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Agreement in Tamil and Telugu

A.Boologarambai, Ph.D.

AGREEMENT IN TAMIL AND TELUGU

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INTRODUCTION

The system of agreement in any language is a vital grammatical phenomenon. Earlier both the terms *agreement* and *concord* were used as if they are synonyms.

John Lyons 1968: p.239 describes concord as a kind of inflection. Agreement may be studied with reference to morphological, syntactic, semantic and pragmatic levels of the language.

Moravcsik 1978: p.333 defines agreement as “a grammatical constituent A will be said to agree with a grammatical constituent B in properties C in language L, if C is a set of meaning-related properties of constituent B across some subset of the sentences of language L, where constituent B1 is adjacent to B and the meaning related non-categorical properties of constituent B1 are the properties of C”.

The present paper highlights the variations in the agreement system between Tamil and Telugu, two genetically related languages of the family of Dravidian languages. Though Tamil and Telugu belong to the same language family, they show variations in agreement system in addition to the similarities between these two languages.

The following table shows the agreement markers of Tamil and Telugu briefly.

AGREEMENT MARKERS IN TAMIL AND TELUGU

	Tamil		Telugu	
Person	Sg.	Pl.	Sg.	Pl.
I	een	oom	nu	mu
II	aay	iir/iirkaL	vu	ru
III	aan/aaL/tu	aar/aarkaL/na	Du/di	ru

Examples from Tamil

naan vanteen	neenu vacceenu	“I came”
naam vantoom	manamu vacceemu	“We (inclu.) came”
naankaL vantoom	meemu vacceemu	“We (Exclu.) came”
nii vantaay	nuvvu vacceevu	“You came”
niinkaL vantaarkaL	miiru vacceeru	“You (pl.) came”
avan vantaan	waaDu vacceeDu	“He came”
avaL vantaal	adi vaccindi	“She came”
adu vantatu	adi vaccindi	“It came”
avar vantaar	waaru vacceeru	“He (Hon.) came”
avarkaL vantaarkaL	waaru vacceeru	“They (Human) came”
avai vantana	avi vaccaayi	“They (Non-Human) came”

Third Person and Agreement

There are two more forms for third person Masculine and Feminine ‘atanu/aayana’, ‘aame/aawiDa’ in Telugu to indicate the degree of respect. These forms have the agreement marker –ru and have the variants -Du and -di in spoken language.

Examples from Telugu

Atanu/aayana vacceeDu/vacceeru	“He came”
Aamee/aawiDa vaccindi/vacceeru	“She came”

Prestigious Forms and Agreement

In Tamil and Telugu the most prestigious forms are ‘taankaL’ and ‘tamaru’ which mean “You (Hon.)”. These forms have the agreement markers –iirkaL and –ru.

Examples from Tamil and Telugu

Tamil**Telugu**

taankaL vantaarkaL tamaru vacceeru “You (Hon.) came”

Plural Marker in Agreement

In Tamil the plural marker –kaL not only functions as plural marker but also functions as an agreement marker. But in Telugu the plural marker –lu cannot function as an agreement marker.

Examples from Tamil and Telugu

Tamil**Telugu**

mantirikaL vantarkaL mantrulu vacceeru “The Ministers came”

In the sentence ‘intira kaanti vantaarkaL “Indira Gandhi came” The third person singular noun Indira Gandhi takes the plural agreement marker –aarkaL (Plural agreement marker –ar+ the plural marker –kaL) due to socio-cultural reasons. But in Telugu the above sentence takes the honorific marker gaaru after the proper noun intira kaanti and takes the honorific agreement marker –ru but it does not take the plural marker –lu as in the sentence ‘intira kaanti gaaru vacceeru’ (Te.).

Conjoined and Collective Nominals and Agreement

Like this the conjoined nominal and collective nominal take the plural agreement + the plural marker -kaL in Tamil. But in Telugu the above-said two nominal take the plural agreement but not the plural marker –lu.

Example from Tamil and Telugu

Tamil**Telugu**

avanum avaLum vantaarkaL waaDu aame vacceeru “He and she came”

Tamil

Telugu

makkaL vantaarkaL manishulu vacceru “people came”

Titles and Agreement

In Tamil, popular persons like ‘amaiccar’ “Minister”, ‘tuNai veentar’ “Vice-Chancellor”, ‘janaadipathi’ “President” etc., have the plural form ‘avarkaL.’ This form means “They.” It also functions as honorific form. It has the plural agreement marker –kaL. This third person pronoun avarkaL is morphologically segmental. But in Telugu ‘mantri’ - “Minister” ‘upaadiyakshulu’ - “Vice-Chancellor” ‘raastrapathi’ - “President” etc., have the honorific form -waaru/-gaaru. These forms are the honorific forms and not the plural forms.

