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Focus constructions in Modern Tamil*

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Use of the suffixes ‘-*dāṇ*’ and ‘-*ē*’ in Tamil always requires further study for the reason that one cannot always make a distinct and unique description of how they behave in a number of different circumstances. This paper attempts to examine how Tamil speakers construe of these two suffixes and use them both in isolation and in combination in order to mark a distinctively identifiable discourse element of ‘focus’. Appropriate syntactic tests are employed not only to illustrate how such pragmatically motivated constructions fit in speech context, and also to identify their significant role in discourse.

1.1. INTRODUCTION

Recent works on pragmatics -information structure- have shown beyond doubt that languages have many means to bring to focus any part or constituent of an utterance as more significant than others. Studies on such dichotomies like ‘topic-comment, theme-rheme, topic-focus’ etc., have shown that these pragmatic notions play an important role in determining the theories of language structure, communication and discourse. In general topic and focus are understood as grammaticalized pragmatic functions. These discourse devices are organized under the concept of ‘information packaging principle’. If the ‘information structure’ of any expression does not correlate to ‘information packaging’ as required by any given context, the expression is considered to be infelicitous in the respective context. Different languages employ many strategies such as syntax, morphology, prosody or a combination of these to encode the focus structure.

The semantic roles of foci and their morphosyntactic structures in Tamil are an area to be investigated in detail. The scope of this present study is limited to the use of the two particles namely -*dāṇ* and -*ē* in the context of their discourse functions in modern spoken Tamil. We concentrate on the following two important strategies of marking focus: 1) insertion of focus particles -*dāṇ* and -*ē* and combination of these two forms, either as -*dāṇē* or -*ēdāṇ* and 2) nominalization of verbal predicates (cleft focus). We will also concentrate on some other discourse functions (speaker’s attitude, appreciation, causal relations) as expressed by these two particles.

Tamil is a diglossic language with a high degree of distinction between spoken and written varieties. Data for this paper are chosen mainly from modern spoken Tamil, which shows much relevance to ‘focus’ as a discourse function when compared to written Tamil. It is important to note that intonation (accent, pitch) plays a crucial role along

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with discourse particles in conveying a set of pragmatic nuances. But such features are not readily expressible in written variety of Tamil.

It is commonly understood that in any question-answer pairs there is a correlation between the constituent of ‘question’ and the corresponding constituent on ‘focus’. Hence, in this paper we employ a set of sentences mainly involving question-answer pairs to illustrate how ‘focus’ in Tamil is expressed in various circumstances. Focus can fall on any constituent of a sentence: argument, verbal predicate, adjective and adverbial phrase. However, there seems to occur certain restrictions on how these particles are used to denote a particular nuance of meaning. We will specifically examine how these restrictions play an important role in the context of syntactic and semantic functions.

1.2. Focus in Tamil: theoretical frame work

In the literature on ‘information structure’ different definitions are proposed with divergence among scholars (Dryer 1996, König 1997, Lambrecht 1994). In the present work, however, we use the term ‘focus’ in its widest possible sense to circumvent the Tamil data. We consider the term ‘focus’ to be the ‘highlighted part’ of any given utterance - whether it is newly introduced or something that is already expressed - which is mainly employed to further the knowledge of the addressee. The distinction between old and new information does not seem to be a straightforward gauge in this context. It is generally accepted that there exists two broad categories of focus namely ‘identificational focus’ and ‘informational focus’ (É. Kiss 1998).¹ As it will appear, a clear distinction between ‘presupposition’ and ‘common ground’ seems important to deal with Tamil data. The notion of presupposition is understood as a feature that concerns only the speaker but not shared by the participants in the discourse. On the contrary, the common ground represents beliefs that are mutually recognized and shared by the participants in a discourse.² Various notions, such as ‘new information’, ‘old information’, ‘presupposition’, ‘assertion’, ‘shared knowledge’, ‘identificational focus’ etc. as used in this work are primarily an adaptation of the definitions as given in Lambrecht 1994, Kiss 1998 and Stalnaker 2002.

1.3. Earlier studies in Tamil:

Earlier studies on these two suffixes identify them either as ‘emphatic’ or ‘intensive’ markers. The set of suffixes that are studied under this definition include: *-dāṇ*³ ‘oneself’ *-ē* ‘only’; *-maṭṭum* ‘only’; *-um* ‘also’; *-ō* ‘dubiousness’; and *-ā* ‘interrogative’. Even though some of these studies evoke pragmatic notions like ‘new vs. old information’, ‘shared knowledge’, ‘presupposed knowledge’, they do not distinguish clearly how the different pragmatic functions of these particles are expressed (Andronov 1989:241-248;

¹ For a detailed view on focus see Lambrecht 1994 :206-215). For example “The focus is that portion of a proposition which cannot be taken for granted at the time of speech. It is the UNPREDICTABLE or pragmatically NON RECOVERABLE element in an utterance” (Lambrecht 1994 p.207).

² For discussions see Dryer 1996, Stalnaker 2002.

³ Note that the form *-dāṇ* is the phonological variant of *tāṇ*. In Tamil the distinction between voiced and voiceless consonants is not a distinctive feature and any inter-voclic occlusive will be pronounced as voiced. Through out this paper we will use the form *-dāṇ*.

Arokianathan 1981;⁴ Chevillard 1997; Lehman 1993:150-162; Schiffman 2002:192-194). We emphasize in this paper how morphosyntactic devices play an important role in determining the discourse functions of the two particles *-dān* and *-ē* in the context of the principles of information structure.

