was working in Colombo

inṯa varucam naan yaaḷpaaṇaṯṯilay
veelay ceyṯukoṇṭirukkiRen
'This year, I am working in Jaffna'

vaaRa varucam naan inṯiyaavilay
veelay ceyṯukoṇṭiruppen
'Next year, I will be working in India

Jaffna Tamil speakers may also use the simple tense forms instead of the progressive forms to express progressive sense.

enna ceyyiRiiṅkaḷ
'What are you doing?'

naan peeppar vaacikkiRen
'I read (or am reading) a paper'

Prior completion

Past participle + aaccuṯu indicates completion of action prior to the time of speaking. Thus it always gives a past sense.

naaṅkaḷ ellaac caamaanum
vaaṅkiyaaccuṯu
'We have bought all things'

makaḷukkuk kaliyaaṇam peeciyaaccu
'We have proposed marriage for daughter'

ṯuRappay ellaa iṭaṯṯilum
ṯeeṭiyaaccu
'We have searched the key everywhere'

niiṅkaḷ ellaa veelayum ceyṯaaccaa
'Have you done all the work?'

aaccuṯu is the third person nonhuman singular past tense form of the "full" verb aaku 'become'. In aaccuṯu the final -ṯu is mostly dropped in speech.

In examples 2 and 3, the doer of action can be in any person, number or gender, although for convenience the translation has been given as 'we'.

Some speakers may use mutiñcu(ṯu) 'over' in most contexts where aaccutu would occur.

Combination of different aspectual values

The following combinations of aspect markers are common in the language:

participle + vacciru

vaccitu

vaccaaccutu

ṯalḷiyiru

ṯalḷiyiṯu

ṯalḷippooṭu

ṯalḷittulay

ṯalḷiyaaccutu

ṯulacciru

ṯulacciṯu

ṯulaccuppooṭu

ṯulaccaaccutu

koḷumpukkup pookak kaaRukkuc colli vaccirukkiRen

'I have booked a car to go to Colombo'

koḷumpukkup pookak kaaRukkuc colli vaccitten

'I have already booked a car to go to Colombo'

koḷumpukkup pookak kaaRukkuc colli vaccaaccuṯu

'I have already booked a car to go to Colombo'

maamaa laṇṭanaalay vanṯu puḷukiṯ ṯalḷiyirukkiRaar

'Uncle has boasted after coming from London

maamaa laṇṭanaalay vanṯu puḷukiṯ ṯalḷiyiṭṭaar

'Uncle has boasted (completely) after coming from London'

maamaa laṇṭanaalay vanṯu puḷukiṯ ṯalḷippooṭṭaar

'Uncle has boasted (completely) after coming from London'

ṯampikkuk kaaṇiyay nankoṭayaay eḷuṯiṯ ṯalḷiṯ ṯulaccen

'I have transferred the land to younger brother as gift (and finished off)'

ṯampikkuk kaaṇiyay nankoṭayaay eḷuṯiṯ ṯalḷiṯ ṯulaccaaccuṯu

'I have transferred the land to younger brother as gift'

appaa ammaakku eeṯoo colliṯ ṯulaccirukkiRaar

'Father has told mother something (and finished off)'

ṯampikkuk kaaṇiyay nankoṭayaay eḷuṯiṯ ṯulacciṭṭen

'I have transferred the land to younger brother as gift'

appaa teetina poruL ellaattayum
annay aliccut tulaccuppoottaar

'Elder brother has destroyed (spent) all the wealth acquired by father'

tampikkuk kaaniyay elutit
tulaccaaccutu

'I have finished off transferring the land to younger brother'

Three markers too occur in a single combination:

avar kaaniyay aarukkoo elutit
tallit tulaccirukkiRaar

'He has transferred the land to someone (and finished off)'

The progressive kontiru combines with iru, vitu tulay and aaccutu:

inta veelayay muuntu maatamaayc
ceytukontiruntirukkiRaar

'He has been doing this work for three months'

makan neerattukkup pookeellay.
paticcukkontiruntittaar

'Son did not go in time. He had been studying'

mantiri kuuttattukku neerattukku
vareellay. ataalay ellaarum
cattam pootat totanki vittinam.
kuuttam kulampip poom entu
payantu naan mantiri varum
mattum paatikkontiruntu tulaccen

'The minister did not come for the meeting on time. Because of that, all had started making noise. Fearing that the meeting would get messed up, I kept on singing (damn it) until the minister arrived'

mani enkatay makalayk kaliyaanam
ceyvar entu naalu varucam kaattuk
kontiruntaaccutu. ini avaray
veentaam.

'We have awaited for four years hoping that Mani would marry our daughter. Now we don't want him'

Among perfectives -tulay, -tallu, -tallittulay and -vay combine with progressive and perfect yielding the following compounds:

-tulaccukkontiru, -tulaccukkontirun-tiru, -tallikkontiru, -tallikkontiruntiru, -tallittulaccukkontiru, tallittulaccuk-kontiruntiru, -vaccukkontiru, -vaccuk-kontiruntiru.

appaa ammaakku eetoo collit
tulaccukkontirukkiRaar.

'Father is telling something to mother (damn it)'

appaa ammaakku eetoo collit
tulaccukkontiruntirukkiRaar

'Father has been telling something to mother (damn it)'

appaa ammaakku eetoo collit
tallikkontirukkiRaar

'Father is telling something (excessively) to mother'

appaa ippa ammaakku ellaaṯṯayum collit taḷḷikkoṇṭirukkiRaar

'Now father is telling mother everything (in excess)'

or

'Father (who did not say anything so far) is telling (out) mother everything now'

appaa ammaakku eetoo collit taḷḷikkoṇṭiruntirukkiRaar

'Father has been telling mother something (in excess)'

avar eetoo eḻutiṯṯaḷḷiṯṯulaccukkoṇṭirukkiRaar

'He is writing something (much) (damn it)'

avar eetoo eḻutiṯṯaḷḷiṯṯulaccukkoṇṭiruntirukkiRaar

'He has been writing something (much) (damn it)'

avar kaacay potti vaccuk koṇṭirukkiRaar

'He is having the money tightly'

avar kaacay potti vaccirukkiRaar

'He has the money tightly'

avar kaacay potti vaccuk koṇṭiruntirukkiRaar

'He has been having the money tightly'

Mood

Conditional

The past conditional is formed by adding -aal to the past base of a verb. It can be used to refer to any time, past, present or future.

maamaa naaḷaykku vantaal naaṅkaḷ caṉikkiḻamay koḷumpukkup pookalaam

'If uncle comes tomorrow, we can go to Colombo on Saturday'

avar neeRRup poonaal iṉṯaykkup pinneeram vantiṭuvar

'If he had gone yesterday, he would certainly come today evening'

The final -l in -aal may be optionally dropped in speech.

Some speakers may use the perfective conditional pooyiruntaal instead of poonaal in the second example.

The past conditional is used in forming 'if' clauses.

Negative conditional

Negative conditional is formed by adding -aaṯṯil to the infinitive of a verb. The final -a of the infinitive is dropped when -aaṭṭil is added.

maamaa naaḷaykku varaaṭṭil naaṅkaḷ koḷumpukkup pooka muṭiyaatu

'If uncle does not come tomorrow, we cannot go to Colombo'

kamalaa neeRRup pookaaṭṭil
naaḷaykkaavaṯu kaṭṭaayam pooka
veeṇum

'If Kamala did not go yesterday, she must surely go at least tomorrow'

nii paṭikkaaṭṭil naan unakku
oṇṭum ṯaren

'If you don't study, I won't give you anything'

For strong verbs there is an alternant form which adds -aaṭṭil directly to the roots.

nii paṭiyaaṭṭil naan unakku
oṇṭum ṯaren

-aaṭṭil has a variant form -aaṭṭaal.

niiṅkaḷ varaaṭṭaal naan pooRen

'I am going if you are not coming'

The final -l of the negative conditional marker is optionally dropped in speech.

An alternate way of expressing negative conditional is to make the final -a of the infinitive long, optionally followed by -mal, and add the verb viṭu followed by -aal.

niiṅkaḷ veelay ceyyaa(mal)
viṭṭaal naan kaacu ṯaren

'If you don't work, I won't give money'

-viṭṭaal has viṭṭil and viṭil as variants. The final -l in viṭṭaal or viṭṭil may be optionally dropped in speech.

The negative conditional forms 'if not' clauses.