Examples from Tamil and Telugu

Tamil

amaiccar avarkaL vantaarkal

Telugu

mantrula waaru/mantri waariyulu vacceeru

“The honorable Minister came”

Tamil

tuNaiveentar avarkaL vantaarkaL

Telugu

upaatiyakshula waaru vacceeru

“The honorable Vice - Chancellor came”

In the above examples, Telugu is similar to Tamil when it adds the plural marker with honorific form as ‘avarkaL’ to the form mantri waariyulu vacceeru. Telugu can also add the plural marker -lu with mantri as mantrula waaru vacceeru. But there is a difference in the usage of the agreement marker. Tamil uses the marker –kaL and Telugu uses the marker -ru.

Elder Persons and Agreement

Elder persons like father, teacher, officers etc. in Tamil are having the agreement marker –aar. But in Telugu the above said persons may have the agreement marker either –Du or –ru.

Examples from Tamil and Telugu

Tamil

Telugu

appaa vantaar naannaa vacceeDu/vacceeru “Father came”

Tamil

Telugu

saar vantaar saar vacceeeDu/vacceeru “Teacher came”

Telugu

manushulu vacceeru “Human beings came”

Telugu

kukkalu vacceeyi “Dogs came”

Mass Noun and Agreement

In Tamil the nouns like ‘paal’ “milk”, ‘taNNi’, “water”, ‘moor, “buttermilk” etc. are considered as singular and take the singular agreement marker. But in Telugu the above-said nouns are considered as ever plural and take the plural agreement marker.

Examples from Tamil and Telugu

Tamil	Telugu	
paal irukku	paalu unnaayi	“Milk is there”

Tamil	Telugu	
taNNi irukku	niiLLu unnaayi	“Water is there”

Tamil	Telugu	
moor irukku	majjiga unnaayi	“Butter-milk is there”

Second Person Interrogative and Agreement

In Tamil for the question ‘nii jaar’ “who are you?” the answer is ‘naan parimala’ “I am parimala” won’t take agreement marker. But in Telugu the answer for the above question is ‘neenu parimalanu’. In this –nu is the agreement marker of ‘neenu’. Like this the other personal pronouns have the agreement markers.

Human and Nonhuman Nouns and Agreement

Both in Tamil and Telugu, one human and one non-human nouns are combined together and occur as subject. In this condition, human plural agreement is used.

Example from Tamil and Telugu

Tamil

oru manitanum oru naayum vantaarkaL

Telugu

oo manushi oka kukka vacceeru

“One man and one dog came.”

The inanimate nouns like ‘kal’ “stone”, ‘ilai’ “leaf”, ‘maNal’ “sand” etc. do not use a plural marker or an agreement marker in Tamil. But in Telugu the above-said nouns take the agreement markers compulsorily.

Example from Tamil and Telugu

Tamil

anta iTattil kal niraiya irukku

Telugu

akkaDa caalaa raaLLu unnaayi

“There are so many stones”

When more than one non-human noun occurs as subject, the subject does not take the plural marker –kaL but it takes the conjunctive marker -um. The plural agreement marker is also optional in Tamil. But in Telugu the plural marker with noun is obligatory and the agreement marker with the verb is also obligatory.

Example from Tamil and Telugu

Tamil

reNDu naayum muunu puunaiyum vantatu/vandhana

Telugu

reNDu kukkalu muuDdu pillulu vacceeyi

“Two dogs and three cats came”

In Tamil though the non-human plural nouns have the agreement marker –na the usage of that marker is the optional one whereas in Telugu the non-human plural nouns have the agreement marker –yi. This use is obligatory.

Examples from Tamil and Telugu

Tamil

ankee niraiya marankaL irukku

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Telugu

akkaDa caalaa ceTTLu unnaayi

“There are so many trees”

Tamil

naaykaL vantuccu

Telugu

kukkaLu vaccaayi

“The dogs came”

Proper Names and Agreement

In Tamil, the proper names like raaman, kaNNan, kumaar and baabu are combined together and occur as subject. But they may not take plural marker –kaL. Instead they may take the form ellaarum and the plural agreement marker –ar+ the plural marker kaL. In Telugu for the above-said combined subject, the last proper name takes the plural marker –lu and the plural agreement marker –ru in the final position.

Examples from Tamil and Telugu

Tamil

raaman kaNNan kumaar baabu vantaarkaL

raaman kaNNan kumaar baabu elloorum vantaarkaL

Telugu

raama kaNNa kumaar baabulu vacceeru

“Rama kaNNan kumar baabu came”

Honorific Nouns and Agreement

In Tamil, the honorific human nouns like ‘amaiccar’ “minister”, ‘talaivar’ “head”, ‘tuNai veentar’ “Vice-Chancellor” etc. take the honorific plural agreement marker ‘avarkaL’. But in Telugu the above-said nouns take either the plural marker-lu or the honorific form ‘vaaru’.

