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STUDENTS: AN EXPLORATION OF TEACHERS GRAMMAR  
CONTENT KNOWLEDGE**Bavani Arumugam<sup>1</sup>@Seiyalu<sup>1</sup>, Nurul Nazira Hamzah<sup>2\*</sup>, Noorafini Kassim<sup>3</sup><sup>1</sup> Centre for the Promotion of Knowledge and Language Learning, Universiti Malaysia Sabah, Malaysia  
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**DOI:** 10.35631/IJEPC.1061071This work is licensed under [CC BY 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)**Abstract:**

The lack of content knowledge among Tamil language teachers in secondary schools, particularly in the area of Tamil grammar, is an issue that has received limited scholarly attention. This gap underscores the need for research that provides a deeper understanding of teachers' grammar content knowledge, especially in relation to morphology, within the context of Tamil grammar instruction. In response to this need, the present study aims to explore Tamil language grammar content knowledge in the teaching of Tamil grammar, drawing upon Shulman's (1987) framework of pedagogical content knowledge. This study adopts a qualitative research approach employing a case study design. Five Tamil language teachers were selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected using semi-structured interviews and non-participant observation. The data, along with relevant documents, were analysed thematically using ATLAS. TI software (version 8.0). The validity and reliability of the findings were confirmed using several approaches, including the triangulation technique, member checks, peer review and expert verification techniques. The analysis was categorised under the identified central theme, *morphology (colliyal)*. The findings indicate that Tamil language teachers possess a sound understanding of the Form Four Tamil grammar syllabus. They demonstrated proficiency in applying morphological grammar components such as i) *ākupeyar*; ii) *uṭaṇpāṭṭuvinaṭai and etirmaṇaivinaṭai* iii) *aṭai* iv) *pakupatam and pakāppatam* and vii) *yāppilakkaṇam*. However, some Tamil language teachers exhibited uncertainty and inconsistencies in their interpretations, which occasionally diverged from the Secondary Integrated Curriculum (KSSM) Tamil grammar syllabus. In conclusion, this study contributes to the understanding of Tamil grammar

content knowledge among secondary school teachers. The findings are expected to inform professional development initiatives and guide the Ministry of Education in strengthening Tamil grammar pedagogy and teacher expertise.

**Keywords:**

Teacher's Knowledge, Content Knowledge, Grammar Content Knowledge, Teaching Tamil Grammar

**Introduction**

The knowledge of teachers has long been a focal point of interest among educators and policymakers (Shulman, 1986), attracting the attention of scholars across various disciplines. Grossman and Richert (1988) emphasised the importance of identifying the characteristics of knowledge required for teachers engaged in the teaching process. They defined teachers' knowledge as:

*“a body of professional knowledge that encompasses both knowledge of general pedagogical principles and skills and knowledge of the subject matter to be taught”* (Grossman & Richert, 1988, ms.54)

Content knowledge is an in-depth understanding of the subject matter being taught, which enables teachers to deliver lessons accurately according to the curriculum specification or the syllabus (Shulman, 1986). Furthermore, Shulman (1986) described content knowledge as encompassing knowledge of topics, rules, and structures within a discipline, an understanding of underlying theories, disciplinary values and requirements, awareness of current development in the field, and the ability to use evidence, construct arguments, and address competing claims.

According to Bartos, Lederman and Lederman (2014), the type of knowledge identified by Shulman (1987) represents a unique form of expertise that educators must possess to explain a concept or the content of a subject more deeply and in an easier manner. Teachers who neglect the content aspect of knowledge of a subject result in a loss of paradigm in the education field (Shulman, 1986). Moreover, the structure of content knowledge varies across different subject areas (Shulman, 1986). Lafayette (1993) further highlighted that content knowledge is a “specialist component” in language teacher education, where language teachers must master the knowledge of culture, language, linguistics, and literature.

In this regard, such knowledge is regarded as core knowledge in the awareness of language teachers (*Teacher Language Awareness*). High awareness of grammatical content knowledge is considered one of the most important components for effective language instruction (Komila Sayfiyeva, 2022; Myhill, Watson, & Lines, 2013). Conversely, the lack of content knowledge creates significant challenges in the field of language education (Oleg, Kim, Ward, Curtner, & Li, 2016). According to Jain Chee, Mariani, Abdul Jalil Othman, and Nor Mashitah (2017), the lack of understanding of grammar content knowledge amongst teachers negatively impacts the clarity of instruction and communication effectiveness between teachers and students. Similarly, Borg (2001, 2003) and Sanchez and Borg (2014) argued that the relationship between grammar content knowledge and classroom practice of language teaching remains underexplored. With this, they asserted that research related to knowledge of grammatical content in relevant language contexts is difficult to obtain.

In the context of Tamil language education, grammatical knowledge has received particular attention because grammar is essential to be applied in the process of effective communication (Alagesan, 2012). Grammar teaching is also important for writing skills that prioritise grammatical elements, functions, and the meaning of grammar in a sentence (Abduazizova, 2023; Larsen Freeman, 2019). Therefore, the teaching of grammar should be introduced progressively from Form One through stages in secondary school, enabling students to recognise the function of grammar, namely the variation of meaning, the use of accurate punctuation, common grammatical errors, and the construction of grammatical sentences (Usha Rani & Manonmani Devi, 2016).

