



Realization of Tamil Gender into English

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Introduction:

According to Eckert et al (2003) a language is a highly structured system of signs, or combinations of form and meaning. Gender is embedded in these signs and in their use in communicative practice in a variety of ways. It can be the actual content of linguistic sign. For instance in Tamil, the third person singular pronouns distinguish between irrational (*atu* 'it') rational (male and female) (*avaL* 'she', *avan* 'he', *avaLai* 'her', *avaLukku* 'to her', *avanai* 'him', *avanukku* 'to him'). The suffixes *-kaaran*, *-kaari* are added into a generic noun to generate male or female nouns. respectively *veelaiikkaaran* 'servant', *veelaiikkaari* 'servant maid', *kaTaikkaaran* 'shop keeper'(male), *kaTaikkaari* 'shop keeper female'). Lexical items, as well, refer directly to male and female (*aaN*, 'male' – *peN* 'female'), *ciRuvan* 'male child' – *ciRumi* 'female child', *makan* 'son' *makaL* 'daughter'. In other cases, the relation between a linguistic sign and social gender can be secondary. For instance, the adjectives *aTakkamaana*, 'obediently' *paNivaana* 'humility', both mean something like 'obedient' but they have background meanings corresponding to cultural ideals of 'obedient' for females only. Similarly the terms *tuniccalaana*, 'boldly' *viiramaana* 'bravery' have background meanings corresponding to males only.

The adjectives are generally used for gender-specifically or to invoke male or female associated properties. Someone is described positively as *viiramaana peN* 'bravery girl' the description *paNivaana paiyan* 'humility boy' is generally applied with a derisive sneer. There are many means by which we color topics with gender colored by which we invoke gender and discourses of gender even when we are ostensibly talking about something else.

Generally most of the researchers saying that language used to colour ourselves as it is talked. In this field linguistic resources can be used to present oneself as a particular kind of



person; to project an attitude or stance; to affect the flow of talk and ideas. And these can involve gender in a myriad of ways. Not only the pronunciation and grammatical patterns but also the tone and pitch of voice, patterns of intonation, choice of vocabulary, can signal gendered aspects of the speaker's self presentation. They can also signal the speaker's accommodation to, or enforcement of, the gender of other interactants in a situation. At the same time, the association of these linguistic devices with feminine or masculine ideals makes them potential material to reproduce – or to challenge – a conservative discourse of femininity or masculinity. For example, using a soft, high pitched voice invokes the connection between female gender and smallness and fragility. Avoiding profanities or using euphemistic substitutions such as fudge or shoot, invokes the connection between female gender and propriety. Thus, the paper deals with the number of genders in Tamil and how they are realized into English mentioned by Penelope et al (2003).

Aim:

The aim of this paper is to explain the number of genders found in Tamil and how they are realized into English.

Phonology:

As far as linguists particularly phoneticians are concerned the phonological level of language structures the units of sound that constitute linguistic form. The phonological system of every language is based in a structured set of distinctions of sound (phonemes). The differences between words in Tamil like *maN* 'mud', *kaN* 'eye', *maram* 'tree', *karam* 'hand' *taram* 'quality' lie in the differences in the first segment of each, the consonant phonemes /m/, /k/, /p/ and /t/ phonemes do not themselves carry meanings, but provide the means to make distinctions that are in turn associated with distinctions in meanings. These distinctions are thus based not on the actual quality of the phoneme but on the oppositions among phonemes.

Mc Connell (2003) has mentioned that our perception of sound segments is hardly mechanical. We adjust readily to voices of different people and to different accents, something



that designs of speech recognition systems have had trouble getting machines to do. And we do not adjust simply to what we hear but to what we expect to hear.

In addition to segmental phonology, prosody, which includes the tempo and the variations in pitch and loudness with which utterances are produced, is rich with social potential. Rhythm and tune clearly carry important gender meanings and are certainly the objects of gender stereotype.

Gender Represented in Noun Morphology:

Gender in noun morphology can be classified on the basis of two factors. The forms thus classified are as follows:

- (i) Selection forms / Inherent forms
- (ii) Derivational forms

Selection / Inherent form

Some of the Masculine and Feminine forms are inherent forms, since there is no overt morpheme found in to represent gender those forms.