Examples from Tamil and Telugu

Tamil

talaivar avarkaL peesuvaarkaL

Telugu

adyakshula vaaru maaTlaaDutaaru

Telugu

adyakshulu maaTlaaDutaaru

“The honorable leader will take”

Tamil

tuNai veentar avarkaL varuvaar/varuvaarkaL

Telugu

upagulapathila/upaadyaashula vaaru vastaaru

Telugu

upagulapathilu/upaadyaashulu vastaaru

“The Vice-Chancellor will come”

POTENTIAL AUXILIARY VERB CONSTRUCTION

The potential auxiliary verb ‘muTiyum’ “capable” cannot take the agreement marker. The oblique form + instrumental case maker + muTiyum is the construction. But in Telugu the potential auxiliary verb ‘gala’ “capable” can take the agreement marker. The nominative form + the potential auxiliary verb + -nu is the construction.

Examples from Tamil and Telugu

Tamil

Telugu

ennaal vara muTiyum neenu raa galanu “I can come”

nammaal vara muTiyum manamu raa galamu “We (Inclu.) can come”

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enkalaal vara muTiyum	meemu raa galamu	“We (Exclu.) can come”
unnaal vara muTiyum	nuvvu raa galavu	“You can come”
unkalaal vara muTiyum	miiru raa galaru	“You (pl.) can come”
avanaal vara muTiyum	waaDu raa galaDu	“He can come”
avaLaal vara muTiyum	aamee raa galadu	“She can come”
avarkalaal vara muTiyum	waaru raa galaru	“They can come”
adaal vara muTiyum	adi raa galadu	“It can come”
avaikaLaal vara muTiyum	avi raa galavu	“They (non-Hum.) can come”

Neuter Singular and Agreement

The neuter singular ‘atu’ – “it” and the plural ‘avai’- “they” in Tamil take the plural marker – kaL. Whereas in Telugu the neuter singular ‘adi’- “it” and the plural avi – “they” do not take the plural marker –lu.

Examples from Tamil and Telugu

Tamil	Telugu	
adu/aduka vantuccu	adi vaccindi	“It (non-Human) came”
avai/avaikaL vantana	avi vaccaayi	“They (non-Hum.) came”

NUMERALS AND AGREEMENT

In Tamil, more than one numerical noun, that is, two, three etc. are used in a syntactical construction the agreement marker is optional both for the human and the non-human. But the agreement depends upon the numerical noun not the person. Whereas in Telugu the agreement marker for the above-said is obligatory.

Examples from Tamil and Telugu

Tamil

avaLukku muunu puLLe/ puLLaiga

Telugu

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avaLukku mugguru pillalu

“She has three children”

Tamil

naalu pustakam/pustakanka irukku

Telugu

naalugu pustakaaLLu unnaayi

“There are four books”

Tamil

Telugu

iraNDu peer vantaar/vantaarkaL iddaru vaccaaru “Two persons came”

Tamil

Telugu

aaru peer vantaar/vantaarkaL aruguru vaccaaru “Six persons came”

Animate and Inanimate Nouns and Agreement

When more than one animate or inanimate noun is used in combination then the agreement marker with subject and predicate is optional in Tamil. But in Telugu agreement marker is obligatory with subject and predicate.

Examples from Tamil and Telugu

Tamil

Telugu

naalu puunai/puunaikaL vantadu naalugu pillulu vaccaayi “Four cats came”

Tamil

Telugu

eezhu nari vantatu

eeDu nakkalu vaccaayi “Seven foxes came”

Tamil

Telugu

muunRu miin kiTaittadu

muuDdu ceepalu cikkaayi “Got three Fishes”

Tamil

Telugu

reNDu kallu kuDu

reNDu raaLLu ivvu

“Give two stones”

Interrogative Markers and Agreement

In Telugu, the interrogative marker ‘enta’ ”How much” is used with inanimate nouns and ‘entamandi’/endaru’ “How many” is used with human nouns, and,’enni’ ’How many’ is used with non-human nouns. In Tamil, ‘ettanai’ “How many” ‘evvavlavu’ “How much” are the equivalent forms for all the above- mentioned forms of Telugu.

Examples from Tamil and Telugu

Tamil

Telugu

ettanai peer vantiirkaL miiru endaru occaaru “How many of you came?”

Tamil

Telugu

ettanai manitarkaL endaru manusulu “How many persons?”

Tamil

Telugu

ettanai maDu vantadu enni aawulu occaayi “How many cattle came? ”

Tamil

Telugu

ettanai aaDu cettatu enni meekalu caaccaayi “How many goats died?”

From the above examples we come to the conclusion that though the agreement system is more or less same in Tamil and Telugu as far as the Human is concerned, there are differences between Tamil and Telugu in marking agreement.