However, numerous concerns have been raised among language experts regarding the teaching and learning of grammar at both primary and secondary levels. One recurring concern is that students often lose interest in learning grammar because teachers fail to prioritise its teaching (Kacani & Mangelli, 2013). This statement is supported by the research of Mashudi, Nurmansyah, Saenko, Nurjain, & Sharifullina (2022), Komathy (2016), Malathy (2016), and Saraswathy (2017), who suggested that grammar is frequently perceived as a dull and rigid subject by students. This perception stems from the belief that grammar consists solely of language rules, much like mathematical formulas, which leads to disengagement. As Manonmai Devi (2015) argued, teaching objectives could not be achieved when the students experience boredom in learning Tamil language grammar. Accordingly, Gnana Oslin (2015) asserted that every Tamil language teacher must possess strong content knowledge of Tamil language grammar, as grammar plays an important role in nurturing and expanding the existing potential of students in the Tamil language.

### **Problem Statement**

Teaching practices largely depend on the teachers' knowledge, who possess extensive knowledge in the field of education (Iserbyt, Ward, & Li, 2017; Metz, 2018). Knowledge serves as a foundation for teachers to make informed decisions, especially during teaching and learning sessions (Mitton Kukner & Murray Orr, 2015). Grossman (1990) states that teachers cannot teach efficiently without having basic, adequate foundational knowledge of their subject matter. Therefore, a teacher should equip themselves with comprehensive content knowledge in every subject they teach.

However, several studies have identified issues related to the lack of and weakness in grammatical content knowledge among teachers. Research by Alderson and Horak (2011), Alderson, Clapham, and Keluli (1997), and Bloor (1986) found that language teachers have limited grammar knowledge, particularly in aspects of grammatical terminology. Borg (2001) also highlighted that insufficient grammatical knowledge among teachers can influence teachers' instructional approaches. In addition to that, weakness in grammatical content knowledge often results in teachers being more confident in teaching at the textual level rather than explaining grammatical rules in depth (Andrews, 1994; Caikler & Hislam, 2002; Williamson & Hardman, 1995; & Wray, 1993).

In addition, many language teachers hold a negative perception towards grammar, often associating it with frustration and boredom, as it involves adherence to complex sets of rules (Pawlak, 2020). Benjamin and Berger (2013) and Myhill (2000) stated that teacher anxiety and misconceptions prevent a teacher from effective instruction. As a result, Tamil language teachers often teach and explain the grammatical forms in a way that fails to engage students

(Manonmai Devi, 2015). This makes the teaching of Tamil grammar conducted in classes often less attractive to students.

Reports from the *State Board of Inspectors and Quality Assurance* (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2022 and 2023) indicate that secondary school-level Tamil language teachers still demonstrate limited content knowledge, from the aspect of understanding the content of the syllabus and its grammatical components. The 2022 and 2023 reports revealed that 83 Tamil language teachers (77.6%) paid insufficient attention to the grammatical aspect during teaching and learning sessions. This situation directly affects the learning quality of students in the aspect of proper grammar mastery. The statement is in line with the findings of Bavani, Abdul Jalil Othman, Mohana Dass (2019), and Manonmai Devi and Ani Omar (2019), which stated that the lack of Tamil language grammar content knowledge causes many teachers to commit grammatical errors in teaching. If the problem persists, then it could cause significant confusion among the students who learn Tamil language grammar (Bavani, Abdul Jalil Othman, and Mohana Dass, 2019).

This situation depends largely on the teacher's ability to align their content knowledge with the subject syllabus to avoid mistakes in teaching grammar. Kumutha (2012) suggested that teachers should possess in-depth knowledge about the content knowledge of grammar because that knowledge helps them in the teaching and learning of grammar. She further stressed the importance of ongoing exposure to grammar, not only to enhance instructional practices but also to improve teachers' mastery of the Tamil language.

If this issue is not given serious attention, it may adversely affect students' concentration during learning sessions in classes throughout their school period. With this, having a high sensitivity towards knowledge can avoid grammatical errors (Manomani Devi, 2016). Therefore, it is essential to examine the level of Tamil grammatical content knowledge among secondary school-level Tamil language teachers to deliver teaching in a more effective way. Ultimately, Tamil language subject teachers who fail to master the grammatical content knowledge risk diminishing the quality of educators.

### **Research Objective**

Exploring the Grammatical Content Knowledge (GCK) in aspect morphology among Tamil language teachers based on the Kurikulum Standard Sekolah Menengah (KSSM) is the national secondary school curriculum for Form Four.

### **Research Question**

What is the Grammar Content Knowledge (GCK) in aspect morphology, Tamil language teachers based on the Kurikulum Standard Sekolah Menengah (KSSM), the national secondary school curriculum, Form Four?

