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## Current Usage of Traditional Grammatical Rules of Tamil Language

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### Abstract

When referring to traditional grammatical rules of Tamil, Tolkappiam, the traditional Tamil grammatical text produced by the eminent grammarian Tolkappiar, which contributes to the development of studies on Tamil language and critical review of Tamil literature, strikes our thoughts. Most of the subsequent grammatical works were adaptations of Tolkappiam and they also introduced some new changes in compliance with later language developments.

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Grammar illustrates the language structure in terms of script, lexis and semantics. In a language, words signify the structural patterns and characteristics of language. The methodology adopted in this study involves documentary analysis. This study focuses on glide occurring in the process of sandhi and analyses its features.

**Key Words : Glide, Internal Sandhi, External Sandhi, Hiatus**

## **Introduction**

Linguists opine that the function of glide is to prevent hiatus. Tamil grammarians have prescribed a rule pertaining to the presence of glide to fuse two vowels occurring in sandhi. Sandhi is of two types, namely, Internal Sandhi and External Sandhi. Internal sandhi takes place within a word (e.g. *ko+il = koyil / kovil*) whereas external sandhi takes place between words (e.g. *avale + alahi = avaleyalahi*).

Caldwell (1956) elucidated that generally in all Dravidian languages, hiatus caused by two vowels is prevented by certain consonants *t>;a>; k;>H* and *s;*. In Tamil language only *a;* and *t;* are considered as glides. According to Sanmugadas (1997), in order to maintain a harmonious nature of words in Tamil, glide occurs enabling the distinctiveness and articulation of adjacent vowels without any change.

As per the comments of Tolkappiar, when there are two adjacent vowels, the glide does not emphasize sandhi and it can be assumed that sandhi is not regarded a necessary process in this situation.

Like other Dravidian languages, in Tamil also, at some time in the past, the necessity of sandhi with glide was felt.

Another famous Tamil grammarian, Nachchinarkiniar demonstrated thus on the application of glide.

*“avai yaharamum vaharamum” enpathu muthanool pattikkodum*

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*“udampadumeiye yaharavaharam  
uyir munmoli vatuunkalaiyana “  
“iruthium muthalum uyirnilai vatine  
urumena molia udampadumeiye”*

Hence Nachchinarkkiniar pointed out that *yahara* glide influences the *ihara*, *i:hara* and *aihara* among the vowels and the others are influenced by *vahara* glide. He, in support of his view, gives the following examples.

*yahara* glide:

*i -kili + alahithu =kiliyalahithu*  
*i: - kuri: + oppuval = kuri:iyoppuval*  
*ai – vatai + atamahalir = vatayatamahalir*

*vahara* glide:

*a – vila + alahithu = vilavalahithu*  
*a: - pala + alahithu = palavalahithu*  
*u – kadu + alahithu = kaduvalahithu*  
*u: - poo + alahithu = poovalahithu*  
*o: - ko + alahithu = kovalahithu*  
*au – kau + adainthathu = kauadainthathu*

The above examples represent the external sandhi in which two words are combined. Nachchinarkkiniar has provided two formulae which scholars believe to be formulae designed by Ahastya, a renowned Tamil saint. In this context, the following remarks are quite appropriate to mention.

“Only a very few formulae of Ahastya have been available. They have been identified then and there in the old prose texts. Pavananthapillai, a Tamil scholar, has edited such formulae under the title, “Perahathiathiraddu”. In view of their language style and their interpretation, they can be assumed as post-Sankam creations. It is proper to propose that a later grammatical work produced by some unidentified savant with the intention of highlighting the antiquity and glory of Tamil language and Tamil literature has been claimed to be the work of Ahastya, as a post-Sankam work (Sivarajapillai, N.D,

as quoted in Vithianathan, 1968). Thus Vithianathan argued that Ahastiyam cannot be regarded as a text of Sankam period.

### **Application of Glide**

Veluppilai (1978) explained that this thought prevailed not only in Tolhapia's period but later periods also. He also showed examples, regarding the application of glide.

