CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION
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The study on ‘Postpositions in Modern Tamil’ has been reported in the preceding four chapters. In chapter 1, an overview of postpositions, previous studies on Tamil postpositions by traditional grammarians, missionary grammarians and modern linguists, the purpose of the present study and the methodology adopted for the study have been dealt with. A morphological classification of postpositions, formal variants of postpositions and the process of grammaticalization involved in the evolution of postpositions have been discussed in chapter 2. In chapter 3, a syntactic classification of postpositions and the syntactic tests used for testing the separability or inseparability of the postpositions from the preceding noun phrase have been reported. A semantic classification of postpositions and an analysis in terms of multiple meaning (homonymy and polysemy) and synonymy (total, near and partial) have been presented in chapter 4. The findings relating to the morphological, syntactic and semantic analysis of Tamil postpositions are interpreted and discussed in this chapter.

A limited number of nominal and verbal forms with particular inflectional and derivational changes are involved in the formation of postpositions. Of the 100 postpositions included in the study (see Appendix 1), 45 are nominal forms,
40 are verbal forms and 15 are adverbial forms derived from a nominal base. Among the nominal forms, 34 are base forms, 2 are dative and 9 are locative. The verbal forms include a single base form, 12 infinitives, 19 adverbial participles and 8 adjectival participles. All the 15 adverbial forms are derived by adding the adverbial suffix –aaka to a nominal base (see Appendix 2). The nominal base forms anru ‘on’, kan ‘in’, kārum ‘to’, tōrum ‘on ... every’, pāti ‘as per’, pāl ‘to’, piraku ‘after’ and dative forms alavirku ‘to the extent of’ and pāttirku ‘unmindful of’ do not have any formal variant. Similarly, among the verbal forms, infinitives ara ‘without’, aaka ‘as’, aria ‘to the full of’, eṇa ‘exclusively for’, ērpa ‘in accordance with’, oppa ‘as’, kūta ‘with’, cūla ‘accompanied by’ and viṭa ‘than’, adverbial participles iruntu ‘from’, enru ‘exclusively for’, kōntu ‘with’, tōttu ‘since’, nīru ‘from’, poruttu ‘depending upon’, muṇṇittu ‘on account of’ and viṭtu ‘from’ do not have any formal variant. The other forms have phonological and morphological variants through different kinds of inflections and derivations in a restricted manner without any change in meaning (see Appendix 3). All these forms have undergone grammaticalization chiefly through the processes of desemanticization (loss in meaning content), extension (use in new contexts) and decategorialization (loss in morphosyntactic properties) and serve as postpositions.

Postpositions have been syntactically classified into primary and secondary ones on the basis of the form of the preceding noun phrase. 23 postpositions, which follow a nominative noun phrase and 25 postpositions, which follow oblique noun phrase with no case marker in between are
primary postpositions. 17 postpositions, which follow accusative noun phrase and 37 postpositions, which follow dative noun phrase are secondary postpositions. 4 postpositions (alavil 'at about', āka 'as', ena 'like' and valiyē 'via') among those which occur after nominative noun phrase, are found to occur also after different other noun phrases but with difference in meaning. alavil and valiyē occur after oblique noun phrase respectively in the meanings 'as far as' and 'through'. āka and ena occur after dative noun phrase respectively in the meanings 'for' and 'exclusively for'. Similarly, mēl gives the meaning 'on' after oblique noun phrase and 'over' after dative noun phrase and it is a primary postposition in the former meaning and a secondary postposition in the latter. 3 postpositions (atuttu 'next to', anri 'except' and iruntu 'from'), which may be considered as secondary postpositions, are found to occur after more than one casal noun phrases with no change in meaning (see Appendix 4). The nominative, oblique, accusative and dative forms of noun phrases that precede a postposition are devoid of their respective functions. The postpositional phrase, which includes a noun phrase and a postposition, is syntactically a part of a larger noun phrase, adjective phrase, or adverb phrase. The relativizability and coordination tests broadly testify the validity of the classification of postpositions into primary and secondary classes as well as the unitary nature of the postpositional phrase.

A large number of postpositions are subsumed under the semantic class 'location', which is subclassified into 'spatial' and 'temporal'. The semantic classes such as 'distributive',
'repetitive', 'status', 'reflexive', 'instrument', 'fullness' and 'pace oneself' have only one postposition under each. The number of postpositions under other classes range from 2 to 5 (see Appendix 5). However, there is a possibility of several obsolete (vayin 'with' -location), borrowed (nimittam 'due to' - cause) and dialectal (ittu 'with'- instrument) forms, which have not been considered for this study, being subsumed under different classes. There are 12 forms of postpositions, which are homonymous participating in different semantic classes ranging from 2 to 6 (see Appendix 6). Polysemy among postpositions is quite prevalent and 17 postpositions are found to have related senses ranging from 2 to 5 (see Appendix 7). Synonymy of different dimensions, total, near and partial, is found among postpositions. There are 20 sets of total synonyms (see Appendix 8), 19 sets of near synonyms (14 sets syntactically varying and 5 sets semantically varying) (see Appendix 9), and 8 sets of partial synonyms (see Appendix 10). The above semantic facts about postpositions form a strong basis for establishing postpositions as a distinct grammatical category within the case system of Tamil.

The diachronic and synchronic (morphology, syntax and semantics) aspects of postpositions have been analyzed in detail and reported in this study. The findings of this study are expected to be useful in the fields of language pedagogy, lexicography, translation and natural language processing. It would be further enriching if the cognitive and pragmatic aspects of postpositions are taken up for future research.