### **Methodology**

#### **Research Design**

The case study method of qualitative research framework was employed to explore the secondary school Tamil language teachers' grammar content knowledge. This qualitative technique was chosen based on Merriam's (1998) assertion that (i) it allows for an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon, and (ii) it allows the researcher to study, observe, and

investigate issues or problems that arise in an actual setting. A case study is used to facilitate the detailed analysis based on one or a few special cases (Creswell, 1998) and provides an opportunity to record the meaningful features of real-life events (Yin, 2009, p.4). A “single-case embedded unit design was adopted for this research, which is to study a case consisting of one unit of study analysis, Grammar Content Knowledge (GCK).

### ***Participants***

The study involved five (5) Tamil secondary school teachers selected through purposive sampling (Table 1). These participants were chosen based on their experience in their professions and volunteered to participate in the research. All teachers were teaching in the Form Four classes in secondary school. It was assumed that their classroom practices reflect their grammar content knowledge and provide authentic insights into their natural teaching environment, which was directly observed by the researcher.

**Table 1**  
**Demographic Characteristics of Secondary School Tamil Language Teachers**

<b>Tamil Language Teachers (TLT)</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Educational Background</b>	<b>Duration of Teaching Experience (Years)</b>
1	Female	Master's Degree, Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM)	34
2	Male	Master's Degree, Universiti Malaya (UM)	25
3	Female	Master's Degree, Universiti Malaya (UM)	25
4	Female	Master's Degree, Universiti Malaya (UM)	25
5	Male	Bachelor's Degree, Universiti Malaya (UM)	27

### ***Data Collection Techniques of the Research***

In this study, the researchers used data collection techniques as suggested by Merriam (2009). Merriam's qualitative approach, triangulation through interviews, observations, and document analysis, is the most suitable for the objective of this study to give an advantage and enrich the data. Prior to the data collection process, several preparatory steps were undertaken, including the development of interview protocols, teaching observation checklists, and document analysis guidelines to ensure a systematic and organised research process.

### ***Semi-Structured Interviews***

Semi-structured interviews were chosen as they are most used in qualitative studies in which the language level and sequence of the questions can be adjusted by the researchers according to the needs and suitability of the interview process (Ghazali Darusalam & Sufean Hussin, 2016; Othman Lebar, 2015). The researcher also adds additional questions if they find that the responses of the study participants are less stimulating or do not comply with the study question in depth. This statement is aligned with Gay, Mills and Airasian's (2006), assertion that semi-

structured interviews allow for spontaneous follow-up questions (prompts) to be asked based on answers given by study participants for in-depth information.

### ***Observation***

Observation techniques were guided by the principles proposed by Kidder's (1981) and Othman's Width (2015), which emphasised aligning the observation objectives of the study with the purpose of the research. Classroom observations were conducted to capture authentic teaching practices and to examine how teachers' Grammar Content Knowledge (GCK) was applied in actual instructional contexts. This method provided a holistic understanding of the participants' teaching behaviours, strategies and professional reasoning related to grammar instruction.

### ***Document Analysis***

Additional data were collected through document analysis related to teacher teaching, such as teaching record books, the KSSM Tamil Language Syllabus, Form Four Tamil Language textbooks, students' exercise books and student answer sheets, and other relevant teaching materials. The teaching record books are important official documents for teachers; therefore, the researcher obtained permission from participants to analyse their annual and daily lesson plans.

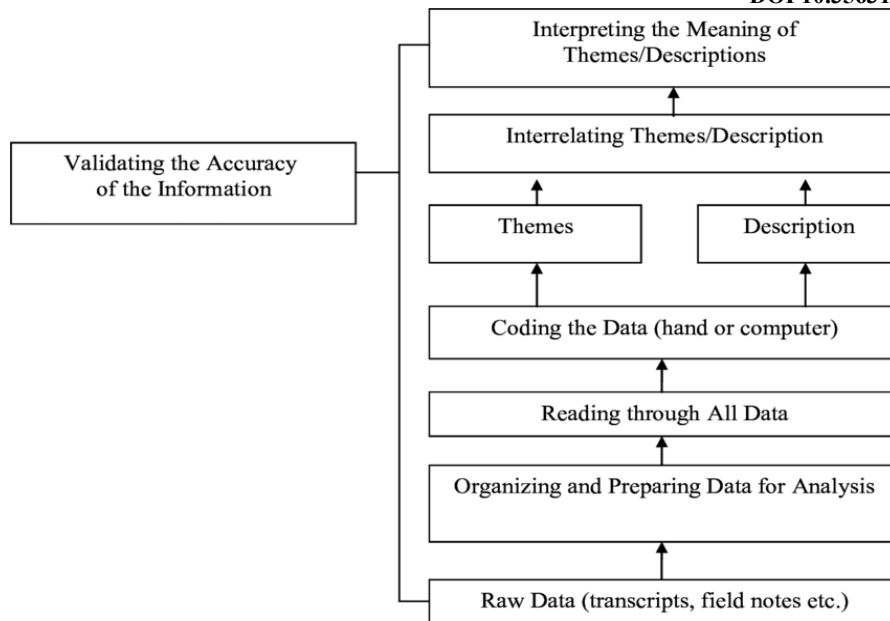
- a) The annual lesson plan outlines the teaching and learning content based on the syllabus, whereas
- b) The daily lesson plan operationalises the annual lesson plan that incorporates information such as objectives, activities to achieve the objectives, and reflection notes on the extent to which the objectives were achieved.

