

## Compound Nouns in Tamil

Dr. M. Baskaran  
Research Guide  
(09952903960)

S. Sridevi  
Research Scholar in Education  
(09444782278)

Bharathiar University, Coimbatore, INDIA

*Transliteration followed in this paper is noted in the Table below*

### Consonants:

|     |     |     |     |     |     |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| க்  | ங்  | ச்  | ஞ்  | ட்  | ண்  |
| /k/ | /ŋ/ | /c/ | /ñ/ | /ɖ/ | /ɳ/ |
| த்  | ந்  | ப்  | ம்  | ய்  | ர்  |
| /t/ | /n/ | /p/ | /m/ | /y/ | /r/ |
| ல்  | வ்  | ழ்  | ள்  | ற்  | ண்  |
| /l/ | /v/ | /ʒ/ | /ɻ/ | /ɽ/ | /ɳ/ |

### Vowels:

|     |     |      |      |     |      |
|-----|-----|------|------|-----|------|
| அ   | ஆ   | இ    | ஈ    | உ   | ஊ    |
| /a/ | /ä/ | /i/  | /i:/ | /u/ | /u:/ |
| எ   | ஏ   | ஐ    | ஓ    | ஔ   | ஔள   |
| /e/ | /ë/ | /ai/ | /o/  | /ö/ | /au/ |

### Grantha letters

|   |   |   |   |     |      |
|---|---|---|---|-----|------|
| ஜ | ஹ | ஸ | ஷ | க்ஷ | ஸ்ரீ |
| J | H | s | ṣ | kṣ  | Śrī  |

### Introduction

In English, words, particularly adjectives and nouns, are combined into compound structures in a variety of ways. And once they are formed, they sometimes metamorphose over time. A common pattern is that two words — fire fly, say — will be joined by a hyphen for a time — fire-fly — and then be joined into one word — firefly. In this respect, a language like German, in which words are happily and immediately linked one to the other, might seem to have an advantage. There is only one sure way to know how to spell compounds in English: use an authoritative dictionary.

There are three forms of compound words:

the **closed form**, in which the words are melded together, such as firefly, second hand, softball, childlike, crosstown, redhead, keyboard, makeup, notebook;

the **hyphenated form**, such as daughter-in-law, master-at-arms, over-the-counter, six-pack, six-year-old, mass-produced;

and the **open form**, such as post office, real estate, middle class, full moon, half sister, attorney general.

### Concept of Compound word in Tamil Language

The concept of Compound word is different from that of English. Compound noun (word) is a noun in which more than one word is combined to act as a noun. Normally two words of which the succeeding word is noun. The preceding word may be noun, verb, adjective, or adverb. Traditional grammar view this as /tokainilai ttoṭar/ (தொகைநிலைத் தொடர்) which means a phrase comprising of two words between which a marker is hidden and implicit. For the purpose of reference in this Thesis they are labeled as Marker Implicit Phrases abbreviated as MAIM.

### Compound words in Traditional Grammar

Traditional grammarians have identified six / tokainilai ttoṭar/s (தொகைநிலைத் தொடர்கள்) in Tamil language. They are:

1. /veṛṛumaittokainilai ttoṭar/ (வேற்றுமைத் தொகைநிலைத் தொடர்) usually labeled as /veṛṛumaittokai/ (வேற்றுமைத் தொகை): (MAIMCA – MAMIM Case marker).
2. /vinaittokainilai ttoṭar/ (வினைத் தொகைநிலைத் தொடர்) usually labeled as /vinai ttokai/ (வினைத்தொகை): (MAMIMTE – MAMIMTE – MAIM Tense marker).
3. /paṇputtokainilai ttoṭar/ (பண்புத் தொகைநிலைத் தொடர்) usually labeled as /paṇputtokai/ (பண்புத்தொகை): (MAMIMQU – MAMIM quality marker).
4. /uvamaittokai nilai ttoṭar/ (உவமைத் தொகைநிலைத் தொடர்) usually labeled as /uvamaittokai/ (உவமைத்தொகை): (MAIMSI – MAMIM simile marker)
5. /ummaittokai nilai ttoṭar/ (உம்மைத் தொகைநிலைத் தொடர்) usually labeled as /ummaittokai/ (உம்மைத் தொகை) (MAIMCO – MAMIM conjunction marker)
6. /aṇmoḷi ttokai nilai ttoṭar/ (அன்மொழித் தொகைநிலைத் தொடர்) usually labeled as /aṇmoḷi ttokai/ (அன்மொழித் தொகைநிலை)

Of these the last one is a phrase evolved from any one of the other five and its meaning is syntactically inferred and the morphological structure is like that of the /toṭar/ from which it is evolved.