Concessive

The concessive form of the verb is formed by adding -um to the conditional form with -aal. (It cannot be added to the conditional with -aa).

appaa poonaalum naan pooka
maaṭṭen

'Even if father goes, I won't go'

Negative concessive

The negative concessive is made by adding -um to the negative conditional form with -aaṭṭil or -aaṭṭaal.

maamaa ciṯanam ṯaraaṭṭilum naan
avaRRay makaḷayṯ ṯaan kaliyaanam
ceyven

'Even if uncle does not give dowry, I will marry his daughter only'

An alternate way of expressing negative concession is to make the final a of the infinitive long, and add -um to the concessive suffix.

maamaa ciiṯanam ṯaraaviṭṭilum
naan avaRRay makaḷayṯ ṯaan
kaliyaaṇam ceyven

Optative

A wish for the happening of something is expressed in the case of a third person subject by -ṯṯum.

maḷay nallaayp peyyaṭṭum
'Let it rain well'

naaṭu celikkaṭṭum
'Let the country prosper'

avan peecaamal irukkaṭṭum
'Let him be silent'

With the first person plural subject the future tense form may also indicate the sense of optative.

poovam vaaṅkoo
'Let us go, come'

caappiṭuvam vaaṅkoo
'Let us eat, come'

Similarly with the first person plural subject the -laam form too may indicate some kind of optative sense.

pookalaam vaaṅkoo
'Let us go, come'

caappiṭalaam vaaṅkoo
'Let us eat, come'

Infinitive plus veeṇum may also indicate some kind of optative sense.

kaliyaaṇaṅ kaṭṭip piḷḷay kuṭṭiyooṭay nallaay vaaḷa veeṇum
'May I / you / he etc marry and live well with children'

Intentional

Intention to do something may be expressed with the infinitive of a verb (indicating the action intended) plus the quotative eṇṭu and the verb iru 'be' or ninay 'think'. The verb iru can occur in any of the three tenses. The verb ninay does not usually occur in the future, but occurs in the past and present.

Instead of the infinitive, one may also use a verb in the form of the modal -laam, followed by eṇṭu and the verb iru or ninay.

naaṅkaḷ laṇṭanukkup pooka eṇṭu irukkiRam
'We intend going to London'

naaṅkaḷ laṇṭanukkup pooka ninaykkiRam
'We think of going to London'

In the first example eṇṭu may be optionally dropped.

naaṅkaḷ laṇṭanukkup pooka irukkiRam

naaṅkaḷ laṇṭanukkup pookalaam eṇṭu irukkiRam

Note that eṇṭu cannot be dropped when the modal -laam occurs.

Jaffna Tamil speakers may also use the modal veeṇum instead of -laam.

naaṅkaḷ laṇṭanukkup pooka veeṇum eṇṭu irukkiRam

The use of veeṇum indicates some sort of seriousness in the intention.

Intention to begin an action and continue it from that time forward may be expressed by adding the present tense form of the verb poo to an infinitive.

enray makaḷ naaḷayilay iruntu
caṅkiitam paṭikkap pooRaa
'My daughter will begin learning music from tomorrow'

Negative intention is expressed by the infinitive of iru or ninay followed by illay.

naaṅkaḷ laṇṭanukkup pooka eṇṭu
irukkeellay
'We don't intend going to London'

naaṅkaḷ laṇṭanukkup pooka
ninaykkeellay
'We don't think of going to London'

naaṅkaḷ laṇṭanukkup pookalaam
eṇṭu irukkeellay
'We don't intend going to London'

The negative can be in reference to any time.

Debitive

Obligation to do something is usually expressed by veeṇum or veeṇṭ- plus some other element. Negative obligation is usually expressed by veeṇṭaam, kuuṭaaṯu or paṭaaṯu.

Different degrees of obligation are indicated either by emphatic markers like ṯaan, ee added to the infinitive preceding veeṇum or by forms like ṯiira (infinitive

of the intransitive "full verb" ṯiir 'finish', 'end', 'exhaust'), (v)iṭa, aaka added to the past participle or to the past participle + ee. aaka does not usually occur with negative obligation.

The adverbial form kaṭṭaayam too may be used in a construction to intensify the necessity of an action.

Examples are arranged from the weakest to the strongest in degrees of obligation.

niiṅkaḷ kaacu kuṭukka veeṇum
'You must give money'

niiṅkaḷ kaacu kuṭukkavee veeṇum
'You must certainly give money'

'niiṅkaḷ kaacu kuṭukkaṯṯaan
veeṇum
'You must certainly give money'

niiṅkaḷ kaacu kuṭuṯṯiṭa veeṇum
'You must definitely give money'

niiṅkaḷ kaacu kuṭuṯṯiṭavee
veeṇum
'You must definitely give money'

niiṅkaḷ kaacu kuṭuṯṯiṭaṯṯaan
veeṇum
'You must definitely give money'

niiṅkaḷ kaacu kuṭuṯṯuṯṯiira
veeṇum
'You must certainly give money'

niiṅkaḷ kaacu kuṭuttee tiira veeṇum

'You must definitely give money'

niiṅkaḷ kaacu kuṭuttee<u>taan</u> tiira veeṇum

'You must definitely give money'

niiṅkaḷ kaacu kuṭuttaaka veeṇum

'You must positively give money'

niiṅkaḷ kaacu kuṭuttee aaka veeṇum

'You must positively give money'

There is another way of indicating positive obligation, namely by using veeṇṭi (past participle of veeṇṭ-) + iru. The verb iru may be in any of the three tenses with corresponding differences in meaning but will be always in the singular neuter form.

There is a difference in sense between the use of veeṇum and veeṇṭiyiru. The occurrence of veeṇum mostly indicates a self-desire or self-motivation to perform the obligation, whereas veeṇṭi + iru always indicates a need for the action due to circumstances.

Jaffna Tamil speakers may also use veeṇṭi + vaa in any of the three tenses, but only as a third person singular neuter form to indicate the necessity of doing an action.

naaṅkaḷ koḷumpukkup pooka veeṇṭi vantutu

'We had to go to Colombo'

(It became necessary for us to go to Colombo)

naaṅkaḷ koḷumpukkup pooka veeṇṭi vareellay

'We did not have to go to Colombo'

naaṅkaḷ kaacu celavaḷikka veeṇṭi varum

'We will have to spend money'

('It would become necessary for us to spend money')

When muṭiyaamal 'without being able' is used dependent on vaa-, it conveys the sense that the situation comes about so that something cannot be done.

naaṅkaḷ koḷumpukkup pooka muṭiyaamal vantutu

'It happened that we could not go to Colombo'

The negative obligation of veeṇum is mostly expressed by veeṇṭaam, or by the nominalised form of veeṇṭ- plus illay.

niiṅkaḷ koḷumpukkup pooka veeṇum

'You must go to Colombo'

or

'You have to go to Colombo'

naan koḷumpukkup pooka veeṇṭi irukku(tu)

'I have to go to Colombo'

niiṅkaḷ koḷumpukkup pooka veeṇṭaam

'You mustn't go to Colombo'

or

'You don't have to go to Colombo

naan koḷumpukkup pooka
veeṇṭiyaṯillay
'I don't have to go to Colombo'

avar koḷumpukkup pooka
veeṇṭiyiruntuṯu
'He had to go to Colombo'

avar koḷumpukkup pooka
veeṇṭiyirukkeellay
'He did not have to go to Colombo'

avar koḷumpukkup pooka
veeṇṭiyirukkum
'He may have to go to Colombo'

avar koḷumpukkup pooka
veeṇṭiyiraa(ṯu)
'He may not have to go to Colombo'

naan eṭṭaray maṇikku munnam
paḷḷikkuṭam pooka veeṇum. aṯukkup
piRaku pooka veeṇṭiyaṯillay
'I must go to school before half past eight. After that there is no point in going'

Sometimes negative obligation is expressed by using either kuuṭaa(ṯu) or paṭaa(ṯu) — forms most commonly used as prohibitives — in a sense, as negatives of the permissive -laam and -ṭṭum forms.

uḷḷay pookalaam
'can go in'

uḷḷay pookak kuuṭaaṯu
'shouldn't go in'

uḷḷay pookap paṭaaṯu
'shouldn't go in'

Different degrees of negative obligation or prohibition expressed by the use of veeṇṭaam, kuuṭaaṯu or paṭaaṯu are illustrated with the following examples on an increasing scale of negative obligation.

nii pooka veeṇṭaam
'You mustn't go' / 'You don't go' / 'You need not go'

nii pookavee veeṇṭaam
nii pookavee pooka veeṇṭaam
nii pooka veeṇṭavee veeṇṭaam

nii pookak kuuṭaaṯu
'You mustn't go'

nii pookavee kuuṭaaṯu
nii pookavee pookak kuuṭaaṯu
nii pookak kuuṭavee kuuṭaaṯu

nii pookap paṭaaṯu
'You mustn't go'

nii pookavee paṭaaṯu

nii pookavee pookap paṭaaṯu
nii pookap paṭavee paṭaaṯu
'You shouldn't go'

The forms veeṇum and veeṇṭaam also occur in a different type of construction, with the sense 'want', 'need' and 'don't want', 'don't need' respectively. Both have a noun in the dative case.

enakkuk kooppi veeṇum
'I want coffee'

enakkuk kooppi veeṇṭaam
'I don't want coffee'

Potential

Physical ability

Physical ability is indicated by either m u ṭ i y u m or e e l u m, and the corresponding negative forms are m u ṭ i - y a a t̲ u and e e l a a t̲ u. The agentive noun phrase will be either in the direct or instrumental case. i y a l u m and i y a l a a t̲ u are variants of e e l u m and e e l a a t̲ u respectively. Final - t̲ u may be optionally dropped in speech.