Photocopies of relevant materials were made to facilitate detailed examination and triangulation with interview and observation data.

### ***Data Analysis***

In this study, the data analysis procedure consists of conducting a systematic and iterative process guided by Creswell's (2014) six-step framework for analysing and interpreting qualitative data according to Figure 1.





**Figure: Data Analysis in Qualitative Research (Creswell, 2014)**

## Result

The analysis revealed that Tamil language teachers demonstrated a sound understanding of **Grammar Content Knowledge (GCK)**, particularly in **morphology (colliyal)**. Based on the thematic analysis, five key subthemes emerged: *ākupeyar*, *uṭaṇpāṭṭuvinaṭai* and *etirmaṇaivinaṭai*, *aṭai*, *pakupatam* and *pakāppatam*, and *yāppilakkaṇam*. The findings illustrate how teachers conceptualised and applied grammatical knowledge within the secondary school Tamil language curriculum, as outlined in the **Kurikulum Standard Sekolah Menengah (KSSM)**.

### **Grammar Content Knowledge of Colliyal (Morphology)**

*Colliyal* refers to the branch of grammar that focuses on morphology the study of word formation, structure, and inflection. It explains how root words combine with affixes, how grammatical markers shape meaning, and how word forms change according to tense, number, case, or syntactic function. Positioning *colliyal* in this way helps readers understand that it is not a broad grammatical category, but specifically a morphology-based component that functions as the foundation for analysing how Tamil words are constructed and transformed. This conceptualisation allows later discussions on pedagogy or linguistic theory to build on a clear understanding of *colliyal* as the core morphological system within Tamil grammar. Word classification is the practice of classifying words based on their features and functions in the Tamil language. The Form Four Tamil language syllabus includes five subtopics: i) *ākupeyar*, ii) *uṭaṇpāṭṭuvinaṭai* and *etirmaṇaivinaṭai*, iii) *aṭai*, vi) *pakāppatam* and *pakupatam*, v) *yāppilakkaṇam*.

### **Ākupeyar**

*ākupeyar* is a noun produced from numerous words, such as nouns and adjectives, that do not refer to the original meaning but instead denote people, animals, objects, or ideas that have a close association with the original noun. Although all *ākupeyar* words are nouns, not all nouns are *ākupeyar*. Form Four KSSM Tamil language students must learn *ākupeyar* grammar. TLT4 suggested that learning *ākupeyar* enhances students' comprehension of everyday

conversational vocabulary. This can be demonstrated using the following TLT1 interview excerpt:

"*Akupeyar* is a grammar concept that every form four student must learn. The *ākupeyar* element is included in the Form Four Tamil syllabus and textbook. Learning *ākupeyar* allows students to effectively communicate with others and gain a thorough understanding of its meaning.

Interview data analysis indicates that all TLTs understood the general definition of *ākupeyar*. The prominence of *peyarccol* (noun) may explain *ākupeyar* due to their close relationship, as described below,

"The word *ākupeyar* has a relationship with a noun." In other words, a noun that does not explicitly refer to the object implies that the thing is related to another thing having a distinct meaning. " That is called *ākupeyar*."

Teaching observation data indicates that TLT emphasises teaching *ākupeyar* by linking it to everyday life. He remarked that people call each other by nicknames based on their physique form. For example, a tall individual is referred to as "long," and an ice cream vendor as "ice cream." Although the name is not ice cream, we refer to it by the name of the product it sells. Situations like this demonstrate the use of *ākupeyar*. The researcher discovered that all TLT understood and applied components of *ākupeyar* to their daily lives.

### ***Uṭaṇpāṭṭuvinaṭai And Etirmaṇaivinaṭai***

The Form Four Tamil syllabus incorporates components of *uṭaṇpāṭṭuvinaṭai* and *etirmaṇaivinaṭai* to aid students in composing sentences and essays. The knowledge of this feature provides them with a variety of possibilities for crafting sentences. All TLT demonstrated understanding of the definitions of *uṭaṇpāṭṭuvinaṭai* and *etirmaṇaivinaṭai* in general. This may be proved by analysing the TLT1 and TLT4 interview data as follows:

The term "*uṭaṇpāṭṭuvinaṭai*" denotes a completed action. '*pālaṇ paḷḷikkuc cenṛāṇ*' indicates Balan went to the school. The word *cenṛāṇ*, which means to have gone, acknowledges or agrees that an act has already occurred. This applies to *uṭaṇpāṭṭuvinaṭai*. In contrast, *etirmaṇai* refers to denying something happened. '*pālaṇ paḷḷikkuc cenṛilaṇ*' indicates that Balan does not attend school. The words *cenṛilaṇ* and *cellavillai* have the same meaning. Both are acceptable as "*etirmaṇai*."

