CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW: STUDY OF PRONOUNS

2.0 Introduction

This section is concerned with the review of literature pertaining to the study of pronouns in Tamil in general and that of Modern Tamil in particular. The review of literature done also includes both the aspects of language study viz, description of pronouns in Modern Tamil. As the present research is on the Malaysian Spoken Tamil, the available studies on Malaysian Spoken Tamil also have been reviewed and presented here.

There are quite a number of studies available in the form of research articles and books on Tamil grammar and description of Tamil grammatical structures undertaken and published with reference to the structure and use of Tamil in Tamilnadu (India), Srilanka and to a certain extent in countries like Malaysia, Singapore, etc. There are not only descriptive grammatical studies but also studies related to Tamil historical grammars. Along with these, there are contrastive grammatical studies and comparative linguistic studies (including the importance and significance of Tamil in comparative Dravidian.)

There are studies with particular reference to morphology and syntax of Old Tamil, Medieval Tamil and Modern Tamil. These are exclusive research works undertaken an accomplished with reference to literary and spoken Tamil varieties also. It is also worth mentioning here the availability of Tamil dialect grammars, dialect variations, and dialect dictionaries, social dialects, etc in the form of research articles and books. All these studies are found to be quite useful for various purposes including materials production for

language teaching-learning activity study of language maintenance, language development and language planning, lexicography, semantics, historical linguistic study and so on.

Nouns and verbs of a language play a significant and vital role in the formation of linguistic structures- noun structures and verb structures with dependent categories like adjectives, adverbs and particles. Tamil is not an exception to this general rule.

Nouns morphology of a language is concerned with the structure and use of nouns of different types as inflectional and derivational forms. Nouns are classified in many ways like

1. Common Nouns

2. Pronouns

3. Abstract Nouns

4. Count Nouns

5. Mass Nouns

6. Animate vs. Inanimate Nouns

7. Human vs. Non-Human Nouns

8. Proper Nouns

9. Place Nouns

10. Time Denoting Nouns

11. Kinship Nouns

12. Numerals

13. Action Denoting Forms

14. Quality Nouns

15. Quantity Nouns and so on

Pronouns form part of the noun structure in a language (form the point of view of language). However, one can identify the use of pronouns or their representations in the verb structure also. Pronouns are also represented in the formation of adjectival nouns, verbal nouns, participial nouns, possessive nouns, etc. So, all these structures though explained as morphological constructions, take part in the formation of phrase structures which directly enter into sentence structure.

So, pronouns though found to be simple word (lexical) forms, when they enter into morphological forms or occur in phrases and sentences, their distribution and occurrence in different linguistic and contextual environments seem to be more complex.

The pronouns used in Tamil in the spoken and written varieties have been described applying the present day structural methodology as well as sociolinguistic approach. However, not much research has been carried out in the Malaysian Tamil and that too with particular reference to the Malaysian Spoken Tamil. Hence, there is a need to undertake the study of pronouns applying the structural methodology on the one hand and that of the sociolinguistics methodology on the other hand. Zvelebil (1985) studied the personal pronouns in Tamil and Dravidian from the structural linguistic point of view.

Balasubramaniam (1995) discussed Tamil pronouns in the formation of cases; Suseendirarajah (1978) did work on Batticoala Tamil (of Sri Lanka) with particular reference to pronouns. This study describes the structure of pronouns in a distinct Tamil dialect of Srilanka. G U Pope (1859) studied the common dialect of Tamil in Tamilnadu and made a description of Tamil in which he included a section on Tamil pronouns also. In the year 1989 Lehmann published a Grammar of Modern Tamil and in that work he has described the present day structure of pronouns as well, Meenakshisundaran (1965) published a book on the History of Tamil Language in which he traces the structure of pronouns at different periods of time with reference to the origin and growth of Tamil language from the historical point of view.