e n n a a l a y i n t̲ a p p e ṭ ṭ i y a y t̲ t̲ a n i y a t̲ t̲ u u k k a m u ṭ i y u m

n a a n i n t̲ a p p e ṭ ṭ i y a y t̲ t̲ a n i y a t̲ t̲ u u k k a m u ṭ i y u m

'I can lift this box on my own'

e n n a a l a y i n t̲ a p p e ṭ ṭ i y a y t̲ t̲ a n i y a t̲ t̲ u u k k a e e l u m

'I can lift this box on my own'

n a a n i n t̲ a p p e ṭ ṭ i y a y t̲ t̲ a n i y a t̲ t̲ u u k k a e e l a a t̲ u

'I cannot lift this box on my own'

When the reference is to past time either m u ṭ i ñ c u t̲ u or i y a ṇ ṭ u t̲ u is used for the affirmation of ability; for the denial of ability m u ṭ i y e e l l a y or i y a l e e l l a y is used.

e p p i ṭ i c o o t̲ i n a y n a l l a a y c e y y a m u ṭ i ñ c u t̲ a a

'How? Were you able to do well in the examination?

i l l a y, n a l l a a y c e y y a m u ṭ i y e e l l a y

'No, I couldn't do well'

n e e R R u u ṅ k a ḷ a a l a y k a ḷ ḷ a n a y p p i ṭ i k k a i y a ṇ ṭ u t̲ a a

'Were you able to catch the thief yesterday?

i l l a y, i y a l e e l l a y

'No, couldn't'

The forms m u ṭ i y e e l l a y and i y a l e e l l a y may be also used when the reference is to present time. They are never used for reference to future time.

m u n t̲ i e n n a a l a y e l l a a v e e l a y u m c e y y a m u ṭ i ñ c u t̲ u. i p p a e n n a a l a y o r u v e e l a y u m c e y y a m u ṭ i y e e l l a y / i y a l e e - l l a y.

'Earlier I was able to do all the work. (But) now I am unable to do any work'

Another way of expressing physical ability is to use the future tense form.

a v a r m a r a m e e R u v a r

'He can climb tree'

The corresponding expression of inability is made by using the infinitive + m a a ṭ ṭ -

a v a r m a r a m e e R a m a a ṭ ṭ a a r

'He can't climb tree'

The - l a a m form of a verb too may indicate some sort of physical ability.

p a t̲ t̲ u p p e e r e n n a t̲ t̲ u k k u n a a n m a ṭ ṭ u m i n t̲ a v e e l a y a y c e y y a l a a m

'Why ten persons? I alone can do this work'

If the speaker wishes to be more assertive in a given context, he would use m u ṭ i y u m instead of - l a a m form. In general, the form m u ṭ i y u m has more the sense of capacity, i . e., ' one has the power to ', whereas - l a a m form has more the sense of possibility.

Permission

Permission is expressed by adding either - ṭ ṭ u m or - l a a m to the infinitive form of a verb.

Usually - ṭ ṭ u m occurs only with third person subjects. It may occur with first person pronouns too, but only in questions. - l a a m form can be with subjects of any person.

a v a n i ñ c a y v a n ṯ u v e e l a y c e y y a ṭ ṭ u m
' He may come here and work '

n a a ṅ k a ḷ n a a ḷ a y k k u v a r a ṭ ṭ u m a a
' May we come tomorrow ? '

n a a n k o o ṭ ṭ a y k k u ḷ ḷ a y p o o k a l a a m
' I can go into the fort '
or
' I am allowed to go into the fort '
or
' There is permission for me to go into the fort '

n a a n p o o k a l a a m a a m
' It seems that I can go '

n i i ṅ k a a ḷ p o o k a l a a m
' You may go '

c i n e e k i ṯ a r i ñ c a y v a r a l a a m
' Friends may come here '

Jaffna Tamil may use a form in - ṭ ṭ e e instead of - ṭ ṭ u m a a, but only in the first person singular.

n a a n n a a ḷ a y k k u v a r a ṭ ṭ u m a a
n a a n n a a ḷ a y k k u v a r a ṭ ṭ e e
' May I come tomorrow ? '

The - ṭ ṭ u m form conveys a more positive and firm sense of permission than the - l a a m form.

Permission is also expressed by adding v i ṭ u to the infinitive form of a verb. It means ' allow someone to do the action of the infinitive '.

v a a ṯ ṯ i y a a r k a ṇ ṇ a n a y v a k u p p u k -
k u ḷ ḷ a y v a r a v i ṭ ṭ a a r
' The teacher allowed Kannan to come into the class '

Learned ability

Learned ability is usually indicated by the root ṯ e r i - ' be known '.

a r a v i n ṯ a n u k k u k k a a r o o ṭ a ṯ ṯ e r i y u m
' Aravindan knows how to drive a car '

m a k a n u k k u i n n u m c a y i k k i ḷ o o ṭ a ṯ
ṯ e r i y a a ṯ u
' My son doesn't know how to cycle yet '

(Note that Jaffna Tamil usually uses the intransitive verb o o ṭ u to express the sense ' drive a vehicle '.)

With ṯ e r i y u m and ṯ e r i y a a ṯ u, the one who knows is in the dative case. These forms are also used to express recognition or understanding of something. In general,

if something is known in the sense of recognition, as in knowing a person, it will be in the accusative case. If understanding is involved, such as knowing a language well, it will be in the direct case.

enakku uṅkaḷinray vaaṯṯiyaarayṯ ṯeriyum
'I know your teacher'

enakkuc ciṅkaḷam ṯeriyum
'I know Sinhala'

Familiarity in doing an action

Familiarity in doing an action is expressed by adding the form paḷakkam to the past participle of a verb.

naan kaar ooṭip paḷakkam
'I am familiar with driving a car'

naan kaar ooṭip paḷakkam illay
'I am not familiar with driving a car'

enakku maram eeRip paḷakkam
'I am familiar with tree-climbing'

Degree of certainty

Possibility or probability of something happening is expressed by (i) adding kuuṭum to the infinitive, (ii) a modal form in -laam, (iii) concessive + a modal form in -laam, (iv) concessive + a future tense form, (v) future tense form with an adverbial (oruveeḷay 'sometime', cilaveeḷay 'sometime', etc.) preceding it.

(i) appaa vaaRa kiḷamay varakkuuṭum
'Father may come next week'

(ii) appaa vaaRa kiḷamay varalaam
'Father may come next week'

(iii) appaa vaaRa kiḷamay vaṉṯaalum varalaam
'Father may come next week'

(iv) appaa vaaRa kiḷamay vaṉṯaalum varuvar
'Father may come next week'

(v) appaa vaara kiḷamay oruveeḷay varuvar
'Father may sometime come next week'

An adverb like oruveeḷay may optionally occur in other sentences (i, ii, iii and iv) too.

All the above constructions are stylistic variations, and do not usually make any difference in the degree of certainty.

Jaffna Tamil adds the form aakkum to an infinitive (or to an utterance) to indicate probability.

avarukku ippa kaacu een
'Why does he want money now?'

makanukku anuppa aakkum
'Probably to send it to his son'

maamaa laṇṭanaalay vaaRa kiḷamay vaaRaar aakkum
'Uncle is probably coming from London next week'

paḻamaa kaayaa

'Is it ripe or unripe fruit?'

kaayaakkum

'Probably (it is) unripe fruit'

Probability is also indicated by adding poolay irukku to an utterance. It can convey the sense 'it seems' too.

maamaattay rampak kaacu irukkup poolay irukku

'Probably uncle has a lot of money'

Some speakers may use teriyutu instead of irukku. The forms irukku and teriyutu may be optionally dropped in speech.

Infinitive + veeṇum may be used to indicate more hope for the action to take place.

appaa vaaRa kiḻamay vara veeṇum

'Father must come next week'

Both the present and the future tenses may indicate certainty. The difference between the two is that the present tense indicates more certainty than the future.

avar naaḻaykku vaaRaar

'He is coming tomorrow'

avar naaḻaykku varuvar

'He will come tomorrow'

Infinitive + present tense form of poo- too indicates certainty, but the certainty is less than that indicated by the present tense form.

anta veelayay avar ceyyap pooRaar

'He is going to do that work'

In some contexts it may give the sense 'one is about to do the action' indicated by the infinitive.

kuuṭiyataayiru- used with an infinitive indicates that the action of the infinitive is possible or can take place. iru can be in any tense.

ippa laṇṭanilay tamiḻ paṭikkak kuuṭiyataayirukku

'Now it is possible to study Tamil in London'

When reference is made to a past action, possibility or probability is expressed by the perfect infinitive of a verb followed by any of the same set of modals.

taṅkacci koḻumpukkup pooyirukkak kuuṭum

'Younger sister would have probably gone to Colombo'

avar neeRRuk kuuṭṭattukkup pooyirukka veeṇum

'Probably he had gone to the meeting yesterday'

The second example with veeṇum can convey a negative sense too, that is, 'He did not go for the meeting yesterday'. It also then conveys an expectation on the part of the speaker that the action should have taken place.

