

TAMIL – JAPANESE RELATIONSHIP: /r/ ALTERNATION

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Tamil – Japanese relationship, a hypothesis of Professor Susumu Ohno (of Gakushuin University, Tokyo), is now receiving careful attention by Dravidianists. He has published a series of articles and books, both in English and in Japanese (an upto date bibliography is provided by Zvelebil (1985) which is reproduced at the end of this paper) which deal with the subject. Professor Kamil V. Zvelebil, an eminent Dravidianist, has recently studied Ohno's works and has noted his observations in a paper: "Tamil and Japanese - are they related. The hypothesis of Susumu Ohno" (1985). According to him, the most important among Ohno's writings are *Sound Correspondences Between Tamil and Japanese* (Gakushuin University, 1980), and two papers, one dealing with the loss of the initial c- in Tamil and s- in Japanese (1983), and another with the intervocalic stops in the two languages (1983). His observations on the items found in Ohno's *Sound Correspondences* are useful and encouraging. He says (1985 : 119 - 20) :

"The majority of items are, at this point in our knowledge, of such nature that it is difficult to say anything either positive or negative about them. In the context of possible regular phonetic correspondences, if and when these are worked out at some future date, such lexical pairs may be ultimately accepted as legitimate cognates. Ohno certainly cites a few comparisons which are striking, either because they indicate certain phonetic regularities, or because they reveal closely related and yet very specialized meanings (referring perhaps to affinities in culture) matched by reasonable similarity in sound shapes, or, finally, because they manifest a possible correspondence in derivational apparatus.

Thus, e.g., items 101, 102 and 192 show a regular correspondence Ta. p- : Jap. f-: *pari* (DED, 3268) 'to run' : Jap. *fasu* id.; Ta. *paru* (DED, 3277) 'become large' : Jap. *faru* id.; Ta. *piti* 'to grasp etc., catch' (DED, 3412): Jap. *fisi* 'to grasp, etc.'. Or, Ta. /- : Jap. /r- is manifested e.g. by 44 Ta. *kaḷ* 'stone' (DED, 1091): Jap. *kara* id., by 46 Ta. *kalai* 'to disperse, be scattered etc.' (DED, 1102): Jap. *karu* 'to depart, separate etc.'.

As instances of similarities in items of very specialized meaning one may quote e.g. 7 Ta. *accu* 'weaver's reed instrument for pressing down the threads of the woof' (DED, 45): Jap. *aza* > *aze* 'weaver's instrument for pressing down the threads'; or 27, 28 Ta. *avuri*, *aviri* (DED, 228). 'indigo plant': Jap. *awo* 'blue (sometimes verging into green)'; Jap. *awi* 'indigo plant'.

A possible correspondence of derivational morphs may be indicated by such items as 47 Ta. *kav-il* (DED, 1121) 'be capsized' : Jap. *kaf-eru* 'be capsized'; or 38 Ta. *kat-ir* 'ear of grain', 'spear of grass' (DED, 1002): Jap. *kas-ira* 'spear of grass'; Ta. *ciluppu* (187) 'to churn, stir, agitate' DED, 2118): Jap. *sir-ofu* 'to agitate each other'.

It is these three types of etyma which need a rigorous, detailed investigation."

As Zvebil rightly pointed out, Ohno's items found in *Sound Correspondences* need a rigorous and detailed investigation. This paper makes an attempt to study certain items provided by Ohno where the phenomenon of an l/r alternation is found. Among the 357 items provided in the book, about 60 show that Tamil l, l, l have a regular reflex of r in Japanese. But in a few items the Tamil laterals l and l change into y/s/z:

Ta. kal-i 'peg to keep a yoke in a place, etc.'

Ja. kas-i 'rod to keep a yoke of boat'

Ta. mal-u 'axe'

Ja. mas-akari 'broadaxe'

Ta. cul-al 'eddy, whirl etc.'