"...for example, *uṭaṇpāṭṭuvinaṭai* carries a positive meaning about an act, that is, that the act has occurred." *etirmaṇai* is a verb with a negative connotation, implying that an act did not occur. The phrase "*iṇṛu āciriyaṇ vantār*" translates to "today the teacher came." "Coming" (*vantār*) is *uṭaṇpāṭṭuvinaṭai*. If we modify it to *etirmaṇai*, it means that the teacher does not attend school. *etirmaṇai* means not coming. "This is the foundation of grammar."

Although all TLT know *uṭaṇpāṭṭuvinaṭai* and *etirmaṇaivinaṭai*, the researcher observed that TLT explains an extra element of grammar, namely *kālam*, which contains *irantakālam* (past), *nikalkālam* (present), *etirkālam* (future) in the aspects of *uṭaṇpāṭṭuvinaṭai*. Other TLTs merely



describe it based on the KSSM Tamil grammar handbook, which includes instances of the verbs *uṭaṇpāṭṭuvinaṭai* and *etirmaṇaivaṇai* as seen in Table 1.

**Table 1: Example Words of *Uṭaṇpāṭṭuvinaṭai* Dan *Etirmaṇaivaṇai***

<i>uṭaṇpāṭṭuvinaṭai</i>	<i>etirmaṇaivaṇai</i>
<i>paṭippēṇ</i>	<i>paṭiyēṇ/ paṭikka māṭṭēṇ</i>
<i>varukirēṇ</i>	<i>vantiṭēṇ/varamāṭṭēṇ</i>
<i>ceytāṇ</i>	<i>ceytilaṇ/ceyyavillai</i>
<i>naduvāl</i>	<i>naṭāl/naṭamāṭṭāl</i>
<i>kaṇṭāy</i>	<i>kaṇṭilāy/kāṇavillai</i>
<i>tiṇratu</i>	<i>tiṇrilatu/tiṇnavilla</i>
<i>naṭantaṇa</i>	<i>naṭantila/naṭakkavillai</i>
<i>ōṭiṇar</i>	<i>ōṭilar/ōṭavillai</i>
<i>uraṅkuvāl</i>	<i>uraṅkāḷ/uraṅkamāṭṭāl</i>

According to TLT3, *kālam* (time) is a crucial element of *uṭaṇpāṭṭuvinaṭai* *etirmaṇaivaṇai*. While some examples, like as *vantiṭēṇ*, *pārttilēṇ*, *kaṇṭilēṇ*, *vantilar*, *pārttilar*, and *ceṇṇilar* are utilised in classical Tamil literature, whether in prose or poetry. Report from TLT1, on the use of *uṭaṇpāṭṭuvinaṭai* and *etirmaṇaivaṇai* in Table 4.5 is more relevant to students' daily lives. This can be shown using the TLT 1 interview data, as shown below:

In Tamil grammar, the verbs *vantiṭēṇ*, *paṭittilēṇ*, and *ceytilēṇ* can be employed for past, present, or future temporal circumstances (*kālam*).<sup>1</sup> However, such verbs exclusively appear in Tamil literature. Currently, I teach *vantiṭēṇ*, *pārttilēṇ*, *kaṇṭilēṇ*, *vantilar*, *pārttilar*, and *ceṇṇilar* as these verbs are not utilised in daily life today and are known as grammatical parts that change with the passage of time. Poṛkō scholars wrote a book on the shifting understanding of grammar. In the book, he claimed that changing this grammatical feature and using the forms *varavillai* and *cellavillai* can be employed suitably in the present day<sup>2</sup>

TLT requires students to categorise the words *uṭaṇpāṭṭuvinaṭai* and *etirmaṇaivaṇai* in a work of their choice. However, the results of document data analysis for TLT1 and TLT5 indicate distinct conclusions, indicating that they give textbook-based training. TLT students rely heavily on KSSM Tamil grammar guidebooks and form four textbooks for their mastery of *uṭaṇpāṭṭuvinaṭai* and *etirmaṇaivaṇai*.

### *Aṭai*

The Form Four Tamil syllabus emphasises the importance of learning *aṭai* grammar. This can assist students in writing grammatically correct essays and sentences. Mastery of this grammar component also enables students to compose faultless sentences in terms of processing noun phrases and verb phrases in the subject and predicate, i.e. without any grammatical mistakes. This can be shown by analysing TLT2 and TLT3 interview data as follows:

"*aṭai* is an important aspect of grammar in KSSM's Tamil language curriculum." In essay writing, *aṭai* is a key feature. Students' failure to learn *aṭai*, a minor part of Tamil grammar, can hinder their ability to write essays effectively. This permits them to compose essays free of grammatical

problems. However, if students incorporate all components of grammar into their writing, it will help them write better essays. For example, to write descriptive essays and short stories."

"Students who learn fundamental grammar will be able to create essays utilizing nouns and verbs and develop on each paragraph. Students will be able to discuss the facts in the essay in greater detail. This can only happen if they master the 'atai'.