In the case of negatives, the range of possibilities is the same as for positive. If the proposition is negated, the verb will be in the negative adverbial participle form, and it will be followed by iru + modal.

taṅkacci koḷumpukkup pookaamal irukkak kuuṭum

'Probably younger sister may not have gone to Colombo'

If the modality is negated, either muṭiyaatu or eelaatu is used.

neeRRu niiṅkaḷ paṭattukkup pooyirukka muṭiyaatu

'You can't have gone to a film yesterday'

Authority for assertion

When one relies on someone else for the source of an information, he may add -aam finally to his utterance. This means that the speaker has no authority for the information that is being conveyed; it is rather based on hearsay.

celvi iṉṭaykku vareellayaam

'It seems Chelvi is not coming today'

celviyinray kaliyaaṇam vaara puṭanaam

'It seems Chelvi's marriage is on next Wednesday'

An alternative way is to make use of eṉṭu keeḷvi (paṭu-). paṭu- is inflected to person / number / gender (p/n/g). Also paṭu may be optionally dropped. Then the sentence will give only a present sense.

caṉmukam laṇṭanukkup pooRaar eṉṭu naaṅkaḷ keeḷvippaṭṭam

'We heard that Chanmugam is going to London'

caṉmukam laṇṭanukkup pooRaar eṉṭu naaṅkaḷ keeḷvi

'We hear that Chanmugam is going to London'

Finite and nonfinite forms

Tamil makes a distinction between finite and nonfinite verbal forms.

Tenses of finite verbs

Positive indicative

Herein the three simple tenses-past, present and future are dealt with.

Morphemes in positive indicative forms have, for the most part, the following sequence: root + tense + person / number / gender.

Personal pronouns have corresponding p / n /g suffixes in the finite form. One exception is that the nonhuman plural finite form does not take plural suffix in any of the tenses, although its corresponding pronoun form always maintains the plural suffix.

The allomorphs of the tense morpheme are morphologically conditioned. Present and future are somewhat mutually predictable: present - kir- ←→ future - pp -; present - iR- or - R- ←→ future - v -. Future tense allomorphs are also predictable on the basis of the infinitive: if the infinitive has - kka finally, the future suffix would be - pp - ; if the infinitive has - a finally, the future suffix would be - v - .

Paradigms for two representative verbs follow: ooṭu 'run', naṭa 'walk'. The pronoun subjects appropriate to the tense forms are given here in the order followed in

the paradigms : (i) first person singular : n a a n; (ii) first person plural : n a a ṅ k a ḷ; (iii) second person singular (nonhonorific) : n i i; (iv) second person singular (intermediate honorific) : n i i r; (v) second person plural : n i i ṅ-k a ḷ; (vi) third person masculine singular (nonhonorific) : a v a n; (vii) third person masculine plural (nonhonorific) : a v a ṅ k a ḷ; (viii) third person feminine singular (nonhonorific) : a v a ḷ; (ix) third person feminine plural (nonhonorific) : a v a ḷ a v a y; (x) third person masculine singular (honorific) : a v a r; (xi) third person feminine singular (honorific) : a v a a; (xii) third person epicene plural : a v a y (a ḷ); (xiii) third person neuter singular : a ṯ u; (xiv) third person neuter plural : a ṯ u k a ḷ .

	past	*present*	*future*
(i)	oo ṭ i n e n	oo ṭ u R e n	oo ṭ u v e n
(ii)	oo ṭ i n a m	oo ṭ u R a m	oo ṭ u v a m
(iii)	oo ṭ i n a a y	oo ṭ u R a a y	oo ṭ u v a a y
(iv)	oo ṭ i n i i r	oo ṭ u R i i r	oo ṭ u v i i r
(v)	oo ṭ i n i i ṅ-k a ḷ	oo ṭ u R i i ṅ-k a ḷ	oo ṭ u v i i ṅ-k a ḷ
	oo ṭ i n i y a ḷ	oo ṭ u R i y a ḷ	oo ṭ u v i y a ḷ
(vi)	oo ṭ i n a a n	oo ṭ u R a a n	oo ṭ u v a n
(vii)	oo ṭ i n a a ṅ-k a ḷ	oo ṭ u R a a ṅ-k a ḷ	oo ṭ u v a ṅ-k a ḷ
(viii)	oo ṭ i n a a ḷ	oo ṭ u R a a ḷ	oo ṭ u v a ḷ
(ix)	oo ṭ i n a a ḷ a-v a y	oo ṭ u R a a ḷ a-v a y	oo ṭ u v a ḷ a-v a y
(x)	oo ṭ i n a a r	oo ṭ u R a a r	oo ṭ u v a r
(xi)	oo ṭ i n a a	oo ṭ u R a a	oo ṭ u v a a
(xii)	oo ṭ i c c i-n a m	oo ṭ i i n a m	oo ṭ u v i n a m
(xiii)	oo ṭ i c c u ṯ u	oo ṭ u ṯ u	oo ṭ u m
(xiv)	oo ṭ i c c u ṯ u	oo ṭ u ṯ u	oo ṭ u m

	past	*present*	*future*
(i)	n a ṭ a n t e n	n a ṭ a k k i R e n	n a ṭ a p p e n
(ii)	n a ṭ a n ṯ a m	n a ṭ a k k i R a m	n a ṭ a p p a m
(iii)	n a ṭ a n ṯ a a y	n a ṭ a k k i R a a y	n a ṭ a p p a a y
(iv)	n a ṭ a n ṯ i i r	n a ṭ a k k i R i i r	n a ṭ a p p i i r
(v)	n a ṭ a n ṯ i i ṅ-k a ḷ	n a ṭ a k k i R i i ṅ-k a ḷ	n a ṭ a p p i i ṅ k a ḷ
	n a ṭ a n ṯ i y a ḷ	n a ṭ a k k i R i y a ḷ	n a ṭ a p p i y a ḷ
(vi)	n a ṭ a n ṯ a a n	n a ṭ a k k i R a a n	n a ṭ a p p a n
(vii)	n a ṭ a n ṯ a a ṅ-k a ḷ	n a ṭ a k k i R a a ṅ-k a ḷ	n a ṭ a p p a ṅ-k a ḷ
(viii)	n a ṭ a n ṯ a a ḷ	n a ṭ a k k i R a a ḷ	n a ṭ a p p a ḷ
(ix)	n a ṭ a n ṯ a a-ḷ a v a y	n a ṭ a k k i R a a-ḷ a v a y	n a ṭ a p p a ḷ a v a y
(x)	n a ṭ a n ṯ a a r	n a ṭ a k k i R a a r	n a ṭ a p p a r
(xi)	n a ṭ a n ṯ a a	n a ṭ a k k i R a a	n a ṭ a p p a a
(xii)	n a ṭ a n ṯ i-n a m	n a ṭ a k k i n a m	n a ṭ a p p i n a m
(xiii)	n a ṭ a n ṯ u ṯ u	n a ṭ a k k u ṯ u	n a ṭ a k k u m
(xiv)	n a ṭ a n ṯ u ṯ u	n a ṭ a k k u ṯ u	n a ṭ a k k u m

In the first and second persons p / n / g endings of both strong and weak verbs are the same in all tenses.

In the third person, past and present forms of strong verbs have the same p / n / g endings. But past and present forms of certain types of weak verbs (not all weak verbs) take different endings either in the human plural alone, or in both the human plural and nonhuman. Compare the

p / n / g endings of the following weak verbs : c e y 'do', a l̤ u 'cry', o o t̤ u 'run', t̲ a a 'give'.

past	*present*
c e y - t̲ - i n a m	c e y - y - i n a m
c e y - t̲ - u t̲ u	c e y - y - u t̲ u
a l̤ u - t̲ - i n a m	a l̤ u - k i n a m
a l̤ u - t̲ - u t̲ u	a l̤ u - k u t̲ u
o o t̤ - i c c - i n a m	o o t̤ - i i n a m
o o t̤ - i c o - u t̲ u	o o t̤ - u t̲ u
t̲ a - n t̲ - i n a m	t̲ a - r - i i n a m
t̲ a - n t̲ - u t̲ u	t̲ a - r - u k u t̲ u

In the third person the feminine singular honorific future forms of both strong and weak verbs have the same p / n / g endings as in the past or present forms. The human plural future forms have the same p / n / g endings as in the past. The nonhuman ending is realized as zero in future forms. The endings in other categories of third person future forms differ, but only in the length of the initial vowel of the endings, that is, the initial aa of the endings in the past and present is realized as 'a' in the future.

A tense morpheme for a given verb remains constant in the first and second person forms of the paradigm.

In the third person forms, a tense morpheme may remain constant, or vary depending on the specific tense and the type of verb.