Ja. uz-u 'eddy, whirl'

Ta. cel-i 'to thrive'

Ja. siz-i 'to thrive'

Ta. ul 'to grow old'

Ja. oy-u 'to grow old'

Ta. kol-u 'fat'

Ja. koy-u 'to grow stout'

Ta. kal-i 'gruel'

Ja. kay-u 'gruel'

Ta. kul-ir 'to feel cool, get numbed (as in death), coldness'

Ja. koy-u 'to be chilled to the bone, be benumbed with cold'

Ta. mul 'to kindle, catch fire, be kindled'

Ja. moy-u 'to burn, be in flames, be kindled, catch fire'

Except in the above instances, the Tamil l and l regularly change into r in Japanese. The regular reflex of Tamil l in Japanese is r. The following are cited as examples from among the 60 items provided by Ohno in which we encounter the l - l - l / r alternation :

3. T. ak-al : to spread, widen, extend, depart, go away. (D. 9)
J. ak-aru : to spread, disperse, part, leave.
4. T. anka-l-ay : to lament, grieve, sorrow, be envious, covet. (D. 33)
J. agar-si : to be lamentable, grievous.
16. T. amal-i : tumult, uproar, bustle. (D. 140)
J. amar-u : to be boisterous, uproarious. (dialectal)
42. T. kam-al : to emit fragrance. (D. 1045)
J. kam-ari : fragrance.
J. kam-aru : to smell, scent. (dialectal)
44. T. kal : stone, pebble, boulder, precious stone, milestone. (D. 1091)
J. kar-a : stone.
46. T. kal ai : to disperse (as an assembly, a defeated army), be scattered
(as clouds), be ruined. (D. 1102)
J. kar-u : to depart, separate.
47. T. kav-il : to be capsized, turned bottom upwards. (D. 1121)
J. kaf-eru : to be capsized, return
51. T. kal-ai : to weed, pluck out, pull up, extirpate. (D. 1157)
J. kar-u : to cut (grass), reap, share, trim, weed.
61. T. cal-avai : bleaching or washing of cloth, washed cloth. (D. 1957)
J. sar-asu : to wash and bleach.
62. T. cal-i : to sift. (D. 1959)
J. sar-u > zaru : sieve.
65. T. call-al : mud, slush. (D. 1993)
J. sar-afu : to dredge, clean (out), sweep (mud).
79. T. tal-ai : to flourish, thrive, grow luxuriantly (as plants), be abundant
(as a flood), prosper (as a family, people, state). (D. 2545)
J. tar-u : to flourish, to be abundant, sufficient.
80. T. tal-ar : to grow, weary, enfeebled, grow slack, become flabby from age,
become relaxed as a tie or grasp. (D. 2551)
J. tar-asi : to be weary, foolish; simpleton.
129. T. val-umpu : fat, suet. (D. 4337)
J. far-e > bare : fat existing between skin and intestine of an animal.
130. T. val-ai : small beam, long piece of wood. (D. 4344)
J. far-i : beam of a house.
140. T. kal : leg, foot, base (of tree), family, relationship. (D. 1238)
J. kar-a : family, clan.

148. T. tāl : to fall low, be lowered, descend, decline as the sun, sink in water, sink in circumstances or repute, decrease, decay, degenerate, despond, be dejected, prove inferior, fail, stay, reat, droop. (D. 2597)
 J. tar-u : to hang down.
150. T. tāl : bolt, bar. (D. 2598)
 J. sār-u : bolt, fastener (of a door)
151. T. tāl-i : large pan pot or vessel with wide mouth, jar, burial urn. (D. 2600)
 J. tar-u : cask, barrel.
180. T. il-aku : to shake (intr.), agitate. (D. 432)
 J. ir-aku > yuraku : to shake, swing, sway.
185. T. kil-i : to tear, rend, split, cut, rip up, lacerate. (D. 1316)
 J. kīru- : to cut, chop, hack, carve, slash, saw, shear.
195. T. pil-i : to squeeze, express, press out with hands, drip, exude, shed or pour (as rain). (D. 3440)
 J. fir-u : to press out, drip, exude.
196. T. mil-i : eye, eyeball, knowledge, wisdom. (D. 4456)
 J. mir-u : to look, see.
199. T. vil : to sell, put on sale, be sold. (D. 4448)
 J. *wir-u > uru : to sell; offer (thing) for sale.
- 200 T. vil-ambu : to speak, say, proclaim openly, make public, reveal. (D. 4460)
 J. *wir-afu > urafu : to divine, tell a person's fortune.
219. T. ul : inside, interior of a place, mind, heart, a locative ending. (D. 600)
 J. ur-a : inside of something, back, rear, reverse side.
228. T. kul-ai : cluster, bunch (as of fruits, flowers). (D. 1504)
 J. kur-a : plant, bunch. (dialectal)
229. T. kul-appu : to mix, stir, confuse, disturb, bewilder, disconcert. (D. 1510)
 J. kūr-ufu : to become insane.
262. T. mūl-ai : brain, marrow. (D. 4146)
 J. mur-ato : (the most important) viscera of human body; brain work.
285. T. pul-ar : to dawn. (D. 3531)
 J. *fōr-a > fora : dawn. (used as in *asa-fora-ke*, 'dawning')
290. T. mul-u : all, entire, whole, large. (D. 4095)
 J. *mōr-ō : all,
296. T. kūr : to crowd together, assemble, muster. (D. 1595)
 J. *kōr-u > kōru : to crowd together, concentrate.

