

Sociolinguistic Description of Case Formation in Malaysian Spoken Tamil of the Younger Generation

A Study in Social Stratification of Language

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Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940** Vol. 13:6 June 2013

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1. Introduction

Case is a grammatical category and its value reflects the grammatical function performed by a noun or pronoun in a sentence. Nouns take different inflected forms depending upon what case they are in. In other words, case can be defined as a system of marking dependent nouns for the type of relationship they have with their head forms (Clackson, 2007: 91).

However, in Tamil noun structure, various suffixes are added to the noun bases to indicate different kind of relationships between the noun and the other parts of sentence. This kind of forms helps to explain the syntactic relationship between noun and verb in a sentence. So the case formation is done by adding a suffix or a postposition or sometimes the word order. The addition of suffixes in Tamil sometimes requires certain phonological changes to explain the concerned forms. There are at least 8 productive case forms like objective case, instrumental case, sociative case, dative case, locative case, ablative case, possessive case and purposive case.

However, in some of the grammatical descriptions nominative and vocative forms are included as case forms though their function is more syntactical, functional or contextual.

2. Objectives of the study

The main objectives are:

- i) To present a well formalized morphological description for the noun structures in Malaysian Spoken Tamil with particular reference to case forms.

Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940** **13:6 June 2013**

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- ii) To present a sociolinguistic description of all the case forms which show variations conditioned by different social variables in the formation and occurrence of case forms in the Malaysian Spoken Tamil of the younger generation.

3. Research questions raised

- i) What are all the case forms found in the morphological structure of Malaysian Spoken Tamil and the conditions for the occurrence of all such forms?
- ii) What are all the sociolinguistic variations found in the Spoken Tamil of younger generation and how they are conditioned by using social variables such as age, gender, economic status, educational level etc?

4. Research methodology used

The present study makes use of the following research methods:

- i) Methods of morphological (structural) description.
- ii) Methodology for the study of sociolinguistic variations making use of the social stratification models (Labov 1996, 1981 and Social Differentiation models as proposed in Trudgill 1972, Trudgill and Hannah 2008 and Karunakaran and Sivashanmugam, 1982.

5. Data for the study

Data for this study includes all those materials collected by the researcher through the field work using pre planned questionnaires, administered to 60 informants selected using stratified sample exclusively for this purpose.

However, the researcher being a native speaker of Tamil in Malaysia made use of the observation method also and recorded some of the variations and occurrences of case forms in the Malaysian Spoken Tamil variety practised by the younger generation. The researcher has also recorded impromptu or naturally occurring conversations from the television and radio programmes.

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This refers to speakers' creating conversations in real time. According to Halliday (1985:46) a paradigm form of spoken language is a natural spontaneous conversation. If it is delivered on the spot, and hence, is a genuine instance of natural conversation. The data collected includes phrases, sentences and short discourses of different types. During the data collection the researcher not only transcribed the data by herself but also audio recorded the same as it would help to listen again, recheck and make due corrections for the purpose of standardisation of the actual data.

She also made use of the question and answer method to collect those responses also to fill the gaps and make it more useful for the analysis. All the collected data were processed in such a way they become fit for the analysis.

6. Sampling Methods used for this study

In order to select the informants for this study a stratified random method was used. The following description presents all the relevant details pertaining to the selected sample.

7. Scope of this study

Though there are other variables, for the purpose of present study only the following social variables were chosen viz., education, age, gender and economic status. All such variations explain the speech pattern of the younger generation.

The following case formation explains the pattern and conditioning of all the variations of allomorphs taking into account the social variables selected.

8. Significance of the study

A study of this kind would be quite useful in the presentation of a well formalized sociolinguistic description of the spoken variety of Malaysian Tamil. As morphology is the core grammar, in order to present all those variations attested this kind of study would be more useful to

achieve adequacy and efficiency in the use of the present day Tamil, especially the communicative Tamil in Malaysia.

Noun Morphological Structures

Case forms

Morphological Structure

$$NB + \left(\begin{array}{c} \left\{ \begin{array}{c} \text{PNG Suf.} \\ \text{Pl. Suf.} \end{array} \right\} \\ LM_1 \end{array} \right) + (LM_2) + \text{Case Suf.}$$

1. Nominative case

Nominative case is not marked by any suffix in Tamil. However, when case suffixes occur with pronouns, there is a restriction. That is only one set of alternants are found to take case suffixes. They are:

en- (I Pr. Sg.), nam- (I Pr. Incl. Pl.), eṅkaḷ - (I Pr. Excl. Pl.), on- (II Pr. Sg.), oṅkaḷ - (II Pr. Pl.).