1.4. A diachronic view on *-dān* and *-ē*:

It is important to note that the two particles namely *-dān* and *-ē* are polysemous and are used from the Old Tamil period onwards with different grammatical and discursive functions.⁵ Even though a historical study of these particles is not within the scope of the present study, a brief note on their use in what is called ‘self reflexive constructions’ in Modern Tamil seems to be relevant for our present analysis. Let us consider the following examples before we discuss further in detail the use of these two particles *-dān* and *-ē* in focus constructions. Specifically the particle *-dān* owes its origin to **tān*, which is a 3rd person singular human pronoun; and it also functions as a reflexive anaphor. The emphatic particle *-ē* is also used as self reflexive suffix.

The particle *-ē* can be added to any personal pronoun: *nān* ‘I’ > *nānē* ‘myself’, *avan* ‘he’ > *avanē* ‘himself’ and so on. But the reflexive meaning is possible only if the predicate of the sentence contains the reflexive auxiliary “*ko!*”. Otherwise, it would imply only the meaning of ‘emphasis’, as in 1. *avan pēsinaṅ* (he- talk.past.3.m.s) ‘he talked’; 2) *avanē pēsinaṅ* (he.ē-talk.past.3.m.s) even he talked; 3. *avanē pēsikkoṇḍē* (he.ē-talk.padv.aux.ref) ‘he talked to himself’.

Note that in the following sentence, the third person singular pronoun *tān* ‘self’ occurs twice:

- | | | | | | | |
|----|---|----------------|-------------|------------------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| 1. | <i>kamalā</i> | <i>tanakku</i> | <i>tānē</i> | <i>pēsikkoṇḍē</i> | <i>samaikka</i> | <i>toḍaṅginā!</i> |
| | PN | self.dat | self.emp | speak.advptp.ref-aux.ē | cook.inf | start.pres.3.f.S |
| | Kamala started cooking (kept) talking to her-self | | | | | |

The word *tan-*, which is the oblique form of *tān*, is marked in dative case argument of the verb in the reflexive form of *pēsu* ‘talking’. In the subordinate sentence, the pronoun *tān* occurs with the particle *-ē*, which gives the reflexive meaning of ‘oneself’. The particle *-ē* that occurs as part of the predicate as in ‘*pēsikkoṇḍē*’ indicates a durative meaning.

This apparent relation between reflexives, intensifiers and focus particles has been noticed also in other languages (Koenig and Siemund 1999:45).

⁴ “The term focusive can be justified to some extent based on their functions which result in one way or other in focusing attention on the host to which they are added” (Arokianathan 1981:3)

⁵ Rajam enumerates different functions of these particles in Classical Tamil poetry. Regarding the particle *ē* she says: “It is the most widely used particle in this period and its various meanings are not easily distinguished.” According to her the particle *ē*, in addition to narrative functions, is used with different meanings: emphasis, simultaneity, rhetorical question marker and also used as adverb of manner. For the particle *-tān*, only two functions are attested: emphasis and reflexive. (Rajam V.S. 1992: 408-412 and 419-420)

2. FOCUS IN TAMIL

2.1. Use of the particle – *dān*

In this section I attempt to outline the specific features of *-dān* as focus marker. This particle is widely used and the focused element conveys mainly identificational focus. Different types of ‘focus’ are proposed: exhaustive focus, contrastive focus, and corrective focus (Kiss 1998, Rooth 1992). In the present paper, the term ‘identificational focus’ is understood to be ‘exhaustive identificational focus’. Identificational focus has a narrow alternatives choice set, normally restricted to the discourse context. I analyse below only simple sentences involving both *wh*-questions and polar yes/no questions. The focus particle *-dān* provides the idea of an exclusive selection among a set of variables. It is important to note that these variables are defined contextually. The particle *-dān* that occurs as part of an answer expresses a contrast between ‘assertion’ and other potential ‘presuppositions’. The focus structure is linked to the communicative situation and each type of question has its appropriate focus structure.⁶ In other words, the choice of the focus particle in Tamil depends on the communicative situation and the type of question. Consider the following *wh*-question.

2. nētti vīṭṭukku yāru vandāṅga?
 yesterday house.dat who come.past.3
 ‘who came to (the/our) house yesterday?’

2a. appā**dān** vandāṅga
 father.dān come.past.3.pl
 its father (of course) who came’

2b. appā nētti vīṭṭukku vandāṅga
 father yesterday house.dat come.past.3.pl
 ‘father came yesterday to the house’

2c. mandiri nētti vīṭṭukku vandāru
 minister yesterday house.dat come.past.3.m
 (the) minister came yesterday to the house

2d. mandiri **dān** vandāru
 minister.dān come.past.3.m
 ‘it is (the) minister who came’

In the above examples (2a, 2b, 2c and 2d) the subject argument is brought into focus. Questions like (2) evoke the set of all possible individuals who could have come. In other words, *wh*-questions set up alternatives which are contextually sensitive. The alternatives

⁶ For instance, Rooth claims a close relationship between focus and questions. “We might say that the function of focus in an answer is to signal other propositions which are potential answers in the context of the question. Or if we wanted to speak in terms of contrast, we could say that focus in an answer expresses contrast between the asserted answer and other potential answers” (Rooth 1996:84). See also “The question indicates the discourse situation in which the structure is appropriate” (Lambrecht 1994:223).

in this particular context may consist of, for instance, one of the parents (set of kinship), the postman (set of public servants) who visit regularly or any others of the such kind. It is important to note that the above answers to question (2) imply different pragmatic readings at various degrees of presuppositions.⁷

The participants interpret a discourse based on a shared body of information. This information is taken for granted by the participants in their conversation. In fact, the speaker assumes that somebody came and ‘the father’ might be one of the potential visitors is also part of common knowledge, beliefs or values shared both by the speaker and the addressee as members of a given community. Taking into consideration the above remarks, and in particular the context of the discourse, (2a) is considered more natural than others. Thus the focused argument stands in contrast to the other options so that the features of exhaustivity and contrast would be highlighted as main features of the particle *-dān*.