316. T. tel-i : to strew, scatter, sprinkle, sow as seed, cast up in sifting, winnow, (D. 2827)
 J. tir-u : to strew, scatter, fall from a tree.
330. T. vel-avela : to quake, tremble (as one's limbs). (D. 4451)
 J. wer-awera : to shake one's body under the influence of wine.
332. T. vël : dart, spear. (D. 4555)
 J. fer-a : spatula.
347. T. ol-ukku : to draw out, as gold thread. (D. 851)
 J. ör-u : to draw out a thread, weave.
350. T. col-i : to strip off, peel off, tear. (D. 2336)
 J. sör-u : to shave.

1. Interchange of l/r in Dravidian Languages

Interchange of l and r is a phenomenon that is found in Dravidian languages. Caldwell (1856 : 159-60) noticed it first and explained it with many examples. He says : "In the Dravidian family, this interchange of r and l is one of common occurrence. Sometimes l is corrupted into r; but in a large number of cases r appears to be the original and l the corruption. In the case of the distinctively Dravidian r and l, the change is uniformly of the latter nature; and the change of the ordinary semi-vowel r into the corresponding l, though not uniform, is an exceedingly common one, and one which may be regarded as a characteristic of colloquial Tamil. It is common in Malayalam also." Caldwell in more than one instances emphasizes that in the interchange between r and l, the former seems to be the original and the latter the altered sound. However, he has not failed to mention that in certain instances l seemed to be the original sound. He has the following to say about the l changing into r:

"l changes into r. Whilst the ordinary change is that of r into l, the change of l into r is occasionally met with, and forms one of the peculiarities of Tulu. Tulu generally changes the final l of the other Dravidian languages into r - e. g. *vil*; Tam. a bow (*billu*, Can.) becomes in Tulu *bir*. In this instance it cannot be doubted that l was the original termination of the word, for we find the same root west of the Indus in the Brahui *billa*, a bow. A similar interchange between l and r takes place in the Central Asia. The l of Manchu is r in Mongolian. l sometimes changes into r - e. g. compare *nil*, Tam. to stand, with *niruttu*, to cause to stand.

In Zend and Old Persian, l was unknown, and r was systematically used instead. In Telugu, *lu*, the pluralising suffix of nouns, is sometimes changed into *ru*. This change, however, of l into r is not systematic, as in Tulu,

but exceptional. In Tamil, l is euphonicly changed, not into r, but into r̄ before all hard consonants - e.g. *palpala*, various, becomes in written compositions *parpala*. This proves that a change of l into r̄ is not contrary to Tamil laws of sound."

According to Caldwell, the change of l into r̄ is systematic in the Dravidian family of languages. Zvelebil in his *Comparative Dravidian Phonology* (1970) explains this systematic change in detail with the necessary examples. He thinks that the l / r̄ alternation seems to provide for an isogloss between South-Eastern (l-) and North-Western (r-) dialects. Commenting on the situation in Gond, he says: "Owing to aphaeresis and metathesis, the original V+*l developed into *l+V, and an alternation appeared of *l-/*r- which developed further into a systematically conditioned alternation of l/r̄. Illustrations: *il-a 'young etc.' *ia-i, *le-i > *ra-i > *leyor 'young man, young boy' / rayioḷ 'boy'." Further instances cited by him are : *ul-a-n > lōn : rōn 'house'; *ul > lopo, lopa/ropo ropā 'in, inside'.