Examples:

Common nouns

Masculine	English equivalents of Tamil
maaNavan	‘student (male)’
aaciriyar	‘teacher (male)’
vaNNaan	‘dhobi (male)’
aḷakan	‘handsome boy’
aaN	‘male’
kaaLai	‘bull’
ceeval	‘rooster; cock’
arasan	‘king’
iLavarasan	‘prince’
tooḷan / naNpan	‘friend (male)’
talaivan,	‘hero’



celvan	‘master’
tiru	‘Mister’
piramaccaari	‘bachelor’
maNamakan	‘bridegroom’
Feminine	English equivalents of Tamil
maaNavi	‘student (female)’
aaciriyai	‘teacher (female)’
vaNNaatti	‘dhobi (female)’
aḷaki	‘beautiful girl’
peN	‘female’
pacu	‘cow’
kooli	‘hen’
araci	‘queen’
iLavaraci	‘princess’
tooli	‘friend (female)’
talaiivi	‘heroine’
celvi	‘Miss, (mistress) / Ms’
tirumati	‘Mrs. /Ms’
kanni(peN)	‘spinster’
maNamakaL	‘bride’

Kinship terms:

Masculine	English equivalents of Tamil
appaa	‘father’
maamaa	‘uncle’
periyappaa	‘uncle’ (father’s elder brother)’
cittappaa	‘uncle’ (father’s younger brother)’
taattaa	‘grandfather’



aNNan	‘brother (elder)’
tampi	‘brother(younger)’
Feminine	English equivalents of Tamil
ammaa	‘mother’
maami	‘aunt’(mother’s brother’s wife)
attai	‘aunt’ (father’s sister)
periyammaa	‘aunt’ (mother’s elder sister, father’s elder brother’s wife)
citti/cinnammaa	‘aunt’(mother’s younger sister, step mother)
paaTTi	‘grandmother’
akkaa	‘sister (elder)’
tañkai	‘sister (younger)’

Gender Represented in Verb Morphology:

In Tamil, the finite verbs (tensed) Change according to gender distinctions of the subject noun. If the noun is masculine, the verb which co-occurs with noun changes in accordance with the noun.

Tamil	English
avaL iru kuḷantaikaLaip peRRaaL .	‘She delivered two babies’.
avan vayalil eer uḷutaan.	‘He ploughed the field’.
leela neeRRu pushpavatiyaanaaL.	‘Leela attained puberty yesterday’.
paRavaikaL paRakkinRana.	‘Birds fly’.
kamala na:RRu naTukiRaaL.	‘Kamala transplants the seedling’.

There are however a limited number of ‘verbs’ which because of their habitual collection with nouns one classifies them as a ‘Feminine verb’ or ‘Masculine verb’

This situation arises when the context is hampered around reproduction. It is not justified by saying that

Tamil	English
*kannan oru kuḷantaiyayp peRRaan.	*Kannan delivered a child.



*kumar pushpavati aanaan.

*Kumar attained puberty.

Here, the gender is marked, as is the case of *peru* 'deliver' and *ulu* 'plough' are used in a restricted context as a feminine and masculine verbs respectively.

The various verb forms and their classification manifested in the use of gender and also the usage of Tense, Person, and Number (PNG marker)

Tamil verbs are generally conjugated by adding the required tense marker with the PNG marker to the root. There are some irregular verbs like non-finite and some finite verbs such as imperative, Appellative etc which do not show the gender distinction.

The finite verbs and with the PNG suffixes *-aan* 'masculine third person singular', *-aaL* 'feminine third person singular' and *-atu* 'neuter third person singular' and *-aar* 'third person singular for common gender' in Tamil. The first and second persons do not have the gender distinction.

e.g.

Masculine	English equivalents of Tamil
paTittaaan	'studied (he)'
naTantaan	'walked (he)'
koTuttaan	'gave (he)'
Feminine	English equivalents of Tamil
paTittaaL	'studied (she)'
naTantaal	'walked (she)'
koTuttaal	'gave (she)'
Common (Human)	English equivalents of Tamil
naTantaar	'walked (he /she)'
kuTittanar	'drank (he /she)'
ooTinar	'ran (he / she)' etc.
Common (neuter)	English equivalents of Tamil
naTantana	'walked (they non- human)'
kuTittana	'drank (they non - human)'



naTantatu	‘walked (it)’
kuTittatu	‘drank (it)’
ooTina,	‘ran (they non – human)’
ooTiyatu	‘ran (it)’

Gender in Grammar:

Eckert et al (2003) have also dealt with some grammatical morphemes having their content. And one of the most obvious ways in which language can reinforce gender is by requiring the use of gender morphology. The gender of various people involved in an utterance. In Tamil, noun and verb morphology have explicit gender content. It has separate pronominal and verb forms in personal pronouns depending on whether a human addressee or subject is male or female:

Tamil	English
vanteen	‘came (I)’
vantoom	‘came (we)’
vantaay	‘came (you, non-hon. singular)’
vantiir	‘came (you, hon. singular)’
vantaan	‘came (he)’
vantaal	‘came (she)’
vantatu	‘came (it)’

In using third person singular pronouns only to refer to a specific person, Tamil forces the speaker to index the referent’s sex: to say “Someone called but he did not leave his name” is to ascribe male sex to the caller.