But, case suffixes are directly added to the third person pronoun bases (distant- proximate forms).

When impersonal verb forms such as ve:ṇṭum (want) - ve:ṇṭa:m (don't want) etc. occur in the predicate of the sentence, the subject is always in the dative case or instrumental case form of the noun / pronoun.

eg. tampi vaṇṭa:n [tampi vaṇḍā:] 'little brother came

avaru maruttuvaru 'he (hon.) is a doctor'

enakku paḷom ve:ṇum [enakku paḷō ve:ṇū] 'I want fruit'

tampikki mala:y teriya:tu [tambikki mala:y teriya:ḍu]

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‘ little brother doesn’t know malay language’
avaḷa:le muṭiyū ‘ she can (do)
na:n oru tamīl a:ciriyaru ‘ I am a Tamil teacher’
avuṅke aṅke po:na:ṅge ‘ they(hum.) went there’
aṅṅa maruttuvaru rompe nallavaru ‘ that doctor is a very good person’

2. Accusative / objective case

{-e}

1. ∞ -e , 2. ∞ -iye / -eye, 3. ∞ - ∅ (unmarked)

∞ -∅ (unmarked) with non-human nouns only and it is free with –e

a-tu - ∅ > atu ‘that it’ (obj.)

atu –e > ate ‘that it’ (obj.)

2. ∞ –iye / -eye occurs after pronoun bases en-, on- etc.

en- iye > enniye ‘me’

on- eye > onneye ‘you’ (obj.)

3. ∞ -e occurs elsewhere.

appa: -e > appa:ve ‘father’ (obj.)

maram - kaḷ-e > maraṅkaḷe ‘trees’ (obj.)

3 Instrumental case

{ - a:le}

1. ∞ - a:le, 2. ∞ - koṅṭu , 3. ∞ - vecci

∞ - koṅṭu occurs in free variation with – vecci after the non-human nouns.

katti - koṅṭu ‘ with knife’

katti - vecci ‘ with knife’

∞ -a:le occurs elsewhere.

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aṇṇan – a:le ‘by the older brother’

nampaḷ - a:le ‘by us’

kal –a:le > kalla:le ‘with stone’

4. Sociative case

{o:te}

1. ∞ - o:te / - o:ta, 2. ∞ - ku:te / -ku:ta 3. ∞ - ko:te / -ko:ta

All the three allomorphs occur in free variation after the human nouns.

en- o:te / -o:ta enno:te / enno:ta ‘with me’

en- ku:te / -ku:ta > eṇ ku:te / eṇ ku:ta

en - ko:te / -ko:ta > eṇ ko:te / eṇ ko:ta ‘along with me’

amma: - o:te > amma:vo:te ‘with mother’

on- ko: ta > oṅko: ta ‘with you’(sg.)

∞ - o:ta / -o:te occurs elsewhere.

ma:tu - ṭ- o: te/a > ma:ṭto: te / ma:ṭto: ta ‘with the cow’

maram- tt – o: ta > maratto:ta / maratto:te ‘with wood’

5. Dative case

{-kku}

1. ∞ -kku, 2. ∞ -akku, 3. ∞ -ukku 4. ∞ -kki

1. ∞ - akku occurs after the pronoun bases en-, on-, nam-, and tan-

en – akku > enakku ‘to me’

on – akku > onakku ‘to you’ (sg.)

tan – akku > tanakku ‘to oneself’

nam – akku > namakku ‘to us’ (incl.)

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2. ∞ -ukku occurs after noun bases ending with consonants other than /y/

oṅkaḷ- ukku > oṅkaḷukku ‘to you’ (pl.)

u:r – ukku > u:rukku ‘to India’

ceṅkal –ukku > ceṅkallukku ‘for the bricks’

3. ∞-kki occurs after noun bases ending with front vowels and /y/

tuṇi – kki > tuṇikki ‘for the clothes’

ve:le –kki > ve:lekki ‘for job’

na:y –kki > na:ykki ‘for the dog’

4. ∞-kku occurs elsewhere

atu –kku > atukku ‘for that’

ko:ylu –kku > ko:ylukku ‘to the temple’

6. Locative case

Locative case and ablative case have the same type of structural and functional significance.