But (2b) and (2c), although stand as a reply to the question (2), can also be uttered out of the context (i.e. lacking any previous discourse context); and hence need not (necessarily) answer the corresponding *wh*-question. Obviously both (2b and 2c) present new and non-presupposed information without any additional semantic effects. It should be the default strategy used to mark the focused element of an answer corresponding to the WH-word of the question in Q-A pairs. In this type of utterances the constituent conveying non-presupposed information is known as informational (or presentational) focus (Kiss 1998).⁸

Consider now the pairs (2c) and (2d). Sentence 2c is a felicitous (or congruent) answer than (2d) to the question (2) only if *the visit of a/the minister* is not considered to be part of the daily routine activity. Clearly ‘the minister’ is a non presupposed information and hence can not be the part of knowledge or beliefs shared by the interlocutors. In this particular case, there is no need to eliminate any other variable to focus on *the minister* as the minister is not considered to be in contrast with other possible variables. The particle *-dān* entails an exclusive selection of an element out of the possible set of pre-supposed variables. Hence (2d), although grammatically well constructed, does not fit into the context pragmatically. It is evident from the above utterances that the particle *-dān* can be added to an argument from a presupposed set of alternatives.

A nominal focus constituent may be both informational and identificational (exhaustive). The particle *-dān* encodes identificational (exhaustive) focus. A constituent that is exhaustively focused always carries the particle *-dān*. On the contrary, an informational focus will be un-marked. A *wh*-question like (3) may give rise to two different replies

⁷ “Often the presuppositions evoked in an utterance are fully or partially expressed in the preceding linguistic context, either in already presupposed form or in asserted form” (p.57); and “[It is clear that the propositions expressed in these sentences are] pragmatically entirely presupposed, in the sense that the addressee obviously was assumed to know them before hearing the utterances (p.59) (Lambrecht 1994).

⁸ “If a sentence part conveys new, non-presupposed information marked by one or more pitch accents-without expressing exhaustive identification performed on a set of contextually or situationally given entities, it is not an identificational focus but a mere information focus. Information focus is not associated with movement. An information focus is present in every sentence, but not every sentence contains an identificational focus.” (E. Kiss. 1998. 246).

whereas with a positive polar question like (4), one would expect as a rule an identificational focus.

3. nīṅga enna sāppittīṅga?
 You what eat.past.2.pl
 what did you eat?

3a. nān paḷam sāppittēn
 I fruit eat.past.1.s
 I ate (some) fruit

3b. nān paḷamdān sāppittēn
 I fruit.dān eat.past.1.s
 I just ate (some) fruit (and nothing else)

4. nīṅga paḷamā sāppittīṅga?
 You fruit.int eat.past.2.pl
 Did you eat fruit?

4a. āmām nān paḷamdān sāppittēn
 yes I fruit.dān eat.past.1.s
 yes, I ate indeed only (some) fruits

In the above examples the object argument is brought into focus. For (3), which is a wh-question, two answers are possible. In (3a) the utterance is unmarked and the object argument conveys a new, non-presupposed information which corresponds to informational focus. In 3b, the particle *-dān* invokes alternatives obligatorily to the focused constituent and thus entails a contrastive focus.

A polar yes/no question (4), inquires the truth value for a corresponding declarative sentence on a polarity scale. The point is that (4) does not ask for some new information but instead asks for a confirmation of something known or is contextually evident to the participants. A polar question can be rightly interpreted only under the light of speaker's beliefs and the context of the discourse. The nature of this relationship is explained further in the section (§2.3) with further evidences. For instance, the question (4) would be clearly infelicitous if one lacks contextual evidence (unless uttered with irony). If the speaker asked (4) based on a contextual evidence, then the information is assumed to be part of a common ground of the participants in the discourse. In our data the polar questions have to do with the common ground of the participants in the discourse. It is important to note that (3b) and (4a) entail different pragmatic interpretation.

5. nētti nī nejamā sinimavukkā pōna?
 yesterday you really film.dat.inter go.past.2.s
 'Did you really go to the cinema yesterday?'

- 5a. āmām, nētti nān nejamā sinimavukkudān pōnēn
 yes yesterday I really film.dat.dān go.past.1.s
 ‘yes, yesterday I really did go to a film (and no where else)’
 ‘Yes indeed I went to the cinema yesterday’

(5a) is a reply to a polar question. The focalized dative nominal is not a new information but presents in the question as part of a ‘background information’. The focus particle in this utterance does not imply that the information is new to the discourse, but asserts the truth value of the constituent focused on by exhaustive identification. It also adds emphasis, to a presupposed piece of information, with the meaning of ‘*it is true the place where I went was cinema – [and no where else]*’ and thus excludes other possibilities.

A locative argument can also be used with the particle *-dān* as is evident from following example.

6. uṅga magan ippō eṅgē irukkān
 your son now where be.pres.3.m.s
 ‘where is your son now?’

- 6a. avan ippō pārisiledān irukkān
 he now paris.loc.dān be.pres.3.m.s
 ‘Of course he is in Paris now (and no where else)’

In (6a), a locative noun is focalized. The particle *-dān* identifies the missing argument in a presupposed open set by eliminating other possible alternatives. The conversation took place in Paris and the interlocutors knew each other very well. Contextually this construction also implies ‘presupposition’ and ‘activation’ because the speaker believes that the addressee remembers that his son lived in Paris earlier and this information is understood to be ‘active’ in the knowledge of the addressee. If it were not the case, i.e. if the addressee knew nothing about the speaker’s family background, the felicitous answer should occur without the particle *-dān*, as in (6b), which is just ‘informative’ and bears no other pragmatic effects.

- 6b. avan ippō pārisile irukkān
 he now paris.loc to be.pres.3.m.s
 ‘He is in Paris now’

In (7) the verb is focalized, in an answer to a polar question.

7. anda paiyana aḍiccīṅgaḷā ?
 dem.adj boy.acc beat.past.2.pl.inter
 did you beat that boy?