### **Example**

Within a word: *ko ilukku, kaani aalar, thisai or, aa iitam, thevatadi aar*  
Between noun and case particle : *irai il, thirunelveli il, netti il, katai il, kai il, mudi odu*  
He went on saying that until 10<sup>th</sup> century A.D., Pallava and Pandya inscriptional tradition also adopted the above norm. He added that in the medieval inscriptional Tamil, viz.. before and after the release of Nannool, a reputed Tamil grammar text, glide either occurs or not occurs in external sandhi. Also the language found in the cave inscriptions believed to have belonged to the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries B.C resemble the language existing during Tolhapia's period, regarding the occurrence of glide.

Mahadevan (1966) interpreted the words, "*vel- arai nikamatoor koti oor*" found in the inscription discovered at Mankulam, Madras as "(The) members of (the) Mercantile Guild of velara gave (this). In this inscription, in the phrase, '*nikamatoor koti-oor*', two vowels , and x occur adjacently. He points out that some features can be found in Sri Lankan inscriptions also. For instance, in the inscription found in Mannar, the writing, *irai ili* and in the inscription in Mannar *iranda itaththu* are observed in Sri Lanka.

Veerasolium, a text by Puththamitra in the Chola period also explains glide. This text does not refer to the function of glide directly but demonstrates that glide occurs when *vahara* affix and *yahara* affix occur as vowel occurs in front of vowel end. In this same period, a grammatical work, "Neminatham" written by Gunaveera Pundit with Tolhapiam as its primary source of data repeats what is elucidated about glide in Tolhapiam. This text too does not refer to glide directly.

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Nevertheless Saint Pavananthy who focused on formula 140 in Tolhapium, its interpretation, and its current usage claimed that direct occurrence of glide is a necessary requirement, in his grammar text Nannool.

*“i, i:, ai vali yavum enai  
uyir vali vavum, emun ivvirumaium  
uyir varin udampadumeiyahum”*

Further, there are evidences that in classic Tamil, the occurrence of glide was determined on optional basis and there was flexibility in adopting the rule “*i, i: and ai vali yavum*”

Following are examples of *yahara* glide.

*mani + alahithu = manialahithu  
thee + alahithu = theeyalahithu  
panai + alahithu = panaiyalahithu*

Examples of *Vahara Udampadumei*

*vila + alahithu = vilavalahithu  
pala + alahithu = palavalahithu  
kadu + alahithu = kaduvalahithu  
poo + alahu = poovalahu  
no + alahu = novvalahu  
ko + alahithu = kovalahithu  
kau + alahithu = kaualahithu*

Examples of *Yahara, vahara* glides before *eharam*

*avane + alahan = avaneyalahan  
ei + elam = eivelam  
se + uluthathu = sevuluthathu  
se + adi = seyadi / sevadi*

The above are examples of external sandhi. It is understood from these examples that both were treated as glides by Tamil grammarians. However when considering acutely the entire Tamil usages, not only *a;* and *t;* but consonant sounds *k;>H* and *s;* are **Language in India** [www.languageinindia.com](http://www.languageinindia.com) ISSN 1930-2940 13:12 December 2013  
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also found to function as glides and these sounds occur mostly in colloquial Tamil. Since colloquial language does not entail grammar, these sounds have not been given emphasis.

In the view of Nachchinarkkiniar, the use of glide which was an essential practice in the pre –Tolhapia period became obsolete during his period and in the following period. It turned out to be an essential practice again in the Chola period. Yet from 1<sup>st</sup> century up to date the insertion of glide has been abandoned and Sanmugadas (1997) remarked about it thus.

“In the current written form of Tamil, owing to the influence of printing industry and English language, the practice of writing words separately could be observed. At instances when a vowel occurring finally in a word and a vowel occurring initially in the following word occur, the insertion of glide is omitted. Examples pertaining to this can be quoted from the texts of Vithiananthan (1968), Velupillai (1978) and Kanapathippillai (1964). Following are some examples from these texts.

thamakke utiya  
iyainthe inthu  
pala uyatia  
maatankalai arayum  
oli idam  
puthu oli  
ahaiyinala athanai  
iru eddu pirathihal  
intha aiyar

## **Conclusion**

The above stated authors used separate words without combining them. In the 11<sup>th</sup> century A.D., the glide which did not occur in the process of internal sandhi between words is felt to occur essentially today. For example, instead of ko il (Temple) the usage koyil or kovil exists today. Hence this study implies the necessity of making suitable modifications to the existing language structure as language grows modernized according to current needs.

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