Past tense morpheme of strong verbs remains constant in the third person forms, that is, it remains constant throughout the paradigm. For instance, consider k a t̤ i 'bite'. Present tense morpheme in strong verbs is realized as zero in the human plural and nonhuman forms. Again consider k a t̤ i 'bite'.

Past tense morpheme in certain types of weak verbs remains constant in the third person forms, that is, it remains constant throughout the paradigm. For instance, consider - y ending weak verbs like c e y 'do', or verbs of a l̤ u 'cry' type. In certain other types the past tense morpheme varies in the third person human plural and nonhuman forms. For instance, consider verbs of o o t̤ u 'run' type where - in - for other p / n / g suffixes corresponds to - i c c - for third person human plural and nonhuman.

Present tense morpheme is realized as zero both in strong and weak verb forms in the third person human plural and nonhuman forms.

Future tense morpheme is realized as - um in the third person nonhuman forms of all verbs.

Negative indicative

In Jaffna Tamil there is a nine-fold distinction in the set of finite negative forms :

(i) infinitive + i l l a y
(ii) nominalised past tense + i l l a y
(iii) nominalised present tense + i l l a y
(iv) infinitive + present / future nominalised form of p o o + i l l a y
(v) infinitive + m a a t̤ t̤ -

(vi) root + p / n / g suffixes

(vii) past / present finite + i l l a y

(viii) past verbal adjective + p a aṭ u + i l l a y

(ix) root + p / n / g suffixes + a a m

The most commonly used form of negative is infinitive + i l l a y. It can be used in any tense, but, in general, the basic meaning is past, that is, if the context or a clue in the sentence does not indicate present or future time, one can assume that past time is meant: e. g. n a a n p o o - k e e l l a y 'I did not go', n a a n n a aḷ a y k k u p p o o k e e l l a y 'I am not going tomorrow'.

Note that the final -a of the infinitive + i of i l l a y becomes ee.

Nominalised past tense + i l l a y may be termed as past emphatic negative. It conveys a sense that one has never done the action indicated by the verb, or has not had the experience of doing it.

n a a n l aṇṭ a n u k k u p p o o n a ṯ i l l a y

'I've never been to London'

The corresponding emphatic verb is formed in Jaffna Tamil by adding the appropriate pronoun to agree with the subject of the past verbal adjectival.

n a a n l aṇṭ a n u k k u p p o o n a n a a n

'I did go to London'

Nominalised present tense + i l l a y indicates habitual negative sense, that is, one is not in the habit of doing something.

a p p a a k u ṭ i k k i R a ṯ i l l a y

'Father does not drink'

Infinitive + present / future tense nominalised form of p o o + i l l a y conveys future emphatic negative sense.

k a ṉṉ a n m a l a r a y k k a l i y a a ṇ a m c e y y a p p o o R a ṯ i l l a y

'Kannan is not going to marry Malar'

Infinitive + m a aṭṭ - gives a future negative sense. m a aṭṭ - takes p / n / g suffixes, and agrees with its subjects in the same way as verbs.

The p / n / g suffixes are the same as those for the future tense except that the third person singular masculine suffix is - a a r, rather than - a r, and the nonhuman suffix is - u ṯ u.

m a aṭṭ - conveys the sense of inability too, and in the nonhuman it always indicates 'inability', that is, it seldom gives the simple negative sense.

p a aṭṭ a a c a a p p i ṭ a m a aṭṭ a a r

'Grand father won't eat'

'Grand father won't be able to eat'

a ṭ u i ṯ a y c c a a p p i ṭ a m a aṭṭ u ṯ u

'A goat won't be able to eat this'

The negative formed by adding p / n / g suffixes directly to the root may be termed direct (inflectional) negative.

For all forms, but the second person honorific, the third person human plural and the third person non-human, the p / n / g suffixes of the present tense are added directly to the root. If the root ends in -u, the -u is dropped. e.g. c a a p p i ṭ e n 'I won't eat', c a a p p i ṭ a m 'We won't eat', c a a p p i ṭ a a r 'He won't eat', c a a p p i ṭ a a 'She won't eat'.

For the second person honorific, third person human plural, and third person nonhuman, the p / n / g suffixes of the present tense are added to a negative base formed by adding - a a to the root, and the p / n / g suffixes are added as follows :

(i) for the second person plural, - y a l is added to the negative base in - a a, e.g. c a a p p i ṭ a a y a l

(Note that there is no negative form of this type in the second person singular intermediate honorific category corresponding to a subject in n i i r).

(ii) for the third person human plural - y i n a m is added to the negative base in - a a, e.g. c a a p p i ṭ a a - y i n a m ' They won't eat '.

(iii) for the third person nonhuman, - t̲ u is added to the negative base in - a a, e.g. c a a p p i ṭ a a t̲ u ' It won't eat '.

The (irregular) verbs p o o, t̲ a a, v a a and k o ṇ ṭ a a take the forms p o o k-, t̲ a r-, v a r-, and k o ṇ ṭ a r- respectively before p / n / g suffixes.

The direct negative conveys a strong and more definite sense of negative than that conveyed by m a a ṭ ṭ -.

There is a negative formed by adding i l l a y directly to a sentence with a present / past verb. The negative generally implies disapproval. That is, the speaker feels that the action should have taken place.

m a k a n p a ṭ i k k i R a a r i l l a y

' My son does not study '

(with the implication that he should study)

The past verbal adjective + p a a ṭ u i l l a y indicates that there is little chance of the action of the verbal adjective taking place. It also suggests that the speaker would like the action to take place, even though he does not believe it will.

k a a c c a l k u R a y ñ c a p a a ṭ i l l a y

' The fever is not subsiding '

(The speaker would like the fever to subside.)

Earlier the negative form (root + p / n / g suffixes) was given. When - a a m is added to the p / n / g suffixes, the form, that is, root + p / n / g suffixes + - a a m suggests that one is not doing the action indicated by the verb but the speaker would like the action (affirmative) to take place.

a v a r k a a c u t̲ a r a a r a a m

' He is not giving the money '

(with the suggestion that he should give)

In the same form, - a a m may give the quotative sense too. Context has to be taken into consideration in deciding the meaning.

Tenses of nonfinite verbs

Infinitive

Infinitives do not distinguish tenses.

Strong verbs form the infinitive by adding - k k a to the verbal root, and the weak verbs by adding - a to the root. e.g. p a ṭ i ' study ' p a ṭ i k k a; a a ṭ u ' dance ' a a ṭ a. A number of irregular verbs (usually weak verbs) change their root before adding the infinitive - a. e.g. p o o ' go ' p o o k a; k o ṇ ṭ a a ' bring ' k o ṇ ṭ a r a .

Infinitive is used to express purpose and simultaneity. It occurs in the following constructions :

Infinitive + modal auxiliaries
+ forms of poo 'go'
+ forms of viṭu 'leave'
+ forms of paar 'look'
+ forms of ninay 'think'
+ illay 'no'
+ (eṉṭu) past / present forms of iru 'be'
+ forms of veeṇṭiyiru 'have to', 'it is necessary that ...'

Also infinitive may be used to form a when clause. e.g. niiṅkaḷ aṯayc collaṯ taan enakkuṯ teriyum 'It was only when you told me that that I came to know (of it)'. An infinitive may be doubled to form an adverb meaning 'as the action of the verb of the infinitive continued' or 'the more one does such and such', e.g. naan kaacu keekkak keekka avar taaRaar 'He gives as I continue to ask for money', niiṅkaḷ kuuppiṭak kuuppiṭa avar varaar 'He won't come as you keep on calling (him)'.

Aspects can occur in infinitival forms. e.g. eḷuṯiṯṯaḷḷa.

Adverbial participle

The adverbial participle, or past participle does not distinguish between past, present and future tenses.

Weak verbs that take -in- in the past tense drop the -n- of the past tense to form the past participle. e.g. kaaṭṭu 'show', past tense base kaaṭṭin-, past participle kaaṭṭi. Strong verbs and all other weak verbs

form the past participle by adding -u to the past tense base. e.g. cey 'do', past base ceyṯ-, past participle ceyṯu; naṭa 'walk', past base naṭaṇṯ-, past participle naṭaṇṯu. The verbs poo 'go', collu 'tell' have the past participles pooy, colli respectively.

Past participles of perfective forms are similarly composed of the past tense base of this complex form + -i or -u as explained earlier. e.g. cey 'do' + viṭu + pp > ceyṯuviṭṭu ~ ceyṯiṭṭu. Past participles of progressive forms consist of the past tense base of a verb + koṇṭu.

The negative adverbial participle is formed by adding -aamal to the root of a verb. Strong verbs optionally add it to the infinitive. The final -a of the infinitive is then dropped. e.g. paaṭu 'sing' paaṭaamal; paṭi 'study' paṭiyaamal ~ paṭikkaamal. The final -l in -aamal may be optionally dropped in speech - but not when suffixes follow.

Relative participles

Positive relative participles make a two-way distinction in tense, between past and present, and are formed by adding -a to the past tense base or present tense base. e.g. paṭi 'study' paṭicca, paṭikkiRa; poo 'go' poona, pooRa.