Linguists talk about grammatical gender when a language has noun classes that are relevant for certain kinds of agreement patterns. For example,

In Tamil and other Dravidian languages, the forms of plural suffixes are described by the gender classes. The noun is modified by the form of adjectives and also the noun is an antecedent



which the form of pronoun. According to general principles the noun classes have to do with their properties like shape and intimacy but not like sex. In fact, grammatical gender has nothing at all to do with social gender in some Dravidian languages.

Lexicon:

Eckert et al (2003) have also concentrated on lexicon which is a repository of cultural preoccupations. It is as a result the link between gender and the lexicon is deep and extensive. The lexicon is also the most changeable part of language. It is an important site for bringing in new ideas. Because lexical items have content in different domains, different language users have access to somewhat different lexicon: Linguists have their specialized terminology and other professionalisms have theirs. The gendered division of labor is likely to produce gendered patterns in the precise lexical inventories speakers can access.

Grammatical morphemes like pronouns are more stable than lexical nouns and verbs. They come and go only gradually. The traces in a grammar of gender may reflect more the preoccupations of earlier eras than they do the culture of those currently using a particular language. Marks of gender in the lexicon are often more complex and multilayered than those found in gender morphology. The linguistic resources seem to come ready-made. Like gender however, they all have a history. Resources we deploy come to be embedded in language through use. In Tamil, we have masculine generics, pairs of words that reflect the social asymmetry of male and female. It also includes the semantic non equivalences.

Semantic non-equivalences:

These are pairs of terms that historically differentiated by sex alone, but which, over time, have gained different connotations (e.g. of status or value) and in some cases different denotations.

e.g.

Masculine	English equivalents of Tamil
naTikan	‘actor’
ciRuvan	‘boy’



paaTakan	‘singer (male)’
kataanaayakan	‘hero’
kanavan	‘husband’
Feminine	English equivalents of Tamil
naTikai	‘actress’
ciRumi	‘girl’
paaTaki	‘singer (female)’
kataanaayaki	‘heroine’
manaivi	‘wife’

Gender Represented in Syntactic Structures:

Syntax is the study of ways in which words are arranged together in order to make larger units such as phrases, clauses, sentences and discourse.

Person, Gender and Number in Tamil syntax have a selection role. The verb in the syntactic constructions changes according to the gender distinctions of the noun. If the noun which functions as a subject of a verb is Masculine, the verb which co-occurs with that noun in the syntactic constructions will also be masculine. If the noun which functions as a subject of a verb is feminine the verb in the syntactic constructions will also be feminine. If these two gender categories occur, the verb form in the syntactic construction will be in common gender and in plural number.

Sentence is divided into NP (subject) and VP (predicate). The formal representations of gender do vary according to the gender in Tamil. In the sentence, *raaman siitaavaip paarttaan* ‘Raman saw Sita’ the verb in predicate form shows gender agreement according to the subject forms only. If the subject is masculine, the verb in predicate also shows masculine form, provided the object is followed by a case marker. It shows the subject and verb agreement.

If the subject of a verb is the co-ordinate noun with singular nouns of the same gender the verb takes the common gender in plural form if they are animate nouns. Here, the singular nouns of different gender are co-ordinate and function as subject of a verb, the verb takes the common



gender in plural as *vantanar* ‘came (they)’ if the nouns animate. If they are inanimate nouns the verb takes neuter gender in plural form (*vantana*).

Tamil	English
raamanum kannanum vantanar .	‘Raman and Kannan came’.
raamanum siitaavum vantanar.	‘Raman and Sita came’.
aaTum maaTum irukkinrana.	‘There are a goat and a cow’.

