

ТАМИЛЬСКИЙ ЯЗЫК

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Статья описывает тамильский язык, один из древнейших языков дравидийской семьи, его распространение, диалектное разнообразие, а также фонологические, морфологические и синтаксические особенности. Особое внимание уделено историческим этапам развития языка и формированию письменности, что подчёркивает его культурное и лингвистическое значение.

Ключевые слова: *особенности; тамильский язык; письменность.*

TAMIL LANGUAGE

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The article describes Tamil, one of the oldest languages of the Dravidian family, its distribution, dialectal diversity, as well as phonological, morphological, and syntactic features. Special attention is given to the historical stages of the language's development and the formation of its script, highlighting its cultural and linguistic significance.

Key words: *features, tamil language, writing system.*

TAMIL LANGUAGE (Tamil), the language of the Tamil people. It is one of the official languages of the state of Tamil Nadu and the union territory of Puducherry (India), as well as Sri Lanka and Singapore. It is also spoken in countries of Southeast Asia, South Africa, Europe, the USA, and Australia. The total number of speakers is about 77 million people (early 2010s, estimate), including approximately 70 million in India (estimated from the 2011 census), 4.9 million in Sri Lanka (2012 census), and about 1.5 million in Malaysia (estimated from the 2010 census).

The Tamil language belongs to the southern group of Dravidian languages. Its dialects are divided into **social dialects** (castes such as Brahmins, Mudaliyars, laborers, Dalits, etc.) and **regional dialects** (territorial). Four groups of regional dialects are typically identified in India (northern, eastern, western, and southern), with a fifth group being the dialects of Sri Lanka. Additionally, distinct dialects of individual ethnic groups, tribes, and two urban koine varieties – those of Chennai (formerly Madras) and Puducherry – are recognized. The linguistic situation is characterized by **diglossia** – a significant divergence between literary Tamil, used in official contexts, and colloquial Tamil, used in everyday communication.

The phonological and morphological systems of literary Tamil, compared to other Dravidian languages, largely preserve the proto-Dravidian state. A feature of its consonantal system is the presence of five series of consonant phonemes, with the loss of the sixth, alveolar, series (except for the phoneme *r*) and the retention of a retroflex fricative *z*. The opposition between voiceless (*k, c, t̪, t, p*) and voiced (*g, j, d̪, d, b*) consonants is positional rather than phonemic, following the law of lenition, which involves the weakening and mutation of sounds in intervocalic positions (formulated for Tamil by the Russian linguist M. S. Andronov) [1, p. 75]. The vocalic system is standard for Dravidian languages. The nature of stress in Tamil remains unresolved. Morphemes are primarily mono- or disyllabic.

The case system uses suffixes and postpositions to express eight cases: nominative, accusative, genitive, dative, instrumental, comitative, locative, and vocative. The neuter gender is opposed to masculine and feminine genders; a specific epicene gender is used for names of people and deities. Inclusive personal pronouns (see Inclusive) and demonstrative pronouns for proximal and distal references are retained (old Tamil also had a third, intermediate reference). Dravidian numerals are preserved, except for terms denoting large numbers, which are Sanskrit borrowings.

The verb system includes three tenses: past, present, and future. Analytic verbal forms are common (see Analytic language), including aspectual and causative forms with auxiliary verbs denoting meanings such as "to make," "to place," etc. Tamil is a nominative-accusative language. The word order in simple sentences is **subject + object + verb**, and modifiers precede the words they qualify.

The lexicon includes a relatively small number of Sanskrit borrowings compared to other Dravidian languages.

The earliest written records of Tamil are preserved in epigraphy from the 3rd century BCE. The history of Tamil is divided into the following periods: **Old Tamil** (up to the 7th century CE), **Middle Tamil** (7th–18th centuries), and **Modern Tamil**. Some researchers further divide Old Tamil into early (3rd century BCE–1st century CE), middle (1st–4th centuries CE), as reflected in poetic anthologies (see Tamil literature), and late (4th–7th centuries CE) [2].

Modern literary Tamil is based on the dialect of the Tiruchirappalli, Thanjavur, and northeastern Madurai districts. Tamil script emerged by the 8th century CE, based on the Grantha script with added elements of Brahmi (see Indian scripts).

REFERENCES

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