Relative participles of aspectual forms are similarly formed. e.g. cey 'do' ceyṯa (past), ceyyiRa (present), ceyṯiruṇṯa (pluperfect), ceyṯirukkiRa (perfect), ceyṯiṭṭa (past perfective of certainty), ceyṯiṭuRa (present perfective), ceyṯukoṇṭiruṇṯa (past progressive), ceyṯukoṇṭirukkiRa (present progressive).

Negative relative participles do not distinguish tense. They are formed by adding -aaṯa to the root of a verb. Strong verbs optionally add -aaṯa to the infinitive. e.g. cey 'do' ceyyaaṯa; paṭi 'study' paṭiyaaṯa ~ paṭikkaaṯa.

Nominalised forms

Nominalised forms consist of the tense base form + the nominalising suffix -aṯu. They usually occur in the past or present tense: e.g. collu 'say' connaṯu, collu-RaṯuR; poo 'go' poonaṯu, pooRaṯu.

There is, however, one construction where the nominalised form of poo 'go' occurs in the future form: ceyya + poo ceyyap poovaṯu.

naan ceyyappoovaṯu enna eṇṭu oruvarukkum teriyaaṯu

'No one knows what I am going to do'

Classification of verbs

There are a number of tense markers, particularly in the past tense. It will be rather difficult to predict fully (perhaps except in the future tense) which marker will occur with a given verb.

The infinitive form can be used to predict whether the future marker will be -pp- or -v-. If the infinitive ends in -kka, -pp- is substituted for -kka to form the future base. For other verbs, -v- is added to the root.

Different groups of verbs form their present tense in slightly different ways. Strong verbs form the present tense base by adding -iR to the infinitive. The final -a of the

infinitive will be dropped: paṭi 'study', infinitive paṭikka, present base paṭikkiR-. Weak verbs that end in -y too add -iR to the infinitive to form the present base: cey 'do', infinitive ceyya, present base ceyyiR-; caay 'lean', infinitive caaya, present base caayiR-. Note that the final -a of the infinitive is dropped. Weak verbs like aḻu 'cry', uḻu 'plough', aRu 'be ruined' add -kiR to the root to form the present base: aḻukiR-. Other weak verbs add -R to the root to form the present base: poo 'go' pooR-, koṇṭaa 'bring' koṇṭaaR-, naṭu 'plant' naṭuR-.

For strong verbs a past tense marker is substituted for the -kka of the infinitive.

Strong verbs have past tense in either -ṯṯ- (~ -cc-), -nṯ-, -ṭṭ- or -ṇṭ-. The choice between -ṯṯ- or -cc- is phonologically conditioned: root-final front vowel or -y requires -cc-, nonfront (other than -a) requires -ṯṯ-: vaaci 'read', infinitive vaacikka, past base vaacicc-; kaṯay 'converse', infinitive kaṯaykka, past base kaṯaycc-; uṭu 'dress', infinitive uṭukka, past base uṭuṯṯ-. Strong verbs ending in -a and the verb iru 'be' have the past marker -nṯ-: naṭa 'walk', infinitive naṭakka, past base naṭaṇṯ-.

There are relatively few strong verbs with roots ending in consonants, and the changes that take place when the past tense markers are added are very complicated.

root	*infinitive*	*past base*
keeḻ 'ask'	keekka	keeṭṭ-
nil 'stand'	nikka	niṇṭ-
vil 'sell'	vikka	viṯṯ-
paar 'see'	paakka	paaṯṯ-

Tense bases of strong verbs are given below in the following order – singular imperative, past base, present base, future base, gloss:

kuṭu	kuṭuṭṭ-	kuṭukkiR-	kuṭupp-	'give'
piṭi	piṭicc-	piṭikkiR-	piṭipp-	'grasp'
naṭa	naṭaṇṭ-	naṭakkiR-	naṭapp-	'walk'
keeḷ	keeṭṭ-	keekkiR-	keepp-	'ask'
nil	niṇṭ-	nikkiR-	nipp-	'stand'

A major division within the set of weak verbs is between those having -in- (~ -n) for past and others. One can partially predict which marker a verb will take. Exceptions may have to be given.

Among others, the following types of weak verbs take -in-: (a) verbs ending in two consonants + u, or a double consonant + u (except collu 'say'): kaaṭṭu 'show', iṇaṅku 'agree', (b) verbs ending in a consonant + u preceded by a long vowel (pooṭu 'drop' is an exception): ṯeeṭu 'search', paaṭu 'sing', (c) verbs of three short syllables ending in -u: kaḷuvu 'wash', eḷuṯu 'write'.

The verbs collu 'say' and poo 'go' are also members of this category, but both have -n- for past: conn-, poon-.

-in- is the most common past tense marker for weak verbs.

Other weak verbs form their past tense base with -ṯ-, -ṭ-, -nṯ-, -ṇṭ- or -ñc-.

-ṯ- is taken only by a few (about ten) verbs: cey 'do', koy 'pluck', aḷu 'cry'

-ṭ- is taken by about fifteen weak verbs. These verbs have -ṭṭu finally preceded by a short vowel: caappiṭu 'eat' caappiṭṭ-; viṭu 'leave' viṭṭ-. The verb pooṭu is an exception that takes -ṭ- (and not -in-) to form the past base. The final -u of the verb is dropped when past marker is added.

About twenty verbs ending in -r- and the verbs viḷu 'fall', vaaḷ 'live', ṯaa 'give', vaa 'come' and koṇṭaa 'bring' take -nṯ- to form the past base: ceer 'join' ceenṯ-; ṯaa 'give' ṯanṯ-. Final consonant of the root is dropped when -nṯ- is added. (The language does not usually allow a sequence of three consonants in colloquial speech).

A set of about twenty weak verbs take -ṇṭ- to form their past base. Most of them end in -ḷ. A couple of verbs end in -l. One verb ends in -ṇ and two in -ṉ: aaḷ 'rule' aaṇṭ-; piraḷ 'turn' piraṇṭ-; vel 'win' veṇṭ-; ṯin 'eat' ṯiṇṭ-.

Weak verbs ending in a front vowel have -ñc- for past tense. Of the weak verbs ending in -y, some may take -ñc- (a few others take -ṯ-) for past: aRi 'know' aRiñc-; nanay 'wet' nanañc-. The verb (maḻay) pey 'rain' may take either -ṯ- or -ñc- for past.

Verbs made causative by the addition of -vi or -ppi are strong verbs, and they form the past base by adding -cc-: cey 'do', ceyvi 'cause to do', ceyvicc-; naṭi 'act', naṭippi 'cause to act', naṭippicc-.

Imperative

Positive imperative

Imperative forms occur in singular and plural. There are two types of singular forms : one is nonpolite, the use of which indicates the subordinate position of the addressee, or speaker's familiarity with the addressee, and the other is polite form, the use of which indicates some degree of respect to the addressee. The plural form too can be used in the singular to indicate politeness and greater degree of respect to the addressee. These verb forms correspond to the three second person pronouns, namely, n i i singular nonpolite, n i i r singular polite and intermediate respect form and n i i ṅ k a ḷ plural or singular polite and respect (greater degree) form.

Verb root is used as the singular nonpolite form. - um is added to the root to form the singular polite form. And the plural imperative is formed by adding the suffix - ṅ k o o to verb roots ending in a vowel other than - i and - a, and by adding - u ṅ k o o to roots ending in consonants and the vowels - i and - a.

nonpol. sing.	*pol. sing.*	*plural*
p a ṭ i	p a ṭ i y u m	p a ṭ i y u ṅ k o o 'study'
c e y	c e y y u m	c e y y u ṅ k o o 'do'
e ṭ u	e ṭ u m	e ṭ u ṅ k o o 'take'

The verbs v a a 'come', k o ṇ ṭ a a 'bring' and t a a 'give' change their root form to take - um : v a a r u m, k o ṇ ṭ a a r u m, t a a r u m. The verb p o o 'go' takes -m instead of - um to form the singular polite: p o o m. Note that certain morpho - phonemic changes take place when suffixes are added to some types of roots. For instance, when - u ṅ k o o is added to a monosyllabic verb ending in a consonant, that consonant doubles if the preceding vowel is short.

The second person plural imperatives of v a a 'come' and t a a 'give' have the alternates v a a r u ṅ k o o and t a a r u ṅ k o o respectively. The second person plural form in - (u) ṅ k o o has an alternate form in - (u) ṅ k a ḷ which is less frequent : c o l l u ṅ k o o 'say' c o l l u ṅ k a ḷ. The plural imperatives t a a ṅ k o o, v a a ṅ k o o and k o ṇ ṭ a a ṅ k o o have t a a r u ṅ k a ḷ, v a a r u ṅ k a ḷ and k o ṇ ṭ a a r u ṅ k a ḷ as alternate forms.

In Jaffna Tamil - en is added to an imperative form to express some sort of request : v a a 'come' + e n v a a v e n, c e y 'do' + u m + e n c e y y u m e n, p o o 'go' + ṅ k o o + e n p o o ṅ k o o v e n, p a a r 'look' + u ṅ k a ḷ + e n p a a r u ṅ k a ḷ e n.