All TLTs understood the definition and types of *atai*, including *peyaratai* and *vinaiyatai* in general. This can be shown by interview data from TLT2 and TLT3, as follows:

"*peyaratai* acts as an *atai* for the noun, providing more information about it. *peyaratai* refers to the qualities of nouns. For example: *alākāṇa peṇ* (beautiful woman) and *pacumaiyāṇa vayal* (fertile paddy field). Women and paddy fields are nouns, with *alākāṇa* (beautiful) and *pacumaiyāṇa* (fertile) as *atai* characteristics.

The phrase "*vinaiyatai*" serves as an explanation for the verb. Adverbs describe the qualities of verbs. For example, *vēkamāka nīntiṇāṇ* (swim quickly). In this situation, *nīntiṇāṇ* (swim) is the verb while *vēkamāka* (speed) is the *atai* of the verb. This is referred to as *vinaiyatai*.

The findings indicate that TLT1, TLT2, and TLT4 indicate a strong understanding of nouns and verbs. Consequently, their knowledge of *atai* demonstrates a comprehensive mastery of TLT. This is further supported by interview data, as follows:

"To understand *peyaratai* and *vinaiyatai*, we must first understand nouns and verbs." If we are clear about this, we may go on to the grammar aspect. In other words, we must comprehend the qualities of nouns. I shall explain that the suffix '-āṇa' must be added to the basic word '*peyaratai*' before a noun. *Vinaiyatai* should add the suffix '-āka' to the root adjective preceding the verb. I'll explain this to my classmates. All of these things are quite significant. So, we enhance our knowledge of nouns and verbs that pupils would grasp well."

Observational data analysis revealed that TLT2 executed an intriguing induction set. TLT2 assigns a ball to each group and asks students to identify its qualities. Students can describe many features of balls, such as round, spherical, huge, pink, and new. TLT2's expertise in *atai* enabled him to create an effective induction set and assessment of students' comprehension of *peyaratai* concepts. However, the study found that the knowledge of TLT3 and TLT5 held minor misconceptions in some aspects of Tamil grammar of the *atai*.

Document data analysis indicates that TLT3 and TLT5 prepared worksheets and notes on the *atai* component. The worksheets were organised sequentially, beginning with identifying *peyarccol* (noun) and *vinaiaccol* (verb), followed by altering adjectives by adding -āṇa to adjectives into *peyaratai* (adjective) phrases and adding -āka to adjectives to become *vinaiyatai* (adverb) and vice versa (TLT4/AD). This clarifies TLT's understanding of *atai*, allowing for

more effective instruction for pupils. In summary, TLTs understand the *atai* aspect from the Fourth Form Tamil grammar curriculum for students.

### ***Pakupatam dan Pakāppatam***

The study results indicate that all TLTs understand the definition of *pakāppatam*. *Pakāppatam* refers to a term that cannot be broken down into smaller grammatical components, whereas *pakupatam* can. Form Four students find the topic of *pakāppatam* and *pakupatam* fascinating. According to interview data from TLT2 and TLT1, all TLTs are familiar with *pakāppatam* and *pakupatam*. One teacher explained:

Tamil words can be split into two categories: words that can be divided into smaller components. *pakupatam* and *pakāppatam* are words that cannot be broken down into smaller components. The term *patam* relates to words. The word "nail" means divisible. Thus, *pakupatam* refers to words that can be broken into smaller units. *Pakupatam* refers to a term that can be broken down into smaller meaningful pieces, whereas *pakāppatam* refers to a word that cannot be broken down. "That is why we call it *pakāppatam*."

Another teacher added:

"Normally, students are aware of *atam*. Teaching *tirukkuraḷ* and ethical poetry also includes *patam*. *Patam* means word. Today, I will explain what *paku* and *pakā* are in PdP. So, what exactly does "nails" mean? Let's imagine Mom offers you food and asks you to share. At the time, one understood that he had to share the meal equally with others. The meaning of *pakā* cannot be separated. I believe that if pupils understand this grammar notion, they will have an easier time understanding this subject."

According to TLT4, identifying the base word in *pakupatam* and *pakāppatam* is the first step. This understanding assists teachers and students in breaking down a word into smaller grammatical pieces that carry meaning. This statement can be demonstrated using interview data as follows:

"Looking at the word *nail*, we see that it signifies to divide. *Pakuttal* means separate. Can we separate words? First, we need to separate the root words. Examples include *naṭantāṇ* (walk) and *ōṭiṇāṇ* (run). Can this term be divided into smaller components? Yes. '*naṭa+ān*' and '*ōṭu+ān*'. We can split the root word into *naṭa* and *ōṭu*. A base word consists of a root word plus constituents appended as suffixes. The word "*pakā*" signifies inseparable. It is a root word that cannot be divided into smaller grammatical components. We refer to the words *ōṭu*, *tī*, and '*pō*' as *ōreḷuttu* single-grapheme words, which are also root words.