Locative case forms:

{-le}

1. ∞ -le /-la ~ -ule / ula, 2. ∞ - a:ṇṭe / a:ṇṭa 3. ∞ - aṇṭe / aṇṭa , 4. ∞ - kiṭṭe / - kiṭṭa

5. ∞ - ṭe / ṭa

1. ∞ -le /-la occurs with non-human nouns only

u:ru – le / la > u:rle / u:rla ‘in India’

kampam –tt- ule > kampattule ‘in the village’

atu- le / la > atule / atula ‘in it’

~ -ule / -ula is in free variation with ∞ -le/ la

na:ṭu - ṭ - ule / - la > na:ṭṭula ‘in the country’

1. - kiṭṭe / - kiṭṭa occurs with human nouns and it is in free variation with ∞ -aṇṭe /- aṇṭa

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∞ - a:ṅte / a :ṅta, ∞ -te / -ta

en - kiṭte > e:ṅ kiṭte ‘with me’

avar - kiṭte/ta > avar - te /avarte ‘with him’

avan - aṅte > avanaṅte / avanaṅta ‘with him’

ma:ma: kiṭte / kiṭta ‘with maternal uncle’

7. Ablative case

Ablative case has an additional form - iruṅtu / -ruṅtu added to the locative case suffixes. Historically this addition can be explained as an addition of a particle or post position to the locative case markers referred above.

{ -leruṅtu }

1. ∞ - leruṅtu / -laruṅtu,

2. ∞ - uleruṅtu / -ularuṅtu,

3. ∞ - kiṭṭeruṅtu / -kiṭṭaruṅtu,

4. ∞ - aṅṅeruṅtu / -aṅṅaruṅtu

5. ∞ - ṭeruṅtu / -ṭaruṅtu

6. ∞ - a:ṅṅeruṅtu / -a:ṅṅaruṅtu

1. ∞ - leruṅtu / -laruṅtu [freely occurs with -uleruṅtu / -ularuṅtu]

vi:ṭṭuleruṅtu ‘from the house’

atuleruṅtu ‘from it’

kampattuleruṅtu ‘from the village’

aṅta na:ṭṭuleruṅtu ‘from that country’

2. ∞ - kiṭṭeruṅtu / -kiṭṭaruṅtu occurs with human nouns and it is in free variation with others

(as stated in the locative case forms)

eṅkiṭṭeruṅtu ‘from me’

ennaṅṅaruṅtu ‘from me’

e:ṅ kiṭṭeruṅtu ‘from me’

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avar- ʒeruntu ‘from him’

avan - aŋʒeruntu ‘from him’

ma:ma: kiʒʒaruntu ‘from the maternal uncle

8 Possessive case

{-o:ʒe}

1. ∞ -o:ʒe / o:ʒa
2. -∅ (unmarked)
3. ∞ -u

-u occurs after the noun bases ending with –am, (C) V: ʒu- , -Ru and it is in free variation with

∞ -o:ʒe / o:ʒa and ∞ -∅ (unmarked)

vi:ʒu vele ‘price / cost of the house’

∞ -o:ʒe / o:ʒa occurs elsewhere and it is in free variation with –∅ (unmarked)

avaɭ -o:ʒe ‘her’

tampi- o:ʒe > tampiyo:ʒe ‘little brother’s’

tampi (-∅) manaivi > tampi manaivi ‘little brother’s wife’

9 Purposive case

(The occurrence of a particle –a:ŋʒi after the dative suffix –kku in the formation of purposive case form is noticed.

eg. onakka:ŋʒi ‘for your (sg.) sake’

tampikka:ŋʒi ‘for the sake of little brother’)

{- kka:ka}

1. ∞ -kka:ka / -kka:ke
2. ∞ -akka:ka /-akka:ke
3. ∞- ukka:ka / -ukka:ke

All the three alternants occur in the same way as in the case of the dative case form.

i) - akka:ka /-akka:ke with pronoun bases

ii) -ukka:ka / -ukka:ke occurs after the noun bases ending with consonants.