Negative imperative

All the positive imperative forms have parallel negative forms, and the negative is formed by adding - a a t a y to either the infinitive (with loss of final - a) or to the root. The verbs v a a 'come', t a a 'give', k o ṇ ṭ a a 'bring' and p o o 'go' add - a a t a y to the infinitive only.

nonpol. sing.	*pol. sing.*	*plural (and pol. sing.)*
p a ṭ i k k a a t a y	p a ṭ i k k a a - t a y u m	p a ṭ i k k a a - t a y u ṅ k o o
		p a ṭ i k k a a - t a y u ṅ k a ḷ
		p a ṭ i k k a a - t i i ṅ k a ḷ 'don't read'

nonpol. sing.	*pol. sing.*	*plural (and pol. sing.)*
paakkaatay	paakkaa-tayum	paakkaa-tayuṅkoo
		paakkaa-tayuṅkaḷ
		paakkaa-tiiṅkaḷ
		'don't look'
ceyyaatay	ceyyaa-tayum	ceyyaa-tayuṅkoo
		ccyyaa-tayuṅkaḷ
		ceyyaatiiṅkaḷ
		'don't do'
eṭaatay	eṭaatayum	eṭaatayuṅkoo
		eṭaatayuṅkaḷ
		eṭaatiiṅkaḷ
		'don't take'

In Jaffna Tamil -en 'why didn't you' may be added to the negative imperative to give the sense that the speaker is asking the hearer why he did not do something that the speaker feels he should have done. It also implies that he had the opportunity to do so.

patiyaatayen 'Why didn't you study?'
patiyaatayuṅkaḷen (with the implication that the action could have been done, that is, the hearer could have studied)

Defective verbs

A certain number of verbs in Tamil lack many of the forms that the majority of verbs have. They are defective verbs. Of them the more important ones in common use are :

positive		*negative*
veeṇum	'want'	veeṇṭaam
muṭiyum	'possible'	muṭiyaa(tu)
eelum	'possible'	eelaa(tu)
kuuṭum	'possible'	kuuṭaa(tu)
teriyum	'know'	teriyaa(tu)
piṭikkum	'like'	piṭikkaa(tu)
		piṭiyaa(tu)
kiṭaykkum	'be available'	kiṭaykkaa(tu)
		kiṭayaa(tu)
		paṭaa(tu)

Forms associated with these defective verbs are as follows :

veeṇum
- veeṇṭiya (past verbal adjective)
- veeṇṭa (infinitive)
- veeṇṭiyatu (positive nominalised form)
- veeṇṭiyiru-
- veeṇṭivaa-

(can occur in any tense, but only as third person neuter singular)

veeṇṭaam
- veeṇṭaaṭa (negative verbal adjective)

veeṇṭaaṯaṯu
(negative nominalised form)

muṭiyum
muṭiyuṯu
(present finite)

muṭiñca
(past verbal adjective)
muṭiyiRa
(present verbal adjective)

muṭiñcuṯu
(past finite)

muṭiya
(infinitive)

muṭiyeellay
(past, present
negative finite)

muṭiñcaṯu
(past nominalised form)
muṭiyiRaṯu
(present nominalised form)

muṭiyaa(ṯu)

muṭiyaaṯa
(verbal adjective)

muṭiyaaṯaṯu
(negative nominalised form)

Infinitive of muṭi- occurs only in the emphatic construction muṭiyavee muṭiyaaṯu 'absolutely impossible'.

eelum ~ iyalum
iyaṇṭuṯu
(past finite)
iyaluṯu
(present finite)
iyaleellay
(past, present neg. finite)

iyaṇṭa
(past verbal adjective)
iyaliRa
(present verbal adjective)
iyaṇṭaṯu
(past nominalised form)
iyaliRaṯu
(present nominalised form)
iyala ~ eela
(infinitive)

eela ~ iyala occurs only in the emphatic eelavee eelaaṯu, iyalavee iyalaaṯu 'absolutely not possible'

eelaa(ṯu) ~ iyalaa(ṯu)

eelaaṯa ~ iyalaaṯa
(negative verbal adjective)

kuuṭum

kuuṭiya (verbal adjective)
kuuṭa (infinitive)
kuuṭiyaṯu
(nominalised form)

kuuṭa occurs only in the emphatic kuuṭavee kuuṭaaṯu 'absolutely mustn't'.

kuuṭaa(ṯu)

kuuṭaaṯa
(verbal adjective)
kuuṭaaṯaṯu
(nominalised form)

teriyum
teriñcuṯu
(past finite)
teriyuṯu
(present finite)
teriyeellay
(past, present negative finite)

teriña
(past verbal adjective)
teriyiRa
(present verbal adjective)
teriya
(infinitive)
teriñcaṯu
(past nominalised form)
teriyiRaṯu
(present nominalised form)

teriyaa(ṯu)

teriyaaṯa
(verbal adjective)
teriyaaṯaṯu
(nominalised form)

piṭikkum
piṭiccuṯu
(past finite)

piṭicca
(past verbal adjective)

piṭikkuṯu	piṭikkiRa
(present finite)	(present verbal adjective)
piṭikkeellay	piṭikka
(past, present finite)	(infinitive)
	piṭiccaṯu
	(nominalised form)
	piṭikkiRaṯu
	(present nominalised form)
piṭikkaaṯu ~	piṭikkaaṭa ~
piṭiyaaṯu	piṭiyaaṭa
	(verbal adjective)
	piṭikkaaṭaṯu ~
	piṭiyaaṭaṯu
	(nominalised form)
kiṭaykkum	
kiṭayccuṯu	kiṭaycca
(past finite)	(past verbal adjective)
kiṭaykkuṯu	kiṭaykkiRa
(present finite)	(present verbal adjective)
kiṭaykkeellay	kiṭaykka
(past, present finite)	(infinitive)
	kiṭayccaṯu
	(past nominalised form)
	kiṭaykkiRaṯu
	(present nominalised form)
kiṭaykkaaṯu ~	kiṭaykkaaṭa ~
kiṭayaaṯu	kiṭayaaṭa
	(verbal adjective)
	kiṭaykkaaṭaṯu ~
	kiṭayaaṭaṯu
	(nominalised form)
paṭaa(ṯu)	paṭa (infinitive)

Infinitive paṭa occurs only with the emphatic ee: (ceyya) paṭavee paṭaa(ṯu) 'absolutely not'.

The verbal root en

The quotative particle eṉṯu is the past participle form of the verb eṉ 'say'. It takes the past suffix -ṯ- eṉ + ṯ eṉṯ -.

In colloquial speech, (and also in literary Tamil), eṉ is one of the three verb forms, (others being kaaṇ 'see', ṯiṉ 'eat'), that take -p- to form the future tense base. All the three are weak verbs.

All three verbs have alternants with the suffix -v- in their future base: eṉṉuv-, kaaṇuv-, ṯiṉṉuv-.

The past and present bases of eṉ are eṉṯ- and eṉkiR- ~ eṉṉuR- respectively. The conditional form is eṉṯaa (1), and the concessive is eṉṯaalum.

Adjectival or nominalised form of this verb usually occurs only in the past: eṉṯa, eṉṯavaṉ, eṉṯavar, eṉṯaṯu etc. Of these, the forms eṉṯa and eṉṯaṯu are used primarily for the embedding of factual statements.

The present verbal adjective or the present nominalised form of eṉ seldom occurs in Jaffna Tamil speech. If some situation warrants the use of present forms, one may say eṉṯu colluRa (instead of eṉkiRa), eṉṯu colluRaṯu (instead of eṉkiRaṯu). Examples:

caṉṯiraṉ profecar aaki viṭṭaar
'Chandran has become a professor'

caṉṯiraṉ profecar aaki viṭṭaar eṉṯaṯu uṇmay
'That Chandran has become a professor is true'

caṉṯiraṉ profecar aaki viṭṭaar eṉṯa uṇmay
'the fact that Chandran has become a professor'

cantiran profecar aaki vittaar enta cantoocam

'the joy that Chandran has become a professor'

avar ippa mantiri entatay maRantittten

'I completely forgot that now he is a minister'

kunam entavaray unkalukkut teriyumaa

'Do you know a person called Gunam?'

This quotative verb occurs as finite form, but usually only in the past tense. It can occur in all three persons.

naan vaaRen enten

'I said that I would come'

avaa pooka maatten endaa

'She said that she won't go'

niir vaaRen entiir

'You said that you would come'

Jaffna Tamil speakers usually use the present and future finite forms of entu collu- instead of the present and future finite forms of the verb en-.

naankal vaaRam entu colluRam

'We say that we are coming'

naankal vaaRam entu colluvam

'Let us say that we are coming'

Occasional action

The defective verb untu is added to present or past nominalised form of a verb to express that the action indicated by the nominalised form is done from time to time or occasionally.

avar kutikkiRatu untu

'He drinks (occasionally)'

avar kuticcatu untu

'He drank (occasionally)'

Try to do an action

The verb paar 'look' used with a dependent infinitive gives the sense 'try to'.

antap puttakattay vaankap paarunkoo

'Try to buy that book'

Questioning an action (with disgust)

Jaffna Tamil has a verb form made by adding the suffix -aan to the future tense base: varuv+aan, ceyv+aan, poov+aan. (Note that the third person masculine nonhonorific singular suffix in Jaffna Tamil is -an).