Discourse:

Linguists generally, use the term discourse to refer to the study of structure and meaning that goes beyond the level of the sentence. In other words, discourse analysis focuses on the deployment, in the building of text, of the kinds of linguistic resources. While the levels of grammar are quite themselves bounded, the move into the structure of their actual deployment brings us into a large of possibility that extends indefinitely. The study of discourse structure can be restricted to principles of combination in carefully bounded texts, such as the analysis of turn – taking in a single exchange, or the use of connectives to create coherence among sentences. It can include study of the gender of agents in a group of different text books, novels etc. or it can be expended to take in the use of language in the building of a relationship over a life time. Utterances are sequenced and connected to produce a continually emerging text – whether spoken or written and whether individual or collaborative-that may be interrupted and extend for years, and may include ever-changing participants. The discourse context, therefore, expands indefinitely in time and social space. For this reason while phonologists generally agree about the purview of phonology and the syntacticians generally agree about what syntax includes, discourse analysts disagree quite markedly about how to define their enterprise.

Discourse analysis in the more restricted sense focuses on patterns of syntactic combination which, like levels of grammar below the sentence level, can be studied without attention to meaning beyond what is actually being said in the bounded text itself. For example, we can examine the productive used of *anaal* ‘but’ *enave* ‘therefore’ and *eenanil* ‘because’ as



general linguistic strategies to connect propositions, without knowledge of the larger social context. In the following two sentences, the use of *anaal*, *enave* and *eenanil* single different relations between the two propositions as follows,

- ma_{lai} peytukoNTiruntatu enave avaL kuTai konTuvantaaL.
'It was raining, therefore she brought an umbrella'.
- ma_{lai} peytukoNTiruntatu anaal avaL kuTai koNTuvaravillai'.
'It was raining, but she did not bring an umbrella'.

In the case of *enave* 'therefore', the connection is casual, where as *anaal* 'but' signals that the second proposition is in some way unexpected given the first.

These relations between the two propositions would hold no matter what the speech situation and the speaker's attitudes towards the events described.

Semantics and Pragmatics:

Semantics deals with how the meanings of grammatical morphemes and lexical items are combined to yield the propositional meanings expressed by phrases, clauses and sentences. It also deals with the meanings of the basic units, the grammatical and lexical morphemes. The lexical morphemes have the closes ties to cultural concerns and are the most changeable word meanings are much less closely tied to a linguistic system than the meanings of grammatical morphemes and of syntactic structure. Basically, semantics offers interpretations of morphological and lexical units and their syntactic combinations. In the case of lexical morphemes, the interpretations may be incomplete or relatively unspecific, and we rely on social context to fill in the meaning. It helps to explain how social and cultural meanings enter the lexicon so readily. Thus, semantics has less to say about word meanings become these meanings more often depend on language as used in social practice. Semantics, roughly, assigns the literal propositional content of utterances. Pragmatics enters the picture to argument the interpretations assigned by the semantic component of the grammar, to deal with the ways in which what is conveyed, for e.g.

- avaLai maatiri unnaal naTikka / cirikka muTiyumaa?



‘Can you act / laugh like her’?

It is understood as an insult. What is literally said is evaluative neutral, but the derogatory message arises from background assumptions brought into play in interpreting the point of uttering those words in particular context. The fact that communication goes beyond what the language system specifies is also part of the reason that language which remember includes not just the system but everything involved in its use enters so crucially into the social construction of gender.

Semantics and pragmatics play a central role in helping participants to understand how language is being put to work in discourse, in particular in recognizing the content of what people are communicating to one another. Semantic and pragmatic interpretation are assumed by discourse analysis, although, they show only part of what is going on as people pursue their agendas through talk. Social meaning draws on much else. Some of the rest has to do with other aspects of accompaniments of each utterance: tone of voice, phonetic detail, body language, and so on. Some has to do with connections to texts produced in other times and places, with patterns that emerge only when we look at the longer discourse picture. But we can not ignore semantics and pragmatics in thinking about the role of language in constructing gender.

Conclusion:

From the present study, the following observations have been arrived:

- a) Most of the lexis in Tamil and English are similar to express the gender distinction.
- b) Some of the forms like common terms, professional terms, kinship terms, and name of animals in Tamil have the gender distinction,
- c) Whereas their equivalents in English do not have the gender distinction.
- d) The classification of gender (i.e. masculine, feminine, common, and neuter) is similar in both Tamil and English.
- e) The distinction in neuter gender i.e. rational and irrational is found in Tamil.
- f) In Tamil, Subject – Verb agreement is represented by person, number and gender distinction, whereas in English, it is represented by only number distinction.



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