Though there are couple of studies with reference to spoken Tamil as used in the Malaysian context no exclusive or exhaustive studies on pronouns have been made so far. Pronouns as mentioned earlier are used quite commonly and frequently in different socio cultural context in the day to day communication, both formal and informal. Hence, there is a need to undertake formalized and objective oriented researches in order to identify all types of pronouns and their occurrences both in the noun and verb structures.

2.1 Study of Grammatical Structures and The Role of Pronouns

Tamil is a highly diglossic language (Ferguson 1959 and Karunakaran, 2005.) Its spoken and written varieties are not only structurally significant but also functionally different. Tamil is a Dravidian language spoken predominantly in Tamilnadu and elsewhere in different regions, states and countries. It is the official language of Tamil Nadu and the

Union Territory of Pondicherry, India as per the constitution of India). It is one of the twenty-two scheduled languages of India and the first Indian language to be declared as a classical language by the Government of India in the year 2004. Tamil is also spoken by significant minorities living in Malaysia, Singapore, South Africa, and Mauritius as well as by the emigrant communities living in different parts of the world. Tamil literature has existed for over two thousand and five hundred years. The earliest epigraphic records found on rock edicts and hero stones dates back to the 3rd century BC. The earliest period of Tamil literature, Sangam literature, is dated from the 300 BCE – 300 CE. Tamil language inscriptions written in 1st century BCE and 2nd century CE have been discovered in Egypt, Sri Lanka and Thailand. The two earliest manuscripts from India, to be acknowledged and registered by UNESCO Memory of the World Register published in 1997 & 2005 were in Tamil. More than 55% of the epigraphical inscriptions – about 55,000 – found by the Archaeological Survey of India are in the Tamil language. According to a 2001 survey, there were 1,863 newspapers published in Tamil, of which 353 were dailies. It has the oldest extant literature amongst other Dravidian languages.

Tamil language has the special claim of being a classical language like Sanskrit, Greek or Latin, and vigorous and modern like the modern Indian languages. Its history can be traced back to the age of Tolkappiyam the earliest extant Tamil grammar generally to 500 B.C. Among the Dravidian language it is least influenced by the Sanskrit language though there is a certain degree of influence in the lexical level.

Pronoun is a word that takes the place of a noun. Pronouns can be in one of three cases: subject, object or possessive. 'A pronoun' usually refers to something/somebody already mentioned in a phrase, sentence or in a text. When we address a person we must choose our words carefully to show the social relation between the addresser and addressee. Each

linguistic community has its own set of verbal behavior specified for each context and situation. A speaker is not free to choose any of the alternatives available ignoring the contextual and linguistic importance in the language. He or she is constrained to use what is most appropriate for that context. While talking with others we have to use different styles. That is, what we want to say, how we want to say and how to select appropriate sentences, types, words and sounds. All are governed by certain ordered set of rules. Content and form always go together. Choice of pronouns and related syntactic and morphological nuances are set apart in many languages, more so in the languages of the tradition-bound societies of India. Pronouns function as substitutes for the nouns. But they also perform various others important functions in through different media and channels of communication. They are used for the sake of brevity and to avoid unnecessary and clumsy repetitions of nouns. Pronouns are said to have syntactic functions in sentences, where they are recognized as one of the word classes. Pronouns are used instead of the name of a person or thing. Friedrich (1964) sums up neatly and explains as follows "Just two short words operating in all speech events that involve two interlocutors signaled of dyadic relationship". Pronoun, as a grammatical item, plays an important role in maintaining and identifying the relationship that holds between individuals in the society.

Thus, pronouns have a greater social relevance. Grammarians classify pronouns into several types, including the personal pronoun, the demonstrative pronoun, the interrogative pronoun, the indefinite pronoun, the relative pronoun, the reflexive pronoun, and collective pronoun, etc. A personal pronoun refers to a specific person or thing and changes its form to indicate person, number, gender and case. A subjective personal pronoun indicates that the pronoun is acting as the subject of the sentence. The subjective personal pronouns are "I," "you," "she," "he," "it," "we," "you," "they." An objective personal pronoun indicates

that the pronoun is acting as an object of a verb, compound verb, preposition, or infinitive phrase. The objective personal pronouns are: "me," "you," "her," "him," "it," "us," "you," and "them." The demonstrative pronouns are "this," "that," "these," and "those." "This" and "that" are used to refer to singular nouns or noun phrases and "these" and "those" are used to refer to plural nouns and noun phrases. Note that the demonstrative pronouns are identical to demonstrative adjectives, though, obviously, we use them differently. It is also important to note that "that" can also be used as a relative pronoun.