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	iii)	-kka:ka / -kka:ke	occurs elsewhere
e.g.	onakka:ke		‘for you’(sg.)
	avanukka:ka		‘for him’/ ‘for his sake’
	pillekka:ke		‘for children’/ ‘for the sake of children’

10 Vocative formation

Vocative form is an expression of address in different contexts- formal or informal. There are forms showing respect or honour or status occurring either before or after the vocative expression formed with noun as base.

Vocative expressions in Tamil have sociolinguistic conditionings or pragmatic value. They go with politeness-honorific-status-closeness showing forms as well.

The following processes are found in the formation of vocative forms / expressions.

$$\text{NB} + \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{suf.} \\ \text{processes} \end{array} \right\}$$

i) Lengthening of the final vowel

e.g. *tampi* > *tampi:* ‘hi! little brother’

amma: > *amma:* + (further lengthening) ‘hello mother’

ii) Addition of –e:

kaṇṇu > *kaṇṇe:* ‘hi! Beloved’

muttu > *mutte:* ‘hi! Loved one’

iii) Deletion of word final /-n/ and lengthening of the preceding vowel

kaṇṇan ‘name of a male’ → *kaṇṇa:* ‘hello! Kaṇṇan’

iv) Addition of pronoun (in honorific form)

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Pronoun used: (a) vaṅka(l) + e: > periyavaṅkaḷe ‘hello! sir’

v) Use of kinship terms (as address / politeness expressions)

makan –e: > makane: ‘oh (my) son’

aṅṅan- e: > aṅṅe: ‘to address elders (male)’

amma: ‘to address women/ females’

Link Morphemes

In the structure of case forms, there is a need to have link morphemes mainly to link the noun bases with the following case suffixes, and this process is a must in Tamil.

It is possible to add case suffixes :

- i) Directly to the noun bases
- ii) After the addition of one or more link morphemes.
- iii) After the addition of PGN suffixes

eg.

kaṅ - ukku > kaṅṅukku ‘for the eye’

maram-tt-e > maratte ‘tree’ (obj.)

kay –n- a:le > kayna:le ‘by hand’

structure:

NB + case suf.

NB + LM + case suf.

NB + PGN suf. + case suf.

NB + PGN suf. + LM + case suf.

{-tt-}

1. ∞ -tt- , 2. ∞ -t-, 3. ∞ -R- 4. ∞ -an, 5. ∞ -n-

1. ∞ -tt- occurs after the NBs ending with –am (except pronouns)

maram-tt-e > maratte ‘tree’ (obj.)

2 ∞ -t- occurs after the NBs of the pattern (C) V: tu

na:tu -t- ule > na:ttule ‘in the country’

3 ∞ -R- occurs after the NBs ending with -R-

vayRu -t- ule > vayttule ‘in the stomach’

4 ∞ -an- occurs after the pronoun bases

atu –an- a:le > atana:le ‘by / because of that’

5. ∞ -n- occurs elsewhere

kay-n- a:le > kayna:le ‘by hand’ (using)

Social stratification and study of linguistic variations

Social stratification in the formation of case forms in the spoken Tamil of Malaysian Younger Generation. All those variations or conditioned by the following stratifications made. All the identified variations are presented in the form of variable rules (V.R.). Each variable rule has a variable, two or more variants and the conditions based on the social stratifications mentioned above.

- SV1 - male informants 13-17 years old
SV2 - female informants 13-17 years old } Secondary school students
SV3 - male informants 18 – 30 years old
SV4 – female informants 18 – 30 years old
SV5 - educated, young professionals 24 – 30 years old
SV 6- Tamil educated 18-30 years old
SV7 - all groups (SV1-SV6)

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SV8- less fluent in Tamil

1. **Accusative case /Objective case**

{-e}

Structure: NB + (LM) + Acc. Suf.

1.

-e, 2. ∞ - iye / -eye, 3. ∞ - ∅ (unmarked)

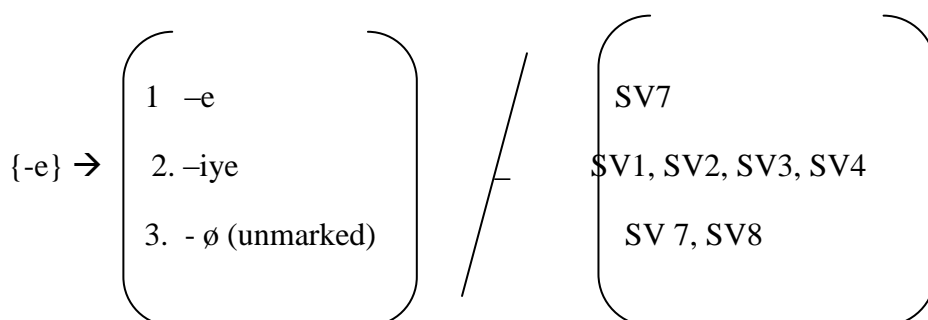
eg.