According to TLT2 and TLT5, *pakupatam* and *pakāppatam*, or the root and suffix (*vikuti*), have legal implications. They describe how to divide or cut off the grammatical components in a Tamil word using the guidelines listed below:

"For example, the word *pārvai* (vision) has two constituents: *pār* and *vai*." Actually, this word contains two crucial elements. One is the basic *pakuti*, while the other is the final particle *vikuti*. *pakuti* refers to the base word. In the term *pār+vai*, the base word is *pār*. It has meaning. As a result, we can divide the word into *pakuti* and *vikuti*. The particle *-vai* is a *pakuti* suffix that carries its own meaning. This allows us to separate the words. Similarly, with the word *talaivaṇ*. We can also divide this word; *talai* is the primary one, and *-an* is the *vikuti* accusative particle that indicates masculine gender. Breaking down words like this allows pupils to understand well. But keep in mind that *pakāppatam* cannot be divided. If it is divided it will have no meaning."

TLT's expertise in *pakupatam* and *pakāppatam* is supported by observational data analysis. For example, TLT1 argues that components in one category or group of words can be split, with each little constituent having a meaning, whereas constituents in another group of words cannot be broken into small units with meaning. Base words, also known as *vērccol* (root words), are small, meaningful units that can be separated. Words that can be broken down into even smaller pieces, such as *pakuti* (base word) and *vikuti* (suffix). This is demonstrated by observation data from TLT1, as given in Table 2 below:

**Table 2 Examples *Pakupatam* and *Pakāppatam***

<i>pakāppatam</i>	<i>pakupatam</i>
<i>kārru</i>	<i>kārrai = kārru + ai</i>
<i>kēḷ</i>	<i>kēḷvi = kēḷ + vi</i>
<i>naṭa</i>	<i>naṭantāṇ = naṭa + āṇ</i>
<i>pō</i>	<i>pōkiṛār = pō + ār</i>
<i>vai</i>	<i>vaittāṇ = vai + āṇ</i>
<i>uṇ</i>	<i>uṇtatu = uṇ + atu</i>
<i>maram</i>	<i>marattil = maram + il</i>
<i>kaṇ</i>	<i>kaṇtāṇ = kaṇ + āṇ</i>

### ***Yāppilakkaṇam***

The *yāppilakkaṇam* aspect represents the final grammatical component included in the colliyal portion of the Tamil Fourth Form Tamil syllabus. When referring to the masterwork *Tolkāppiyam*, *yāppilakkaṇam* takes on a broader meaning. Within the Tamil language syllabus in Form Four incorporates the fundamentals of *yāppilakkaṇam*, including *cantam*, *etukai*, and *mōṇai*. This assertion can be proved by the TLT3 interview, as shown below.

The form four curriculum includes *yāppilakkaṇam*, which is the final component of morphology (colliyal). The content of *yāppilakkaṇam* is limited to three aspects: *cantam*, *etukai*, and *mōṇai*.

The Malaysian Certificate of Education (SPM) examination heavily relies on the *yāppilakkaṇam* element. This can be demonstrated using the following TLT2 interview example:

"The aspect of *yāppilakkaṇam* is very important for students to know because there is a 15th question related to it in the Tamil Literature

paper at the SPM exam level." Pupils are tested by being assigned a poem to compose in modern prose. To appreciate the poetry, pupils must first understand *yāppilakkaṇam*. This feature of *yāppilakkaṇam* is extremely essential in Tamil grammar.

All TLTs understand the rules and definition of *yāppilakkaṇam*. Traditional Tamil poetry requires extensive knowledge and follows the *yāppilakkaṇam* rule. They argue that writing poetry (*yāttal*) is synonymous with weaving or binding (*kaṭṭutal*). This is supported by interview data from the following TLT3:

"*yāppilakkaṇam*" refers to poetry created using traditional procedures and laws. *Yāttal* translates to "binding" (*kaṭṭutal*). Poetry has vowels and consonants, like *acai*, *cīr*, *taḷai*, *aṭi*, and *toṭai*. The ingredients of this *yāppilakkaṇam* can be investigated thoroughly. The Fourth Form Tamil language curriculum covers only three aspects: *cantam*, *etukai*, and *mōṇai*"

Observation data revealed that TLT3 used worksheets containing song lyrics and guided students with songs. Students were required to underline the words in the song's lyrics demonstrating recognition of rhythmic and sound patterns. The observational data also revealed that TLT5 had discussion sessions with students, who actively participated in the discussions. Active involvement by pupils demonstrates their level of comprehension. He continues the second step by stating that *cantam* is an important component of poetry and can be present in most songs. However, the study found that the knowledge of a TLT1 and TLT4 held misconceptions in some aspects of Tamil grammar of the *yāppilakkaṇam*, especially in aspects *cantam* and *mōṇai*.

In conclusion, the findings indicate that the TLTs possess a strong understanding of the components of *yāppilakkaṇam*, as evidenced by their instruction, examples, and classroom activities. TLT1, TLT2 and TLT5 were found to understand definitions, characteristics, and instances. This is further corroborated by interview data from TLT1 and TLT4, which explored and described the following:

"*mōṇai*" represents the first letter or vowel sound in each line of a poem. There are two sorts of *mōṇai*: those with identical first letters or sounds in each word and those with similar first letters or sounds in both first and second lines. For example, *vaḷavaṇ viṭṭāṇ paṭṭam* and *vāṇil pōṭutu vaṭṭam*. The letter [va] appears in both the first line and the first word, as does the second letter [vā]. So, we can observe that every word begins with the sequence letter [va]. Next, compare the first letter or sound in each word, which is *cīr mōṇai*.