When verbs show action in a sentence, a suffix is added to the verbs that match up with the subject of the sentence. Each pronoun is associated with a verb suffix. This means that if a pronoun appears in a sentence, then its corresponding verb suffix is added at the end of the verb form. An interrogative pronoun is used to ask questions. The interrogative pronouns are: "who," "whom," "which," "what" and the compounds formed with the suffix "ever" ("whoever," "whomever," "whichever," and "whatever"). Note that either "which" or "what" can also be used as an interrogative adjective, and that "who," "whom," or "which" can also be used as a relative pronoun. Relative pronoun is used to link one phrase or clause to another phrase or clause. The relative pronouns are "who," "whom," "that," and "which." The compounds "whoever," "whomever," and "whichever" are also relative pronouns.

2.2 Tamil Pronouns: Review

The history of the Tamil Language authentically reports the existence of well formalized grammatical treatises and descriptions of various types at different periods of time, starting from the 3rd century B.C. There are references to the effect that there were grammatical works even before the period of Tolkappiyam, the earliest extent Tamil grammar now

available. The history of the Tamil language also shows the existence of grammars written by ancient native grammarians, followed by expert commentators on ancient grammatical treatises of the medieval period, European missionaries and native scholars starting from 1680 A.D.(Meenakshisundaran, 1965) who produced traditional grammars and linguistic descriptions.
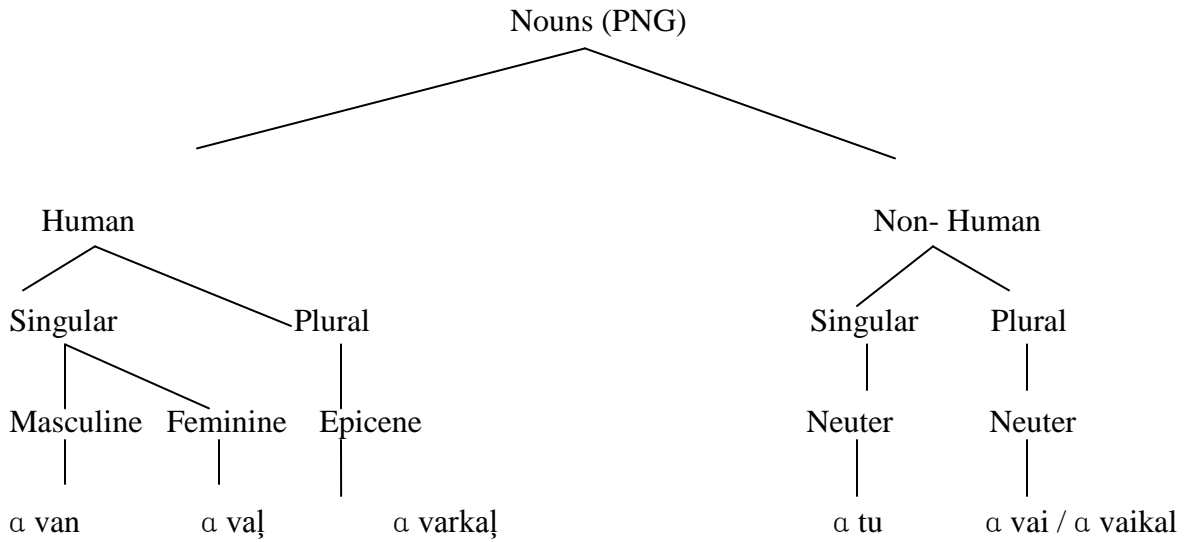
Of these grammars and descriptions produced by them, some of them present the phonological and morphological structures and descriptions whereas some others present both morphological and syntactic structures in a well systematized way. There are linguistic descriptions of Old Tamil, Medieval Tamil, Modern Tamil, Spoken Tamil, Inscriptional Tamil and so on produced at different periods of time (Meenakshisundaran, 1965)