ate eṭu ‘take that’

enniye ku:ppuṭa:te (don’t call me)

vi:ṭu kaṭṭu ‘ build a house’

Variable Rule -1



2. **Instrumental case (by, with, because of)**

Structure : NB + (LM) + Ins. Suf.

{- a-le}

1. ∞ - a:le. 2. ∞ - koṇṭu, 3. ∞ - vecci

e.g.

kattiya:le veṭṭinā: ‘he cut with knife’

katti koṇṭu veṭṭinā: ‘ he cut with knife’

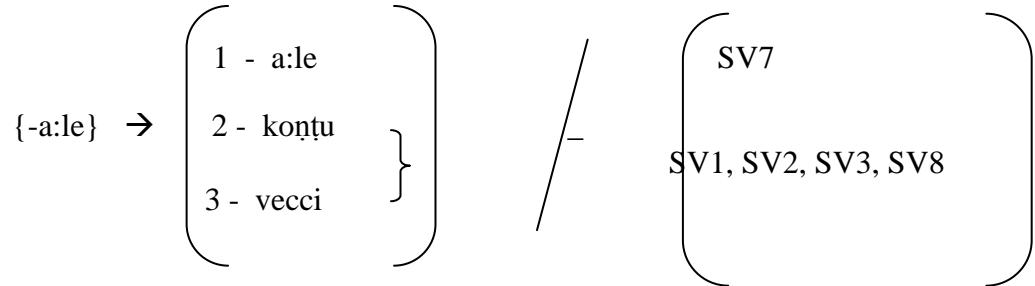
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katti vecci veṭṭinā: ‘ he cut with knife’

Variable Rule -2



3 Sociative case (with, along with)

Structure : NB + (LM) + Soc. Suf.

{- o:ṭe}

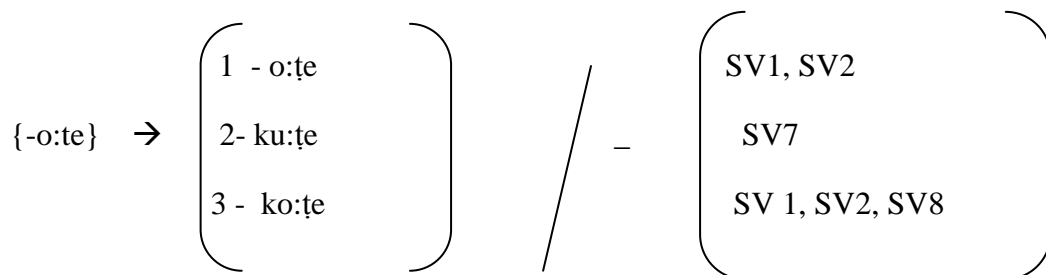
1. ∞ - o:ṭe / o:ṭa, 2. ∞ - ku:ṭe / ku:ṭa 3. ∞ - ko:ṭe / ko:ṭa

eg. ammavo:ṭe po:nen (ponē) ‘ I went with mother’

avañ ku:ṭe pe:cunen (pe:cunē) ‘ I spoke with him’

ku:ṭṭa:liko:ṭe kaṭekki po: ‘ go to the shop with friend’

Variable Rule -3



4. Dative case (to, for)

{-kku}

1. ∞ -kku, 2. ∞ - akku, 3. ∞ - ukku 4. ∞ - kki

eg.