## Discussion

The TLT colliyal component is explained through five sub-themes: i) *ākupeyar*; ii) *uṭanpāṭṭuvinaṭi* and *etirmaraṭvinaṭi*; iii) *aṭai*; iv) *pakupatam*, *pakāppatam*; and v) *yāppilakkaṇam*. Each facet of grammatical knowledge is discussed concisely based on subtopics identified through data analysis from each study participant. The researcher also

discovered that all TLTs are familiar with integrating teaching and learning Tamil grammar in Form Four from the perspective of *colliyal* components and take the initiative to teach the *colliyal* component.

These findings reflect the findings of Farahian (2011) and Metzler and Woessman (2012), who discovered that teachers with a deep knowledge of a subject matter are able to provide students with a broad variety of knowledge. Similarly, this study also supports Andrew's (1994) finding that it is critical for a teacher to understand grammatical rules and concepts to improve confidence in speaking and writing. This view is reinforced by Stronge (2018), who claims that the characteristic of effective teaching is the teacher's capacity to provide lesson content in an organised and methodical manner, as well as related examples, so that students can understand.

The result also indicated that teachers demonstrated strong knowledge of *colliyal* components, such as *ākupeyar*, *utaṇpāṭṭuvinaṭai*, *etirmaṇaivinaṭai*, *aṭai*, *pakupatam*, *pakāppatam*, and *yāppilakkaṇam*. Effective teachers' were able to connect concepts to real-life situations, thereby making them easy for students to understand. For example, The study found that expert teachers can explain several types of *ākupeyar*, which include *uvamaiyākupeyar*, *kāriyavākupeyar*, *karuviyākupeyar*, and *karuttaṇākupeyar*. This demonstrates that outstanding teachers have expertise beyond the Tamil grammar textbook.

According to Seeni Naina Mohamed (2015), *ākupeyar* can be classified into ten categories. Excellent teachers highlighted features of *ākupeyar* grammar in the curriculum description, including *porulākupeyar*, *ciṇaiyākupeyar*, *iṭavākupeyar*, *kālavākupeyar*, *paṇpākupeyar*, and *tolilākupeyar*. This shows that, these outstanding teachers possess knowledge beyond the syllabus description. This finding aligns with the research of Deepa (2019), who found that mastery of materials beyond the syllabus description allows teachers to provide concise explanations and relevant examples that connect to students' daily experiences.

The study found that effective teachers use *aṭai*, *pakupatam*, *pakāppatam*, and *yāppilakkaṇam* to explain grammatical concepts, types, and instances that are appropriate for their students' level of understanding. Furthermore, the study's findings also revealed that outstanding teachers use intriguing induction sets, conduct group activities, prepare worksheets, and provide written notes on the grammar features covered in *colliyal* (morphology) aspects. Such practices demonstrate how the broad expertise of exceptional teachers aids in giving adequate training for conducting effective and efficient teaching and learning sessions. This confirms a recent study by Aro and Bjorn (2016), who emphasised that a teacher must deepen GCK and understand the genuine notion of grammar laws in order to avoid misconceptions and increase students' comprehension of grammar elements. Ultimately, the success of a lesson depends greatly on the ability of a teacher to master the GCK of the curriculum.

## Conclusion

The uniqueness of the Tamil grammar curriculum lies in its implementation throughout the academic year, with the impact observable only over an extended period of time. The grammar component of the Tamil language is important for teachers to uphold the standard outlined in the *Curriculum and Assessment Standards Document* set by the Ministry of Education. An in-depth understanding of the lesson content of the lesson helps teachers process the content creatively and innovatively in their presentations to the students. The curriculum content for



each subject should therefore be examined carefully by teachers in more detail in terms of topics, objectives, and concepts before the teaching is implemented in the classroom.

Therefore, the Tamil grammar curriculum planning needs to be more detailed in the preparation of more comprehensive content in terms of information and broader examples according to the rules of Tamil grammatical principles. Stakeholders need to consider all aspects carefully in the preparation of the Tamil grammar curriculum in order to realise the goals of national education. The findings of this study highlight implications for teachers about the importance of understanding the curriculum fully.

Extensive knowledge of grammatical content has major implications for classroom teaching practice. Future studies should explore how teachers' mastery of GCK translates into measurable student outcomes in Tamil grammar learning. This line of inquiry is important to determine whether strong GCK proficiency among teachers results in tangible improvements in students' grammatical understanding, accuracy, and overall language achievement. Such research could examine specific indicators of student learning such as error reduction in writing, enhanced sentence construction skills, and improved application of morphological and syntactic rules and link these outcomes to the quality of GCK informed instruction. In the future studies can provide empirical evidence on the pedagogical value of GCK and its direct impact on Tamil grammar acquisition.

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