1.1. Commenting on the Dravidian l, Zvelebil (1970 : 143) says :

"*l develops often to r̄ in Tulu both medially and finally, cf. Ta. *talai* : Tu. *tare* 'head', Ta. *ilai* : Tu. *ire* 'leaf', Ta. *muyal* : Tu. *muyeru* 'hare', Ta. *mulai* : Tu. *mire* 'women's breast', Ta. *kāl* : Tu. *kāru* 'leg' Ta. *pal* : Tu. *paru* 'animal's tooth', Ta. *vil* : Tu. *biru* 'bow'." Though the change of Tamil l to Tulu r̄ is somewhat uniform, the latter, in certain instances, retains the l. Zvelebil provides the following examples: Ta. *muyal* : Tu. *mola* 'a large hare', Ta. *kāl* 'leg, quarter': Tu. *kālu* 'quarter', Ta. *kal* : Tu. *kallu* 'stone', Ta. *kal* : Tu. *kalpuni* 'to study'. A few stems seem to have a widespread l/r̄ alternation. The following are cited as examples: Ta. *kal* 'to learn, to teach etc.' : Tu. *kalpuni* 'to learn' : Te. *karcu* 'to learn', *karapu* 'to teach' : Kol. *karp-* 'to learn' : Nk. *karap-* 'to learn' : Go. *karitāna* 'to learn' : Kui *grāmb-* 'to learn', *grap-p-* 'to teach' (DED. 1090); Ta. *el* 'to happen' : K. *erpar* 'preparation' : Te. *er̄cu* 'to set in order' : Ka. *er̄pātu* 'to be arranged, be ready to act' (DED. 766); Ta. *kāl* 'to vomit, etc.' : Ma. *kāruka* 'to retch', *kāruka* 'vomit' : Ko. *kar* 'to vomit' : Ka. *kāru* : Kod. *kar* : Tu. *kāruni* : Te. *kraṅṅu* 'vomitting' (DED. 1236). As Caldwell pointed out, l in Tamil euphonicly changed into r̄ before all hard consonants. *Tolkappiyam* and other Tamil grammatical works have enunciated rules for this change. But the interchange between l and r̄ has been noted by the commentator of the Tamil grammar *Nannūl* (13th century). He cites the following examples *pantal* > *pantar* 'shed or hut', *cāmpal* > *cāmpar* 'ash', *kutal* > *kutar* 'intestine', etc. The l/r̄ alternation in

these cases takes place only at the final position of a word. The editors of Cankam poems (earliest Tamil literary compositions belonging to 300 B. C.—300 A. D.) have always preferred to the original *l* in certain words and have given alternate readings with *r* in them. For example, 278th poem of *Puranānūru* (a Cankam anthology consisting of 400 verses) has the following expression: *narampeḷun tulariya*. The alternate reading given for this expression is: *narampeḷun turariya*. *ulariya* and *urariya* exhibit the *l/r* alternation. The word *akil* 'incense' is employed in many Cankam poems (see, for example, *Kuruntokai* 286 : 2). But the word *akaru* is also used in some poems.