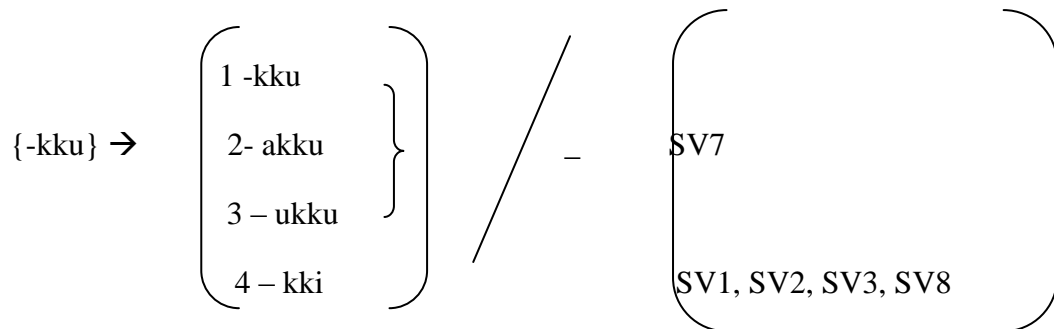
atukku ‘for that’

enakku ‘to me’

onkaḷukku ‘to you’

ve:lekki ‘to work’

Variable Rule -4



5. Locative case

Structure : NB + (LM) + Loc. Suf.

{-le}

1. ∞ -le / la , 2. ∞ -ule/- ula 3. ∞ - kitte / - kitta , 4. ∞ - te / -ta

Allomorphs 1&2 occur with non- human nouns.

Eg.

vi:ṭṭule / vi:ṭṭula ‘in the house’

nela:vule / nela:vula ‘in the moon’

atule / atula ‘in that’

Allomorphs 3, 4, 5 and 6 occur with human nouns.

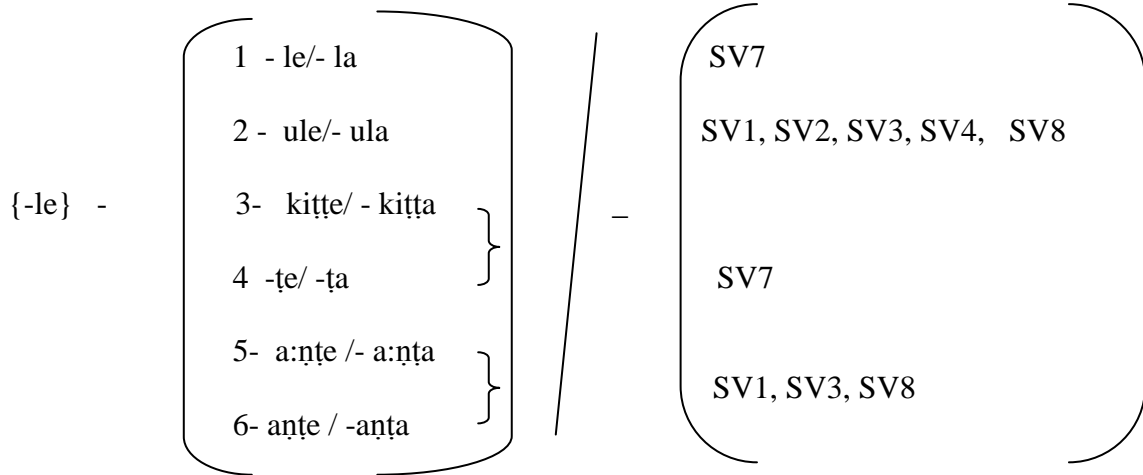
Eg. e:ñkiṭṭe / e:ñkiṭṭa (with me)

ku:ṭṭa:liṭṭe / ku:ṭṭa:liṭṭa ‘with friend’

avanaṇṭe / avanaṇṭa ‘with him’

tampiya:ṇṭe / tampiya:ṇṭa ‘with little brother’

Variable Rule -5



6. Ablative case

{- leruṇṭu }

1. ∞ - leruṇṭu, 2. ∞ - uleruṇṭu, 3. ∞ - kitteruṇṭu 4. ∞- anteruṇṭu,

5. ∞ - teruṇṭu / - ṭaruṇṭu and 6. ∞ - a:ṇṭeruṇṭu / a:ṇṭaruṇṭu

e.g.

vi:ṭṭuleruṇṭu ‘from the house’

kampattuleruṇṭu ‘from the village’

eñkiṭṭeruṇṭu ‘from me’

avanaṇṭeruṇṭu ‘from him’

avarṭeruṇṭu ‘from him/hon.’

