
Hons, Auxiliarity

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The study deals with the problem of auxiliary verbs in Tamil. It tries to define auxiliary verbs in general and then finds out which Tamil verbs suit this definition. Several verbs have been put through five tests regarding loss of their lexical meaning, loss of inflection, frequency of use, change of phonological shape and syntactic restrictions on their use. In the end we get several groups of verbs only one of which can be rightly considered auxiliary, i.e. iru, viTu, koLLu and – TTum. This small group is by no means homogenous and shows considerable internal discrepancy. The particular uses of these verbs differ from each other and show various preservation of their original lexical meaning. Varying amount of auxiliarity in individual uses of these verbs has also been proved on syntactic level.

The other groups are modal verbs (veNTu, muTi, kuTu), the so-called auxiliary verbs (muTi, vai, par, koTu, nil, tolai...) that have somewhat descriptive character and a few odd verbs (varu, ner, paTu, cey...). These are closer to some grammatical function. All of them have reached different levels on the auxiliary scale but they are still more or less easily connectable with their MV counterparts.

The second part of the study brings a detailed of the verbs and their functions.