- 7a. āmām anda paiyana aḍiccēndān
 yes dem.adj boy.acc beat.past.1.s.dān
 Yes, I did beat the boy (because I have my own reasons / he deserves it)

The focused constituent in (7a), a finite verb, is already evoked in (7) and hence is part of the background. The context of the utterance does not permit an identificational focus but allows only polar (yes/no) focus. But, we have already noted that the verb focus does not correspond to the particle *-dān* because this particle encodes mainly (exhaustive) identification. In such cases, the particle *-dān* gives different pragmatic interpretations. (7a) adds emphasis on the assertion as made by the speaker and triggers a kind of factive, cause and result presupposition (I did beat him BECAUSE I have my own reasons), or adversative ‘justification’ (I did beat him BUT he deserves it) conveying denial or contrast between two ideas, with an argumentative orientation. By argumentative orientation, it is meant that the possibility of adding subsequent argument or explanation on the part of the speaker aimed at justifying or smoothing out his ill treatment. The particle *-dān* compulsorily invokes alternatives to the focused constituent. This is one of the reasons for which this particle is rarely used with finite verbs. When this particle does not invoke alternative, it signifies other discourse functions (speaker’s attitude).

However, the particle *-dān* seems to be felicitous in other contexts than question answer pairs.

8. paḷatta vāṅgadān sonnēn tiṅga sollale
 fruit.obl.acc buy.inf.dān to say.past.1.s eat.inf say.inf.neg
 ‘I only asked you to buy the fruits, I didn’t ask you to eat (them)’

In (8), the two verbs occur as part of a small set of variables present contextually, and they are in contrast to each other. The speaker gets to choose one of them as prominent, that which is expected from the hearer and focalizes only that action. The verbs are not finite in nature and the particle is added to an infinite verb. In this case, the particle *-dān* is in conformity with its primary meaning of exhaustiveness, which depends also on the context of the discourse.⁹ In all other instances of verb focus with the particle *-dān*, it may be a case of emphasis or other discourse functions like argumentation.

Generally speaking, speakers communicate additional meaning by means of implicatures. Hearers interpret this meaning through inferences based on the context of communication rather than just on the literary content of the statement. In the following example, the focused constituent does not correspond to the wh-question.

(9-9a) is a conversation between father and son about the son’s bad results in the exams.

9. ēn riṣaḷṭ nallā illa?
 why result good no
 ‘why is the result bad?’

- 9a. nān pariṭcai nallādān eḷudinēṅ
 I exam well.dān write.past.1.s
 ‘(‘paradoxically’/ as for as I am concerned) I did write the exam well’

⁹ “... I suggest that the impression of contrastiveness which we receive when we hear such sentences arises from particular inferences which we draw on the basis of given conversational contexts” (Lambrecht 1994:290).

(9a) is not a direct answer to the question in (9) and the focused element is an adverbial. Here, the conversational implicature does not correspond to the entailments of the literary meaning of the sentence and the meaning is inferred from the contextual factors with the interaction of linguistic expressions. Note that (9a) would be a felicitous answer to a question like ‘*how did you write the exam?*’ In (9a), there is neither assertion nor identification of the reason of the bad result. Thus we note in this case the particle *-dān* creates a presuppositional structure and allows an interpretation by the addressee: “If the result is bad, however it is not my fault... because (paradoxically/strangely) I wrote the exam well...”

In (10a) a temporal adverbial is focalized.

10. ēn vēla innum ārambikkala?
 Why work yet begin.inf.neg
 ‘why hasn’t the work begun yet?’

10a. mēstri ippadān vandāru
 supervisor now.dān come.past.3.m
 ‘(because) the supervisor (only) arrived just now (so we could not begin earlier)
 (and we are going to start the work immediately)’

This sentence, like (9a), is not a direct response to the question. However, the whole sentence provides the addressee with new and non-presupposed information. This utterance implies a presupposition (or common ground between the participants) that “the supervisor should come before starting the work or without the supervisor the work can not be started”. The focus particle *-dān* gives a causal interpretation but not that of identification.

The particle *-dān* can be used in an answer both to *wh*-questions and polar yes/no questions. The particle *-dān* entails (exhaustive) identification and presupposition. This particle is more frequently used with nominal arguments than verbs. A sentence with a contrastive focus is uttered felicitously if there are alternatives to the focused expressions that could replace the focused expression in any given context. The particle *-dān* compulsorily invokes alternatives to focused constituent. But verbal predicates are less readily contrasted than arguments in *wh*-questions. This is one of the reasons why this particle is rarely used with finite verbs. As a result of its exhaustive semantics, the particle *-dān* is normally occurs with arguments in an answer to a polar or *wh*-question.

2.1. Nominalization of the verb

As already stated, it becomes evident that exhaustivity is a basic feature of the particle *-dān*. The meaning of ‘exhaustivity’ is also marked in Tamil by the nominalization of the verb using a participial noun. This process involves a movement of the nominalized verb to the left of the sentence, and as a consequence the focused argument occupies the post verbal or the right most position. Clefting or nominalization is less frequently used than the other two structures discussed in this paper. In this section, I attempt to show how the

particle *-dān* is, as a rule obligatory, on nouns whenever the statement or answer could provide alternatives.

11. yār poy sonṇāṅga ?
 who lie.past.3.pl
 Who lied?
- 11a. mandiri poy sonṇāru
 minister lie.past.3m.h
 ‘(the) minister lied’
- 11b. mandiri**dān** poy sonṇāru
 minister.**dān** lie.past.3m.h
 ‘(It was (the)) **minister** who lied’
- 11c. poy sonṇadu mandiri**dān**
 lie.past.nom minister.**dān**
 It was the minister who lied
- 11d. poy sonṇadu mandiri (...)
 lie.past.nom minister
 (the) one who lied was (the) minister
 ‘It was the minister who lied (...)