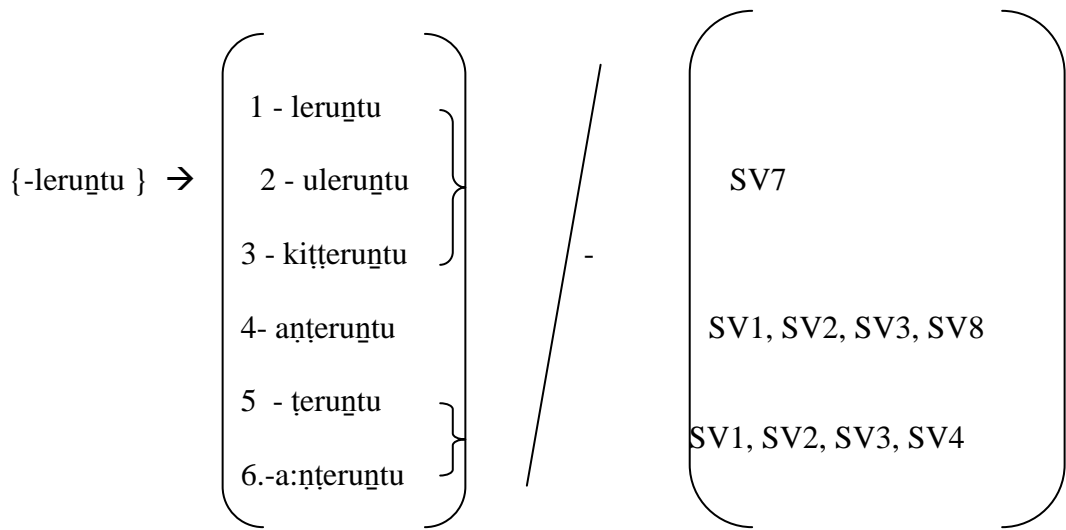
vi:ṭṭa:ṇṭeruṇṭu ‘from the house’

Variable Rule -6

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7. Purposive Case (for, for the sake of)

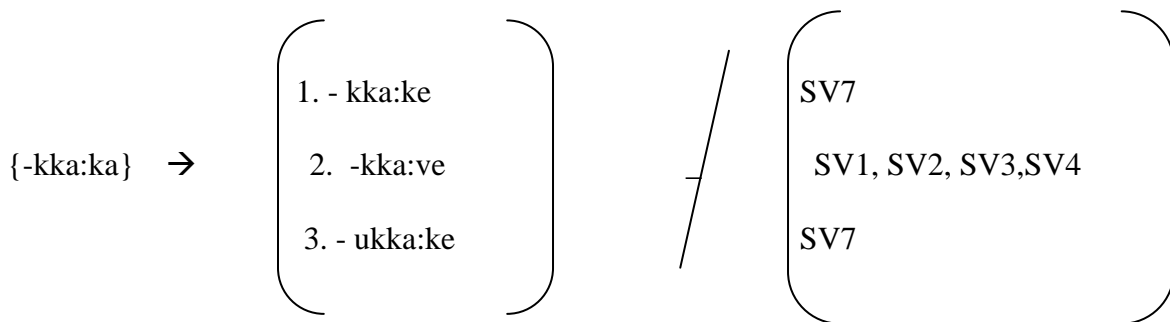
Suffix:

{-kka:ka/e}

Variants: [1. ∞- kka:ke, 2. ∞-kka:ve, 3. ∞- ukka:ke]

- e.g. unakkka:ke ‘for you’
 tampikka:ve ‘for little brother’
 avanukka:ke ‘for his sake’

Variable Rule -7



Conclusion

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The sociolinguistic variation study presented with particular reference to case formation in the spoken Tamil of the younger generation brings out interesting correlations.

- i) The groups which come under SV7 share variations in the formation of most of the Tamil case forms
- ii) Groups SV1, SV2, SV3 share the occurrence of suffixes in 5 of the case formations.
- iii) The group SV8 share features only three of the case formations
- iv) SV7 represents groups SV1 to SV6 and the stratification made shows the following interesting development in language use. That is the educated and young professionals who come under SV5 and SV6 share many features in the formation of case forms. This may be due to the fact that they are exposed to both the varieties namely spoken and written very well.
- v) The stratification also brings out the fact that those who have less fluency in Tamil (SV8) don't share with other groups many of the case formations.
- vi) Both male and female informants of the groups SV1 SV2, SV3 and SV4 share several features in the formation of cases. However, groups SV1, SV2, SV3 share the maximum features. So, a complete sociolinguistic description of morphology when completed would reveal interesting sociolinguistic correlations and characteristic features.

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Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 13:6 June 2013

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