Study of pronouns could be approached from the following points of view and perspectives:

1. Historical point of view

2. Comparative Linguistics Perspective

3. Descriptive Point of View

4. As written vs. spoken

5. From the Point of View of Language Use

A critical review of some the contributions made by researchers and scholars applying the modern linguistic methodology has been presented in the following pages.

Nuhman (1999) classifies person-gender-number in Tamil as follows:

Nouns (PNG)

Human   Non- Human

Singular   Plural   Singular   Plural

Masculine   Feminine   Epicene   Neuter   Neuter

ɑ van   ɑ vaḷ   ɑ varkaḷ   ɑ tu   ɑ vai / ɑ vaikal

1) Human singular has an additional marking in the modern written Tamil.

2) Epicene Plural form <u>ɑ varkɑ ḷ</u>

3) For ɑ vɑ i there is a variant ɑ vaikaḷ 'they (non-hum.' (those)

All these are distant demonstrative pronouns. There is another set of demonstrative pronouns called 'proximate demonstrative pronouns' (with the base i-)

     eg : ivɑ n , ivɑ l , ivɑ r , ivɑ rkɑ l, itu , ivɑ i (ivɑ ikaḷ)
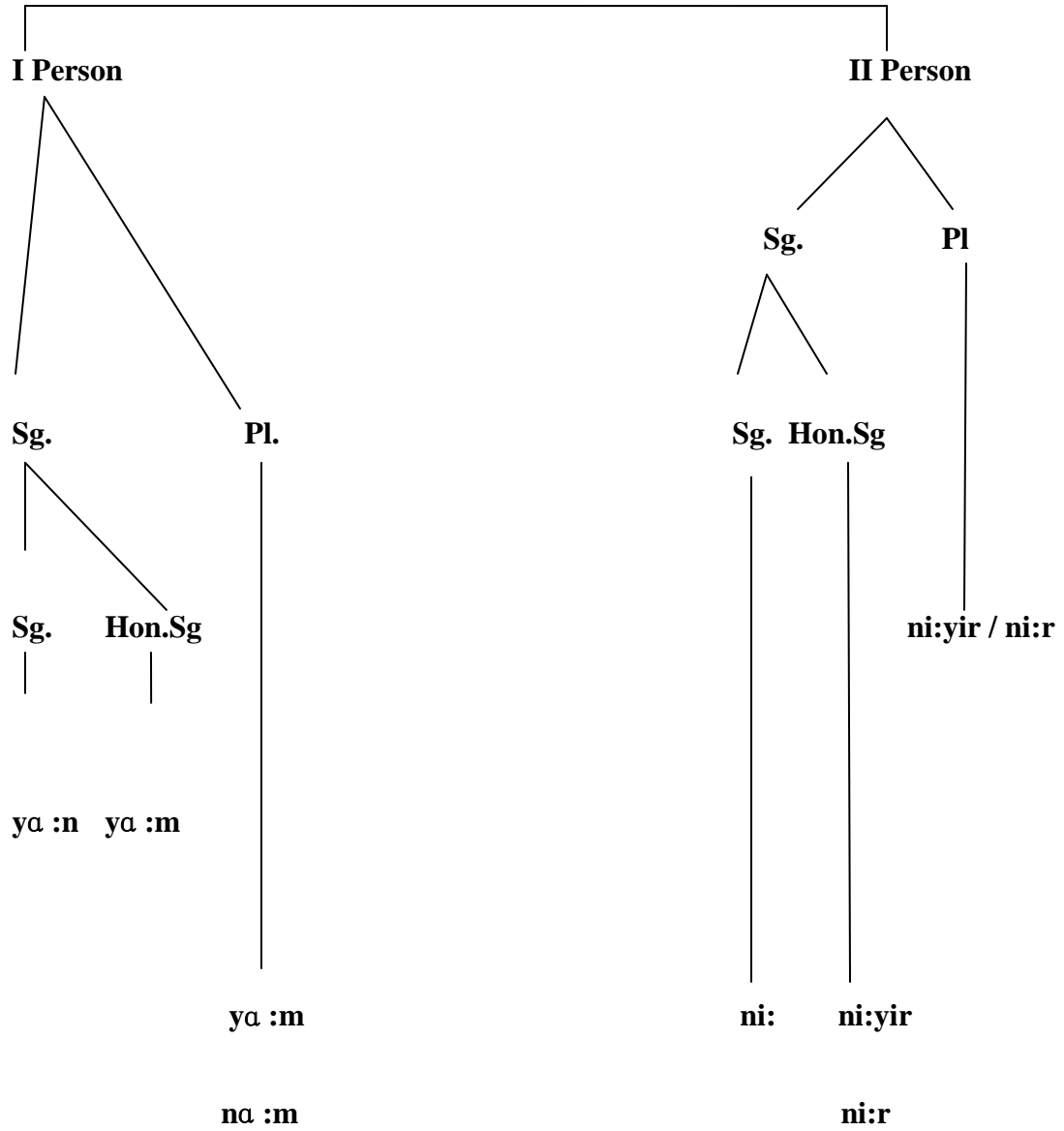
Interrogative Pronouns with e- and yɑ :- are also formed in Tamil