A question like (11) may give rise to different replies like (11a, 11b, 11c, 11d and 11e). But each reply is relevant only in a distinctive context. The answers (11a and 11b) are same as the (2a & 2b) and will not be taken into consideration here. Let us, however, consider 11c and 11d as below.

Sentences 11b and 11c are more felicitous answers than (11a) to the question in (11). Both 11b and 11c with the particle *-dān* imply exclusive identification of the focused nominal in a set of other possible alternatives. Sentence (11b) does not involve any movement and is in situ focus. But in (11c) the verb is nominalized, usually known as participial noun, and is moved to the left or precedes the focused noun. The focused noun occupies the post verbal position, or precisely the extreme right. This position is usually reserved for the predicate. Bhat has shown that in Dravidian, pragmatic functions are directly represented by word order distinctions and underlined the pragmatic relevance of relative clause formation (Bhat, 2008). In the same vein, the use of participial noun also can be regarded as a pragmatic device. There is also a parallel between the relative participle and the participial noun, in which the focused noun occupies the post verbal position.

Even though, (11d) is grammatically well formed, the absence of *-dān* necessitates two remarks: 1) this utterance conveys simply an assertion with emphasis but does not convey exhaustivity and 2) it sounds incomplete from the point of view of discourse. This statement needs further piece of completive information to be felicitous as in (11e). For instance in (11e) a cause-consequence relation is understood between the two conjuncts:

11e. poysonnadu mandiri tuṅbap-pḍuradu makkal
to lie.past.nom Minister suffer.past.nom people

The one who lied is the minister but the ones who suffer are the people
(The minister's lie caused people's suffering)

As can be inferred from (11c and 11d), the leftward movement of the verb triggers nominalization. The change in information structure results the nominalization of the verb. However the focus particle *-dāṇ* is necessary on pragmatic grounds due to its semantics of exhaustivity.

12. nāṇ tēḍunadu inda puttagamdāṇ
I look for.past.nom this book.dāṇ

'It is this is this book that I was looking for (and not any other)'

In (12), the object is brought to focus and occupies syntactically at the right most position in the sentence. The focused constituent is identified exclusively by elimination of other type of books. In addition, the focalized constituent is preceded by the deictic particle which is a demonstrative adjective. Like in 11d, this sentence also calls for the same remark, i.e. without the focus particle *-dāṇ*, the sentence will not be considered to be pragmatically complete.

13. ippō avuru irukkiradu pārisledāṇ
now he.h be.pres.nom paris.loc.dāṇ

'at present he's only in Paris (and not any where else)'

13a. avaru ippō irukkiradu pārisleyā? lanḍanleyā? ḍellīlēyā?
he.h now be.pres.nom Paris.loc.inetr London.loc.inter Delhi.loc.inter

(lit. Is it Paris, London, or Delhi is he living now?) Where does he live now? In Paris, London or Delhi?

(13) is an answer to an alternative question (13a). Generally, an alternative question contains a set of alternatives as answers in the question itself. The focused nominal in (13) is not a new information. But the fact that 'Paris is one of the possible places where the person might live' is available from the context of the discourse. The list of possible alternatives (Paris or London or Delhi) is understood from the question. When speakers make assertions, the identification of the entity is understood from among the entities enumerated as a background or a presupposed information. Only the identified entity receives the focus marker.

14. avuru pōṇadu 8maṇi bassiledāṇ aṅge 12maṇikkudāṇ varuvār
he go.past.nom 8 hour bus.loc.dāṇ there 12hour.dative.dāṇ come.fut.3.m.s

(since) he only left at 8 O' clock bus (consequently) he can only arrive at 12 O' clock.

'He only left by the 8 O' clock bus (so) he can arrive only by 12 O' clock'

Sentence (14) is an answer to a query on the expected arrival of somebody ('why has he not arrived yet?' or 'at what time would he arrive?'). The particle *-dāṇ* is used twice with the meaning of 'only' and the focused noun phrases constitute new information. The focalized locative noun phrase (*8maṇibasle* 'at 8 O' clock bus') is identified exclusively

and contextually and the other buses are excluded. In the second part of the sentence, the time of arrival is restricted by eliminating other possible timings. In this sentence the repetition of *-dān* in the embedded clause gives a causal interpretation (since – as a consequence).

The nominalized (verbal participial) cleft construction is less frequent. This structure involves movement and the focused constituent occurs at the rightmost end of the sentence. This structure focuses readily nominal arguments but not predicates. Any tensed non-finite verb form, like relative participles and participial nouns, impose a syntactic constraint. The argument, whether subject or object, is moved to the right of the verb. This syntactic position adds focus or emphasis on the nominal argument, which is generally accompanied by high pitch and the particle *-dān*.

2.3. Use of the particle *-ē*

As mentioned earlier, the particle *-ē* is used as a reflexive particle which can be translated into English more or less as ‘X-self’. In addition, this particle responds widely to polar (yes/no) questions. The polar (yes/no) question does not ask for (new) information but questions the truth value of the statement. This particle invokes polarity focus (also known in the literature as *verum focus*). This particle *-ē* is more frequently used with verbs and encodes pragmatic function of common ground / shared knowledge. But this particle does not entail exhaustivity effect. A noun or noun phrase evokes other meanings such as ‘even’, or other discourse functions like ‘speakers attitude’. In some cases it invokes the preceding events as evidences for the statement as presuppositions.

(15a) and (15b) are both relevant answers to the question (15), but they do not entail same conversational implicature. In response to this type of polar interrogatives as in (15), the particle *-ē* can be used to draw attention to an obvious fact that is part of a common knowledge.

15. mēstri vanduṭṭārā?
supervisor come.perf.past.3.m.inter
‘has the supervisor arrived?’