The future base + aan is always used with a 'why' interrogative like een 'why', ennattukku 'for what'. It indicates that the speaker is surprised that such a thing should happen, and wonders 'why it did, that is, why on earth'. This form does not change whatever the number, gender, and person of the subject may be:

niinkal een avarukku ellaattayum colluvaan

'Why on earth should you tell him everything?'

avaa enakku een tavaal eḻutuvaan
'Why on earth should she write a letter to me?'

'While an action is done'

'While or when an action is done' is expressed by adding -eekkay ~ -eekkiḻḻay to the infinitive. The final -a of the infinitive is dropped

pookeekkay 'while going'
colleekkay 'while saying'

alla, illay

Jaffna Tamil makes a distinction between the use of alla and illay.

illay is the negative of irukku:

ciini irukku 'There is sugar'

ciini illay 'There is no sugar'

Jaffna Tamil uses alla to emphasize that something is one thing, and not another.

atu ciini alla 'That is not sugar'

avar ṭaakkoṯṯar alla 'He is not a doctor'

illaaṭṭil is the conditional form of illay but only when illay is used in the sense of nonexisting, (that is, when it is the negative of irukku). Thus, it has the sense 'if not there'.

toocay illaaṭṭil vaṭay taaṅkoo
'If there is no dosai, give me vadai'

allaaṭṭil is an alternant for allatu.

toocay allaaṭṭil vaṭay taaṅkoo
'Give me dosai or vadai'

kuṭu 'give' taa 'give'

Jaffna Tamil makes a distinction between the use of kuṭu and taa.

taa is used when either the speaker or the hearer is the recipient. If a third person, that is neither speaker nor hearer is recipient, the verb kuṭu is used.

intap paḻaṯṯay enakkuṯ taaṅkoo
'Give me this fruit'

intap paḻaṯṯay uṅkaḻukkuṯ
taralaam
'(I) can give you this fruit'

intap paḻaṯṯay avarukkuk kuṭuṅkoo
'Give this fruit to him'

Frequent or continuous action

When a past participle is doubled it has the sense that the action is frequent or continuous.

niiṅkaḻ pinṯip pinṯi vaaRiyaḻ
'You are always coming late'

avarayp pooyp pooyp paaruṅkoo
'Go and see him frequently'

'As soon as'

To express the sense 'as soon as', -um is added to past verbal noun. It would imply that the action has just been completed when something else happened.

tampi viḻuntaṯum aḻutaar
'Younger brother cried as soon as he fell'

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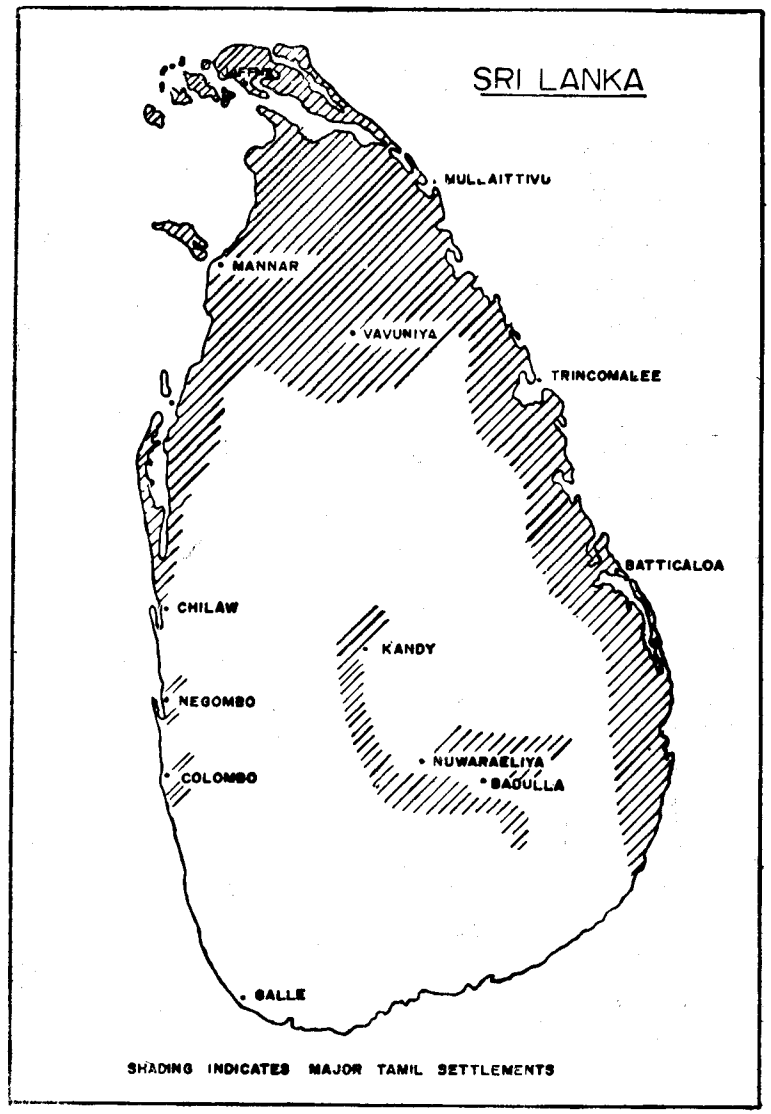
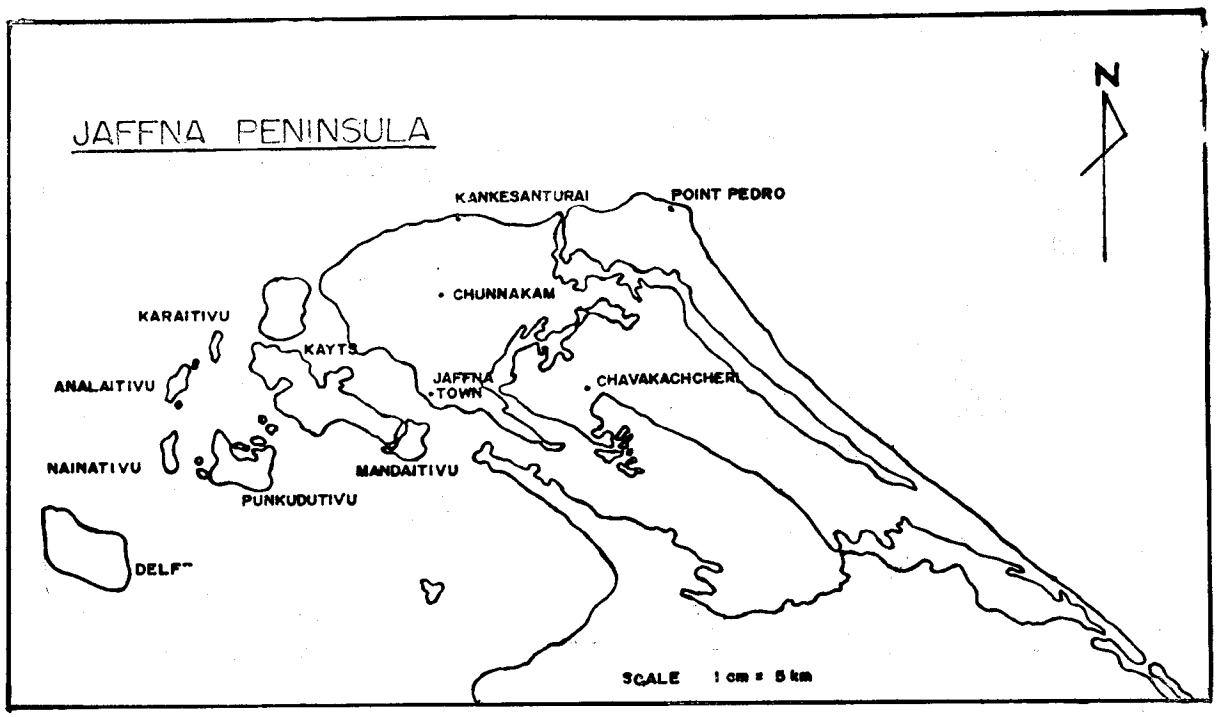


Map of Sri Lanka



Map of Jaffna

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Mahathma Printing Works, Earlalai.

'No scholar is better equipped to provide the much needed description of Jaffna Tamil than Dr S. Suseendirarajah, whose intimate knowledge of the dialect is combined with a firm background in linguistics . . . . . I am confident this first volume of his descriptive grammar dealing with the phonology and morphology, will be seen as a major contribution to the field of Tamil linguistics.'

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