The fifth one is a two word in which the conjunction marker suffixes /um/ (உம்) are implicit and hidden not only in the first word but also in the second.

For example, /mälai kalai/ (மாலை காலை)

This /um/ has the function of 'and'. Hence it treated as two separate words and not as single entity as the other /toṭar/s. Hence /tokainilai toṭar/s which are treated as compound are fall under the following types namely /verṛumaittokai/ (MAIMCA) , /vinaittokai/ (MAIMTE) , /paṇputtokai/, and /uvamaittokai/

For example the phrase or compound word /püñkoṭi/ (பூங்கொடி) in the morphological aspect it is /uvamaittokai/ (உவமைத்தொகை-MAIMSI). But the use of /püñkoṭi/ in the sentence /püñkoṭi vantaḷ/ (பூங்கொடி வந்தான்) , /püñkoṭi/ means a person with an attribute /püñkoṭi/. Hence it is labeled /uvamaittokai purṭupiraṇṭa aṇmoli ttokai/ (உவமைத் தொகைப் புறத்துப் பிறந்த அன்மொழித்தொகை). Such /aṇmoli ttokai/s are in use in the language that are the extension of the the five /tokainilaittoṭar/s namely, /verṛumaittokai/ (MAIMCA), /vinaittokai/ (MAIMTE), /paṇputtokai/ (MAIMQU), /uvamaittokai/(MAIMSI), /ummaittokai/(MAIMCO).

There is another type of compound word or /toṭar/ called /urupum payaṇum uṭaṇ tokkatokai/. This means that a phrase of two words between which a marker and another word are implicit or hidden to reveal meaningful utterance. This is illustrated with the following description.

/mälai väñkiṇṇ/ (மாலை வாங்கினேன்) can be expanded as /mälaiai väñkiṇṇ/ (மாலையை வாங்கினேன்). Here the objective case marker /ai/ (ஐ) is implied. That is hidden in between the two words /mälai/ and /väñkiṇṇ/. Therefore it is /verṛumaittokai/ (வேற்றுமைத் தொகை).

In the sentence /pümälai väñkiṇṇ/ (பூமாலை வாங்கினேன்), the compound word /pümälai/ can be expand not as /pü+ äi +mälai/ (பூ+ ஆல்+மாலை) but as / pü+ äi + seyapaṭṭa +mälai/ (பூ + ஆல்+ ஆன+ மாலை = பூவாலான மாலை). /äi/ is case marker of ordinal number III. /urupum payaṇum uṭaṇ tokkatokai/s related to other /tokai/s also found in the language.

As explained above compound words fall under any one of the following types.

1. /verṛumaittokai/ (MAIMCA), (வேற்றுமைத் தொகை) – phrase in which case marker is implicit.
2. /vinaittokai/ (MAIMTE), (வினைத்தொகை) - phrase in which tense marker is implicit
3. /paṇputtokai/(MAIMQU), (பண்புத்தொகை) - phrase in which quality marker is implicit
4. /uvamaittokai/ (MAIMSI) [உவமைத் தொகை] - phrase in which simile marker is implicit

When the case makers 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, and 8th phrases in which case markers are implicit, these can be divided into another six types {This is indicated by the number suffix in the abbreviation: Eg. MAIMCA2 means the compound noun in which the case marker 'ai' (ஐ). 2nd case implicit) making the count 9. /urupum payaṇum uṭaṇ tokkatokai/s can be evolve from each of these phrases. Hence as such the compound words are of 9 types making the count 18.

Further, there is another kind of /tokainilai ttoṭar/ (தொகைநிலைத் தொடர்) which is labeled as /irupeyarottup paṇputtokai/ (இருபெயரொட்டுப் பண்புத்தொகை). It is a kind of /paṇputtokai/ which a morphological combination of two nouns, the first is the sub-ordinate of an entity and the succeeding word is the super ordinate.

For example, the compound noun /välaimaram/ (வாழைமரம்) consists of two words (nouns) /välai/ (வாழை) and / maram/ [மரம்] in which /välai/ is sub-ordinate and / maram/ is super ordinate. This compound noun is abbreviated as ORIM.

#### Consolidated List

Including this category 19 types of compound words/nouns are seen in Tamil Language. All these types are generally adopted in poetical works. Any how these are the types of compound words considered in this study.