15a. mēstri vanduṭṭāru
supervisor come.perf.past.3.m
‘supervisor has arrived’

15b. mēstri vannduṭṭārē
supervisor come.perf.past.3.m.ē
‘(indeed) the supervisor has arrived (don’t you see- every thing is fine.. !)’

The unmarked sentence (15a) is just a reply to the question and it corresponds to what is called as information focus. In (15b), the particle *-ē* is added to the verbal predicate and

has a semantics of common ground.¹⁰ In this case, as can be seen from the English translation, the focus particle *-ē* is used to draw attention to an obvious fact, through contextual evidence, that the '*supervisor has arrived and is at work*'. The fact that the supervisor has arrived can be verified on the spot given the extra linguistic evidences. For instance - 'the workers have started working or we hear the sounds of the machines and one can imagine a situation where it is conventional that in the context of the factory without the supervisor, the workers would never turn on the machines. The workers would wait for instructions from the supervisor before they can start working' - so many obvious and contextual reasons or evidences to assume that the hearer shares the idea that the supervisor arrived. Given the context that the particle *-ē* prompts a shared knowledge, the speaker of the utterance (15b) creates a common ground (Cf. Stalnakar 2002: 704). In addition, the utterance (15b) also conveys reassurance to the hearer on the fact that the supervisor arrived as expected, and so on.

The particle *-ē* can be added to two different constituents with other functions in the same utterance.

15c. mēstri 8 maṇikkē vanduffārē
 supervisor 8 hour.dat.ē come.perf.past.3.m.ē
 '(indeed) the supervisor has come already at 8 o' clock (don't you make out)'

In (15c) the particle is added to two constituents: 1) the temporal adjunct noun phrase 'at 8 o' clock', and 2) the verbal predicate. The temporal adjunct is a new information and is not part of the presupposed information. The particle *-ē* adds emphasis to this new information and thus can be translated as '**already** at 8' o clock'. The verb phrase represents the reply to the polar interrogative. With the verb, the particle *-ē* triggers, as in previous examples, among other things, shared knowledge or common ground.¹¹ As can be inferred from the translation (*as you might know / as you are expected to know*), the speaker assumes and believes that the addressee knows or shares the information about the arrival of the supervisor.

Note, this particle *-ē* can be used in a negative sentence, which implies always a shared knowledge or common ground.

15d. mēstri varaleyē
 supervisor come.neg.ē
 the supervisor has not come (as you can see!)

In the following set of examples,

¹⁰ "...notion of common ground – the mutually recognized shared information in a situation in which an act of trying to communicate takes place"... "In the simple picture, the common ground is just common or mutual belief, and what a speaker presupposes is what she believes to be common or mutual belief". "The common beliefs of the parties to a conversation are the beliefs they share, and that they recognize that they share..." (Stalnakar 2002:704).

¹¹ Pragmatic presupposition, common ground and common belief, seem to be related notions. (Lambrecht 1994:345, note 12).

16. ḍākṭar innekki varuvārā?
 doctor today come.fut.3.m.s.inter
 'will the doctor come today?'

16a. innekki veḷḷikkeḷama, avuru veḷḷikkeḷamayile varavmāṭṭār
 today Friday he Friday.loc come.inf.negative.imp.3.m
 'today is Friday, he does not come on Fridays'

16b. innekki veḷḷikkeḷama, avuru veḷḷikkeḷamayile varavēmāṭṭār
 today Friday he Friday.loc come.inf.ē negative.imp.3.m
 'today is Friday, he never comes on Fridays'

16c. innekki veḷḷikkeḷama, avuru veḷḷikkeḷamayile varavmāṭṭārē
 today Friday he Friday.loc come.inf. negative.imp.3.m.ē
 (don't you know!) today is Friday, he does not come on Fridays (I am sorry for you...)

(16a) is an unmarked answer to (16) which is a polar interrogative. In (16b & 16c), the particle is added to the verb phrase but structurally at two different positions. In (16b) with infinitive of the main verb, where the particle *-ē* is translated as “never” adding emphasis to the negation of the statement that *'the doctor will not come'*. But in (16c) the particle is added to the verb phrase (verbal predicate) and the entire verb phrase occurs under focus domain. When the particle is added to the verbal predicate in (16c), it entails a shared knowledge between the participants in the discourse that *'today being a Friday, the doctor would not come'*. The hearer (the one who uttered 16a) is expected to be aware of this information, being a patient of that doctor. Here the particle *-ē* is used to draw attention on an obvious fact, which would be evident from the context, part of common knowledge or shared knowledge.

The following sentence (17) is part of a telephone conversation.

17. nīṅga uṅga vīṭṭileyē iruṅga nānē vandu pākkirēn
 you your house.loc.ē be.pres.2 I.ē come.advp see.pres.1.s
 'You just stay at your own home, I shall come and see you myself'

The focus particle is used with two arguments in two different clauses. The referents of the foci (*your house* and *I*), respectively possessive and pronoun are definite, in the sense that their identity is known to the speaker and the hearer. ‘The speaker assures the hearer that she (the speaker) would come and meet her (the hearer) at her house and asks the hearer just to stay in her house itself’. The discourse particle *-ē* adds emphasis to the referent of the nominals. Both nouns (noun phrases) with the particle *-ē* do not provide a new information, but are understood to be part of a shared knowledge, and hence adds emphasis to the arguments.

The particle *-ē* does not entail exhaustivity but can provide other alternatives. (18) is a piece of conversation regarding a money deal, where both speaker and addressee know the borrower.