1.2. Tamil *l* (**r*(z)) changes into *r* in a number of Dravidian languages.

Examples: Ta. *ali* : Tu. *arpuni* 'to efface, obliterate, etc.' Ta. *alu* 'to weep, cry' : To. *arke* 'weeping, lamenting' : Tu. *arpini* 'to weep, cry' : To. *arke* 'weeping, lamenting' : Tu. *arpini* 'to weep, cry' : Kol. *ar-*(*art-*) 'to weep' : Nk. & Ga. *ar* 'to weep' : Par. *rīka* 'to weep' : Kuwi *riali* 'to cry' ; Ta. *ulu* 'to plough' Tu. *uro* 'ploughing' *uralu* 'ploughman's song' : Kol. *ur* (*urt-*) 'to harrow, plough' : Nk. *ur-* 'to plough' : Go. *urana* 'to plough' : Kuwi *ruiyali* (*ru-*) 'to plough' ; Ta. *uluntu* : Ka. *urdu* : Tu. *urdu* Kol. *urunde* : Nk. *urndal* 'blad gram' ; Ta. *elu* 'to rise, etc.' : Ka. *erbu* 'to rouse, to lift up' : Tu. *erkuni* 'to rise' ; Ta. *katal* 'to be hasty, run swiftly, : Ka. *kadar* 'to be shaken, etc.' ; Ta. *kolū* : Ka. *korvū*, *korbu*, *kobbu* : Te. *k(r)ovvu* : Kol. (*Kin.*) *koru* : Nk. *koru* : Kui *krōga* : Kuwi (F) *korowa* 'fat'. According to Zvelebil (1970 : 147—55) the regular reflex of *l* (**r*) in Tulu, Kolami, Naiki, Mandala Gonda and Brahui is *r*. But regarding Kannada he concludes: "In Kannada, **r* is preserved as a phoneme till about the middle of 10th cent. Later, it has been replaced in the prevocalic and word-final position by *l* or *n*, and before stops by *r*. Since these developments are complementary in distribution, they may be regarded as a single development in the system. The first occurrence of the *l* / *l* alteration in Ka. is from 692 A.D.; of the *l* / *r* alternation from 750 A. D." He thinks that the regular reflex of *l* (**r*) in Tulu is *r* in the non-Brahman dialect, though *r* tends to occur also in the Brahmin dialect where the regular reflex is *l*. The position in Telugu is stated by him as follows : "a PDr sequence with an initial consonant and root final **r* develops into an initial cluster in early Te. with **l* and in classical Te. this **l* merged with *r*. In later Te., this *r* is usually lost. Instances : Ta. *polutu* : Te. *proddu* (> *poddn*) *plo-dd-* > *pol-t-* 'sun, time', Ta. *kolū* 'to grow fat etc.' Te. *krovvu* 'be proud' > **klo-vv-* > **kol-v-*"

1.3. The data from DED suggests that Tamil *l* changes into *r* in Kannada, Telugu, Gond, Brahui, Gadba (Oll.) and Kuvi (F). Since this change is not

a regular reflex in those languages, Zvelebil has not discussed it in his *Comparative Dravidian Phonology* (see, pp. 139—42). However, he has mentioned the development of a systematically conditioned alternation of l-/r- in Gond. He has shown that l first changed into ɭ in Gond and then reflected as r (see, p. 7). DED provides the following examples : Ta. *ōkkaḷam* 'retching, vomiting' : Ka. *ōkari* : Te. *ōkara* 'vomit'; Ta. *uḷ* 'inside, etc.' : Go. *ron* 'inside': Br. *ura* 'house, wife'; Ta. *kaḷ* 'toddy' : Kuvi (F) *kāru* 'country spirit'; Ta. *kilar* : Ka. *keralu* : Te. *keralu* 'to increase'; Ta. *nāḷ* : Ga (oll.) *narkam* 'night'.

1.4. The following conclusions can be made on the basis of the data presented so far :

- (a) All three laterals of Tamil (i.e. ɭ, ɭ̣, and ɭ̤) change into r only in Telugu, Gond and Kuvi. Examples:

ɭ > r: Ta. *īcaḷ* : Go. *īsri* 'whistle'
 Ta. *eḷ* 'to happen' : Te. *ercu* 'to set in order'
 Ta. *kaḷ* : Te. *karacu* : Go *kāriānā* 'to learn'
 Ta. *kāl* : Te. *krāyu* 'vomit'
 Ta. *talai* : Kuvi *trāyu* 'head'

ɭ̣ > r: Ta. *ila* 'young' : Go. *raiyoḷ* 'adult boy' : *raiya*
 'adult girl'
 Ta. *uḷ* : Go *ron* 'inside'
 Ta. *ōkkaḷam* : Te. *ōkara* 'vomit'
 Ta. *kilar* : Te. *keralu* 'to increase'
 Ta. *veḷ* 'white, pure, bright' : Go *verci* 'light'
 Ta. *kaḷ* 'toddy' : Kuvi (F) *kāru* 'country spirit'

ɭ̤ > r: Ta. *alu* : Kuvi *riali* 'to cry'
 Ta. *ūu* : Go. *urānā* : Kuvi *ruiyali* 'to plough'
 Ta. *kōḷu* 'fat' : Te. *k(r)ovvu* 'be proud' : Kuvi(F) *korowa* 'fat (animals)'
 Ta. *pulu* : Te. *pur(u)gu*, *pruvvu* : Go. *puri* : Kuvi(F) *priyuli*
 'worm'

- (b) Dravidian *ɭ̤ seems to be more stable. No regular ɭ̤/r alternation is found in any of the Dravidian languages.
- (c) ɭ and ɭ̣(*r) seem to be regular reflex as r in a few Dravidian languages. Tulu is the only language which has both ɭ and ɭ̣ changing into r.