Following table lists the labels of all compound words.

| S. No. | Label in ISO transliteration                  | Tamil in Tamil   | Abbreviation |
|--------|---|--|--------------|
| 1.     | /iraṇṭām verrumaittokai/                      | 2ஆம் வேற்றுமைத் தொகை                                       | MAIMC2       |
| 2.     | /müṇṛäm verrumaittokai/                       | 3ஆம் வேற்றுமைத் தொகை                                       | MAIMC3       |
| 3.     | /näṅkäm verrumaittokai/                       | 4ஆம் வேற்றுமைத் தொகை                                       | MAIMC4       |
| 4.     | /aintäm verrumaittokai/                       | 5ஆம் வேற்றுமைத் தொகை                                       | MAIMC5       |
| 5.     | /ärṇm verrumaittokai/                         | 6ஆம் வேற்றுமைத் தொகை                                       | MAIMC6       |
| 6.     | /ēḷäm verrumaittokai/                         | 7ஆம் வேற்றுமைத் தொகை                                       | MAIMC7       |
| 7      | /2äm verrumai urupum payaṇum uṭaṇ tokkatokai/ | 2ஆம் வேற்றுமைத் தொகை<br>உருபும் பயனும்<br>உடன்தொக்கத் தொகை | MAIMCA2      |
| 8.     | /3äm verrumai urupum payaṇum uṭaṇ tokkatokai/ | 3ஆம் வேற்றுமைத் தொகை<br>உருபும் பயனும்<br>உடன்தொக்கத் தொகை | MAIMCA3      |
| 9      | /4äm verrumai urupum                          | 4ஆம் வேற்றுமைத் தொகை                                       | MAIMCA4      |

|    |  |  |         |
|----|--|--|---------|
|    | payaṇum uṭaṇ tokkatokai/                                     | உருபும் பயனும்<br>உடன்தொக்கத் தொகை                         |         |
| 10 | /5ām verrumai urupum<br>payaṇum uṭaṇ tokkatokai/             | 5ஆம் வேற்றுமைத் தொகை<br>உருபும் பயனும்<br>உடன்தொக்கத் தொகை | MAIMCA5 |
| 11 | /6ām verrumai urupum<br>payaṇum uṭaṇ tokkatokai/             | 6ஆம் வேற்றுமைத் தொகை<br>உருபும் பயனும்<br>உடன்தொக்கத் தொகை | MAIMCA6 |
| 12 | /7ām verrumai urupum<br>payaṇum uṭaṇ tokkatokai/             | 7ஆம் வேற்றுமைத் தொகை<br>உருபும் பயனும்<br>உடன்தொக்கத் தொகை | MAIMCA7 |
| 13 | /vinaittokai/  | வினைத் தொகை  | MAIMTE, |
| 14 | /vinaiurupum payaṇum<br>uṭaṇ tokkatokai/                     | வினை உருபும் பயனும்<br>உடன்தொக்கத் தொகை                    | MAIMTEA |
| 15 | /paṇputtokai/  | பண்புத் தொகை   | MAIMQU  |
| 16 | /paṇpu urupum payaṇum<br>uṭaṇ tokkatokai/                    | பண்பு உருபும் பயனும்<br>உடன்தொக்கத் தொகை                   | MAIMQUA |
| 17 | /uvamaittokai/   | உவமைத் தொகை  | MAIMSI  |
| 18 | /uvamai urupum payaṇum<br>uṭaṇ tokkatokai/                   | உவமை உருபும் பயனும்<br>உடன்தொக்கத் தொகை                    | MAIMSIA |
| 19 | /irupeyarottup paṇputtokai/<br>இருபெயரொட்டுப்<br>பண்புத்தொகை | இருபெயரொட்டுப்<br>பண்புத்தொகை                              | ORIM    |

## Conclusion

The concept of Compound word in Tamil is linguistically same as that of English. But morphologically it is different. This is a separate linguistic entity in which either of case, tense, quality, simile, or conjunction is implicit between two words. It is named as /tokainilaittoṭar/ (தொகைநிலைத் தொடர்). Among /tokainilaittoṭar/s, /aṇmolittokai nilaittoṭar/ (அன்மொழித் தொகைநிலை) is not a morphological entity. It is a syntactic entity whose meaning is inferred morphological pattern. Hence it is included in the other types of compound words. Inferring in this approach Compound nouns are classified into 19 types which are tabulated in the previous section.