18. nīṅgaḷē paṇatta kēḷuṅga, nānum avara pāttu kēkkirēn
 you.ē money.acc to ask.pres.2.s I.also he.acc see.advp ask.pres.1.s

'You ask (him) for the money (yourself), I will also (on my part) meet with him and claim (the money)'

'The speaker suggests the addressee that it would be better that (YOU) the -hearer (her self) claims (directly) for the money lent and adds that she would also (for her part) meet the borrower and ask for the money'. The fact that 'the particle does not mean exclusive identity' is evident from the second clause with coordinate conjunctive *-um*, where the speaker places herself as the second possible alternative to claim for the money lent.

If the focused verb (verb phrase) does not correspond to the polar yes/no question, the particle *-ē* may have different discourse functions. In the following conversation the question (19) would require a yes / no reply.

19. A nī innekki sinimāvukku variyā?
 you today cinema.dat to come.inter
 Will you come to a cinema today?

19a. B nān innekki sinimāvukku varale, paḍikkaṇumē...
 I today cinema.dat to come.neg study.must.ē

I am not coming to the cinema today, (because) I have to study (don't you remember!)

(19a) is not a direct reply, instead the particle *-ē* entails a cause and effect or an evidential reading. There is however a suggestion that B's activities are part of common ground or shared knowledge between the participants in conversation. B is reminding A that B has to study and as a consequence B cannot come for the film. The addressee seems to accommodate with this interpretation of the information.

In (20), topic of the previous utterance or given information is brought to 'focus'. In modern spoken Tamil we notice many instances of this type of expressions where a background or presupposed information is repeated with the particle *-ē*, which produces an interpretation equivalent to 'even'.

20. A rāman kāṭṭukku pōnān
 R forest.dat to go.past.3.m.s
 Rama (went to the forest) went into exile'

20a. B rāmanē kāṭṭukku pōnā nāma enna agiradu
 R.ē forest.dat to go.cond we what become.pres.neut

If / (even) Rama himself went [=had to go] into exile, what will become of us?

This type of phrases with the notion of 'even' entails identification without excluding any members of the potential variables. In (20) the speaker A narrates the story of Rama, mythological hero-god, who was exiled to the forest for 14 years. The hearer B (20a) responds to this statement and conveys his feeling of frustration or disappointment about 'what would happen to us -ordinary human beings- when compared to what had happened to Rama the hero-god'.

Example (20) illustrates that the discourse particle *-ē* is used to draw attention to a fact or an event which is already part of the shared knowledge. Further this corroborates König's remark on the link between reflexive intensifiers and focus marker, "the referent of the focus is considered as high ranking than the other members of the set of alternatives or the referent is central and the relevant periphery being made up by the subordinate or entourage of these powerful persons" (König 2006:7).

The following example (21) illustrates clearly that the particle *-ē* implies the notion of persons with high rank and is related to the meaning of *even*.

21. nī uṅga ammāvaiyē kiṇḍalseyriyā ?
 you your.pl.gen mother.acc.ē makefun.pres.2.s.inter

‘(So) You make fun of **even** your own mother?’ (but you are not expected to do so!)

The argument *mother* is a person of high rank in this particular cultural space or central in a given event. The utterance (21) expresses the speaker's contention about the addressee's ill-treatment of her mother and it is implied that one is not expected to mock at his mother, a high ranking person, as it is considered disrespectful.

The particle *-ē* does not answer wh-questions but responds widely to polar yes/no questions and entails semantics of common ground / shared knowledge. The polar yes/no questions are used to ask for confirmation with respect to the truth value of the statement. The verb focus in Tamil responds readily to polar focus or verum focus. As noticed in the previous sections, the particle *-ē* does not correspond to new information. In contrast, a non verbal constituent with the particle *-ē* invokes different meanings (even, already, cause-consequence, speaker's appreciation or emotion on the event referred to in the discourse etc.). Each particle, in fact, entails a particular set of question answer congruence. A specific feature of this type of *-ē* focused utterances involves shared knowledge among the participants. The shared knowledge (common ground, presupposition) is discernible from the background material and the context of the discourse. The particle *-ē*, in contrast to *-dān*, does not entail exhaustivity.

2.4. Combination of *-dān* and *-ē*

In the previous two sections, it is discussed how the two particles *-dān* and *-ē* can occur independently. There are other cases where these particles can be used in combination as in *-dānē* and *-ēdān*, with different semantic nuances namely: + exhaustivity and – shared information; - exhaustivity and + shared information. It will be evident from the following examples that the semantics of the right most particle is dominant.

22. inda bēṅkil kaḍan koḍuppāṅgaḷā?
 This bank.loc loan give.fut.3.p.inter
 ‘Does this bank lend money (to customers)?’

22a. kēṭṭā koḍuppāṅga
ask.cond give.fut.3.p
'They would (lend) if applied for!'

22b. kēṭṭādān koḍuppāṅga
ask.cond.dān give.fut.3.p
'Only if (one) applies for, they would lend'

22c. kēṭṭādānē koḍuppāṅga
ask.cond.dān.ē give.fut.3.p
'(As you know) they would only lend if (one) applied for'

(22a) is an unmarked utterance and it provides a new information to the hearer. In (22b & c) the particles *-dān* and *-dānē* are added to the conditional clause with different implications. In (22b), the particle *-dān* gives an interpretation of exclusive or restrictive conditional and adds emphasis to the fact that one must apply to get a loan from the bank. This particle preserves its prevailing semantics of exhaustivity. But in (22c) though there is a composite particle *-dānē*, this particle implies only shared knowledge (or common belief) because the right most component dominates semantically. (22c) implies that the hearer is expected to *'be aware of the condition that one should apply for a loan to get it'*. In (22c) the particle *-dān* has lost its exclusive or restrictive (value) meaning when compared to (22b).

In (23) the two combinations are used with different shades of meaning.

23. nīṅga ippō eṅgē irukkīṅga?
You now where to be.pres.2.pl
'Where are you now?'