NEGATIVE CONSTRUCTIONS AND AGREEMENT

The Telugu negative form ‘kaadu’ “not” does not take the agreement marker of the person like ‘leedu’ and Tamil ‘illai’.

Examples from Tamil and Telugu

Tamil

Telugu

naan illai neenu kaadu “not myself”

Tamil

Telugu

naanga illai meemu kaadu “not our self”

Tamil Telugu

naama illai manamu kaadu “not our self”

In Tamil, the simple negative marker ‘illai’ “not” does not take the agreement marker, whereas in Telugu the simple negative marker ‘leedu’ takes the agreement marker depending on the person.

Examples from Tamil and Telugu

Tamil

Telugu

naan ankee illai	neenu akkaDa leenu	“I am not there”
naam ankee illai	manamu akkaDa leemu	“We (Inclu.) are not there”
naankaL ankee illai	meemu akkaDa leemu	“We (Exclu.) are not there”
nii ankee illai	nuvvu akkaDa leevu	“You are not there”
niinkaL ankee illai	miiru akkaDa leeru	“You (pl.) are not there”
avan ankee illai	waaDu akkaDa leeDu	“He is not there”
.....	atanu akkaDa leeDu	“He is not there”
.....	aayana akkaDa leeDu/leeru	“He is not there”
avaL ankee illai	adi akkaDa leedu	“She is not there”
.....	aame akkaDa leedu	“She is not there”
.....	aawiDa akkaDa leedu/leeru	“She is not there”
Avar ankee illai	waaru akkaDa leeru	“He/She (Hon.) is not there”
Adu ankee illai	adi akkaDa leedu	“It is not there”
Avai ankee illai	avi akkaDa leevu	“They (Non-Hum.) are not there”
avarkaL ankee illai	waaLLu akkaDa leeru	“They (Hum.) are not there”

NEGATIVE POTENTIAL AUXILIARY VERB CONSTRUCTION:

The negative potential auxiliary verb ‘muTiyaadu’ “not capable/impossible” do not take the agreement marker. The oblique form + case maker + the negative potential auxiliary verb is the construction. But in Telugu the negative potential auxiliary verb ‘leedu’ “not capable/impossible” can take the agreement marker according to the person with the nominative form.

Examples from Tamil and Telugu

Tamil	Telugu	
ennaal vara muTiyaadu	neenu raa leenu	“I cannot come”
nammaal vara muTiyaadu	manamu raa leemu	“We (Inclu.) cannot come”
enkalaal vara muTiyaadu	meemu raa leemu	“We (Exclu.) cannot come”
unnaal vara muTiyaadu	nuvvu raa leevu	“You cannot come”
unkalaal vara muTiyaadu	miiru raa leeru	“You (pl.) cannot come”
avanaal vara muTiyaadu	waaDu raa leeDu	“He cannot come”
avaLaal vara muTiyaadu	aamee raa leedu	“She cannot come”
avarkalaal vara muTiyaadu	waaru raa leeru	“They cannot come”
adaal vara muTiyaadu	adi raa leedu	“It cannot come”
avaikaLaal vara muTiyaadu	avi raa leevu	“They (Non-Hum.) cannot come”

Equative Sentences and Agreement

In the negative equative sentences, the negative form ‘illai won’t take agreement marker in Tamil. But, in Telugu, the negative form ‘kaadu’ can take agreement marker depending upon the person. Moreover the nouns with the first and second person pronouns also take the agreement marker.

Examples from Tamil and Telugu

Tamil	Telugu	
naan DaakTar illai	neenu DaakTarunu kaanu	“I am not a Doctor”

naangaL DaakTar illai meemu DaakTaramu kaamu “We are not Doctors”
naam DaakTar illai manamu DaakTaramu kaamu “We are Doctors”
nii DaakTar illai nii DaakTaruvu kaavu “You are not a Doctor”
niingaL DaakTar illai miiru Daaktaru kaaru “You are not a Doctor”
avan DaakTar illai avan DaakTar kaaDu “He is not a Doctor”
avaL DaakTar illai aame DaakTar kaadu “She is a not a doctor”
avar DaakTar illai vaaru DaakTaru kaaru “He (Hon.) is not a Doctor”
avarkaL DaakTar illai vaaLLu DaakTaru kaaru “They are not Doctors”
adu DaakTar illai ati DaakTar kaadu “It is not a Doctor”
avai DaakTar illai avi DaakTaru kaavu “They (Non-Hum.) are not Doctor”

CONCLUSION

From the above-mentioned discussions we can conclude that, though Tamil and Telugu are genetically related languages and belong to same language family and share many features, still there are eye-catching differences between them found in those languages.

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Abbreviations:

Inclu. – Inclusive Exclu. - Exclusive
Hon. - Honorific Hum. - Human
Non-Hum. - Non-Human
Sg. - Singular Pl. - Plural

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