evɑ n   ,   evɑ l   ,   evɑ r   (yɑ :r)

evɑ rkaḷ , etu   , evɑ i / evɑ ikaḷ

The classification of pronouns as reflected in the grammatical treatise Tolkappiyam shows the following pattern (with reference to person-number-gender)

I Person

Sg.   yɑ :n   pl.   yɑ :m / nɑ :m

                          variants:

                          (en-)   (en- / nɑ m -)

II Person

Sg.   ni: ni:yir / ni:vir

                          variants:

                          (nin-)   (num-)

III Person

                          tɑ :n   tɑ :m

                          variants:

                          (tɑ n-)   (tɑ m-)

The language of cɑ ńkam Period shows the following pattern of pronoun structure (Sakthivel, 1984)

Pronouns

I Person   **II Person**

                                        Sg.   **Pl**

Sg.   **Pl.**   **Sg.** **Hon.Sg**

Sg.   **Hon.Sg**

                                                              ni:yir / ni:r

yɑ :n   yɑ :m

                ya :m   ni: ni:yir

                nɑ :m   ni:r

III Person

Demonstratives		Non- Demonstratives

Demonstratives

Human   **Non- Human**

Sg.   **Pl. (Hon.Sg)**   **Sg.**   **Pl.**

ɑ tu / itu   ɑ vai/ ivɑ i

Mas.Sg.   **Fem.Sg.**   **Hon.Sg.**

ɑ vɑ n   ɑ vɑ l   ɑ vɑ r

ivɑ n   ivɑ l   ivɑ r

Non- Demonstratives

Sg.   **Pl.**

Sg.   **Hon.Sg**

tɑ :n   tɑ :m

tɑ :m
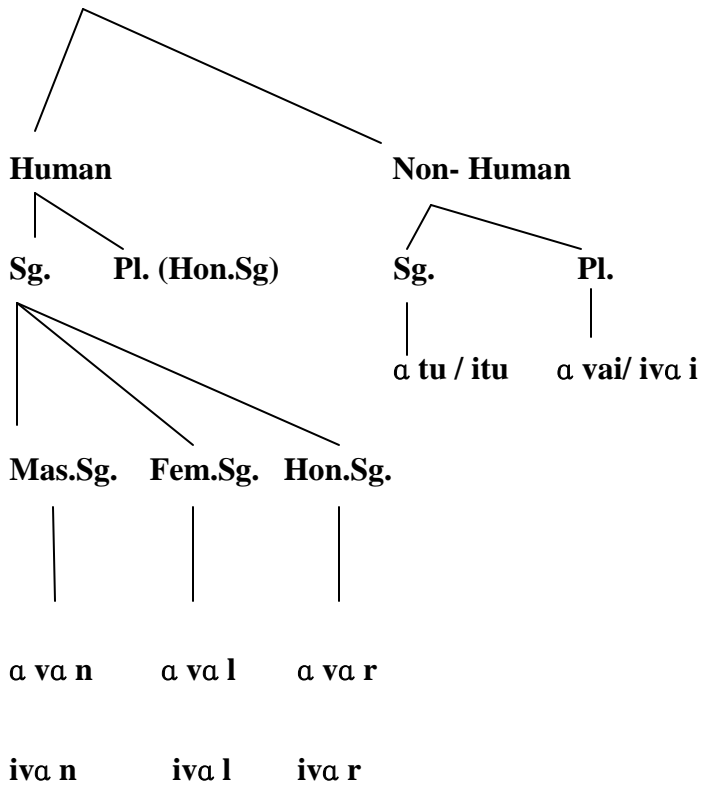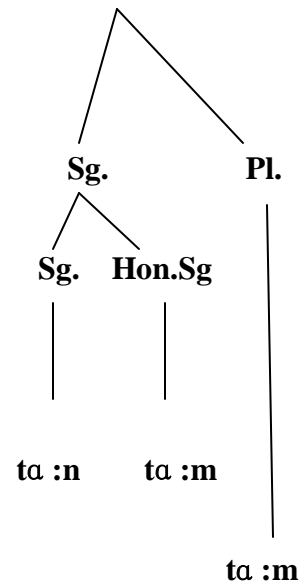
During the cańkam period the distinction between the first person inclusive and exclusive plural was not that clear. Even the so called third person pronoun forms tɑ :n and tɑ :m occurs as a emphatic markers in certain expressions.

Structure and use of pronouns during the Post- caṅkam period presents certain additional forms of pronouns.

Singular

I Person Singular: nɑ :n   /   yɑ :n   'I'

II Person Singular: ni:r   /   um   (umakku)

Plural

I Person: yɑ :ṅkaḷ / eṅkaḷ

II Person: nuṅkaḷ

III Person: tɑ ṅkaḷ