23a. nāṅga aṅḡi varusamā delliyilevēdān irukkōm
We 5 year.since Delhi.loc.ē.dān be.pres.1.p
'We have been continuously living (only) in Delhi for the past five years (we have not moved to any other place)'

23b. nāṅga aṅḡi varusamā delliyildānē irukkōm
We 5 year.since Delhi.loc.dān.ē be.pres.1.p

'It is in Delhi that we have been living for the last five years (as you know/ I presume that you know).'

In (23a) the particle *-ē* in addition to its emphatic value gives a durative interpretation. In (23b) the exhaustivity of the particle *-dān* does not seem to be crucial. The semantics of rightmost particle *-ē* is dominant in the interpretation of the meaning. As discussed in previous section, *-ē* entails shared knowledge, which is explicit from the expression "as you know" as marked in the English translation.

24. unna appādānē aḍiccāṅga pravāyilla aḷuvāda
 you.acc father.dān.ē beat.past.3.h never mind weep.neg.imp.2.s
 ‘it is just your father who beat you, don’t you mind it, and cry’

In (24), the statement is neither informative nor the focused nominal is new. The context is ‘where a mother is convincing her crying child’. The implied meaning is based on a conceptual situation of cultural common ground and on the values shared between the speaker and the hearer. The statement implies that “*it is only your father (so dear to you?) who beat you, so never mind, do not cry*”. The focalized noun “the father” known to the speaker and the addressee, is identified among other possible variables and the particle *-ē* sets the scene for a successive discourse intended at pacifying the child and giving good reason for the father’s attitude towards the addressee –the child-.

3. CONCLUSION:

The nature of the two frequently used focus structures as expressed by *dān* and *-ē* are illustrated in detail here. The present analysis clearly shows that the focus particles *-dān* and or *-ē* are subject to categorical restrictions and can encode different semantic-pragmatic values. In Tamil, information focus is usually unmarked and there exists a contrast between argument focus and verb focus with respect to question answer congruence. ‘Argument focus’ answers wh-question and polar yes/no question whereas the ‘verb focus’ answers only polar (yes/no) question. This distinction is illustrated in sections §2.2 and §2.3.

The table below is presented with different functions of these two particles.

Table: Overview of discourse-semantic functions of the two particles:

	Focus	Focus	O.D.F*	Exhaustivity	CG°
<i>-dān</i>	N/ NP Ex : 2a, 2d, 5, 6a, 8a, 11b, 11c, 13, 14	V/ VP Ex : 8	Ex: 7a, 9a, 10a, 14a,	+	
<i>-ē</i>	V/ VP Ex : 15b, 16c		Ex: 15c, 16b, 17, 19b, 20a, 21		+
<i>-dānē</i>	N / NP		Ex: 22b, 24		+
<i>-ēdān</i>	N / NP			+	

*O.D.F “Other Discourse Functions” (speaker’s intention, only, even, argumentation, cause-effect).

° CG “Common ground”.

What is hypothesized here based on the present analysis is: 1) The particle *-dān* is primarily concerned with ‘argument focus’ and encodes semantics of ‘exhaustivity’. If the utterance does not allow identificational (exhaustive) reading, the particle assumes

other discourse functions. 2) The particle $-\bar{e}$ is mainly concerned with ‘verb focus’ and encodes semantics of ‘common ground’ / ‘shared knowledge’. This particle assumes other discourse functions with a noun (argument).

The particle $-d\bar{a}n$ answers two types of questions namely ‘wh-question’ and ‘polar yes/no question’ and encodes semantics of ‘exhaustivity’. ‘Identificational (exhaustive) focus’ is necessarily marked morphologically with the particle $-d\bar{a}n$. This particle is more readily associated with ‘noun focus’. The particle $-d\bar{a}n$ is compatible only with questions that involve (exhaustive or contrastive) identification. In other words, one can assume that argument focus in Tamil is sensitive to (exhaustive) identification. This is also true even with dislocated (cleft) constructions by nominalization of the verb using the participial noun form. In question-answer pairs, ‘verb focus’ does not fit into the exhaustive semantics of the particle $-d\bar{a}n$. This might be one of the reasons why the focus marker $-d\bar{a}n$ does not very frequently occur as ‘verb focus’.

The particle $-\bar{e}$ answers the polar yes/no question and entails a semantics of common ground/shared beliefs among the discourse participants. This particle is more readily used in verb focus. The focused verb corresponds to polar focus or ‘verum focus’. The polar yes/no question is commonly used for asking for a confirmation to what is stated. The expected answer should provide just the truth value of the expressed statement on a polarity scale, and naturally this does not involve any possible alternatives. This might explain the prevalent association of verb with the particle $-\bar{e}$.

These two particles are also used in compound form. The combination of these two particles, as discussed in section §2.3, shows a range of distinguishing discourse functions. The syntactic position of the particle seems to play a major role in determining their semantic-pragmatic interpretation. The semantics of the rightmost particle is dominant. However each particle maintains its proper semantic-pragmatic value. This shows clearly how these values are not interchangeable.

Focus particles operate not only on discourse referents i.e. entities and statements, but also on truth values and on non-truth-conditional meanings, like implicatures, and fulfil other discourse functions like cause-consequence, speaker’s appreciation or emotion on the event referred to in the discourse, evidential or adversative interpretation, and other meanings like ‘even and already’. It is quite interesting to note that these secondary interpretations are subject to constraints. Verbs or verb phrases with the particle $-d\bar{a}n$ and nouns, adverbials and adjuncts with the particle $-\bar{e}$ imply the above interpretations.

List of abbreviations:

1. first person; 2. second person; 3. third person; acc. accusative; advp. adverbial participle; cond. conditional; dat. dative; dem.adj. demonstrative adjective; fut. future; gen. genitive; h. honorific; imp. imperative; inf. infinitive; inter. interrogative; loc. locative; m. masculine; neg. negative; neut. neuter; obl. oblique; perf. perfective; pl. plural; pres. present; s. singular.

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