2.3 The Need for Research on Malaysian Spoken Tamil

As far as the Malaysian Tamil is concerned, there is no complete description of the Malaysian written or spoken Tamil now available. So, this is an attempt, to start with and produces description of different grammatical structures of the Malaysian Tamil.

The investigator has chosen Malaysian spoken Tamil variety for this purpose, and has initiated the study on Pronouns in Malaysian Spoken Tamil a study in language structure and language use applying the modern methodologies in structural linguistics and sociolinguistics. This would form part of the morphological and syntactic description of Malaysian Spoken Tamil.

2.4 Conclusion

The younger generation of speakers uses Tamil, Malay and English in different formal and informal domains of language use. Tamil has personal pronouns which distinguish first, second, and third persons (both in singular and plural forms). The first plural may be inclusive (i.e. the addressee is included in the reference, as in naambal / nambal) or exclusive (i.e. speaker excludes the addressee, as in na:nka). Furthermore, Tamil has honorific masculine/feminine singular pronouns in third person. As for the demonstrative pronouns, a base form indicates whether one is referring to something proximate (i-, as in idu 'this thing'), distant (a-, as in adu 'that thing'), or whether a question is being asked about something or someone (e-, as in edu 'which thing'). The Tamil pronoun is also followed by a case marker as in the noun. Pronouns in the nominative case may often be deleted from a sentence on the condition that the semantic information can be recovered from the agreement marker of the verb. Thus, in a sentence like naan pooreen 'I am going,' the naan can be deleted but the full meaning of the sentence could be conveyed. One could easily identify code switching or code mixing phenomenon in the use of spoken Tamil in different socio cultural contexts.