2. l/r Alternation in the Context of Tamil-Japanese Relationship

In the light of the above discussion, Tamil-Japanese relationship with regards to l/r alternation seems to match that between Tamil and Tulu. But Tulu possesses l, ɭ and ɮ as distinct phonemes, and whereas Japanese is said to have no such sounds. However, in spoken Japanese, one tends to hear an l sound when the native speakers pronounce foreign words with r sound. Even r sound in some Japanese words is sometimes heard as l. Miller (1967: 71-72) while comparing Japanese with Altaic languages says: "It is clear at least two original liquids have fallen together in Old Japanese -r-." One of the original liquids, according to him, seems to be the original *-l-. However, one cannot overlook the remarkable l/r alternation found among Tamil, Tulu and Japanese:

1. Ta. *alar*: 'to blossom'
Tu. *araluni*: 'to blossom'
Ja. *ar-u*: 'to be born, come into being'
2. Ta. *kavil*: 'to be capsized, turned bottom upwards'
Tu. *kapp̄aru*: 'on the face'
Ja. *kaferu*: 'to be capsized, return'
3. Ta. *kāl*: 'leg, family, relationship, etc.'
Tu. *karu*: 'leg'
Ja. *kar-a*: 'family, clan'
4. Ta. *īal*: 'to fall low, be lowered, sink in water, etc.'
Tu. *taru*: 'to sink in, plunge'
Ja. *tar-u*: 'to hang down'
5. Ta. *tāl*: 'bolt, bar'
Tu. *tarkolu*: 'key'
Ja. *sar-u*: 'bolt, fastener (of a door)'
6. Ta. *pili*: 'to squeeze, press out with hands, drip, exude, etc.'
Ta. *pūrencuni*: 'to squeeze'
Ja. *fir-u*: 'to press out, drip, exude'
7. Ta. *mulu*: 'all, entire, whole, large'
Tu. *mūrka*: 'full, brimfull, exceeding, very much'
Ja. *mōrō* > *moro*: 'all, entire'

3. Conclusion

Compare, for example, the consonant system of Japanese (the Northeastern dialect) and Tamil (Jaffna dialect):

Ja.: k-		-g-	-ng			
Ta.: k-	-kk-	-h-	-ng-	n		
Ja.: t-		-d-	-nd-	n-	-n-	
Ta.: t-	-tt-	-d-	-nd-	n-		
	-tt-	-d-	-nd-		-n-	-n
	-tt-		-nt-			

Ja.: s-		-j-		-nj-		
Ta.: s-	-cc-	-j-		-nj-		
Ja.: F/h		w/zero		-mb-	m-	-m-
Ta.: p-	-pp-	-b-		-mb-	m-	-m- -m
Ja.: w-	-	-w-				
Ta.: v-	-vv-	-v-				
Ja.: y-		-y-				
Ta.: y-	-yy-	-y-				
Ja.:		-r-				
Ta.:		-r, r, l, l, l, n-			-r, l, l, l, n	

In the consonant system of Japanese, we find only one -r-. It cannot occur at the initial position of a word. Japanese has no retroflex consonants. There is no distinction between r and l. The Japanese -r-, according to Ohno (1980) is correspondent to Tamil r, l, l, l, and r in Tamil. Ohno (personal communication) is unable to give any reason as to why Japanese possesses such a poor consonant, namely, -r-. However, he makes the following suggestions:

- (a) Before Japanese language got in touch with the Dravidian language, the Japanese people must have used an unknown language that had no distinction between r and l. Even after they came into contact with the Dravidians, the people in the Japanese archipelago could not distinguish between r and l (also l, r and l).
- (b) The confusion between r and l that had already existed in Tamil, a Dravidian language, might have introduced a similar one in Japanese too.

His second suggestion seems to be more probable. We have a number of instances to show that r and l confusion had been existing in ancient Tamil too. Consider, for example, the following examples from Cankam poems:

- | | | |
|-----------------------|---------|--------------------|
| 1. Akānānūru 170:15 | amiltu | 'nectar' |
| Patirruppattu II:6:12 | amirtu | 'nectar' |
| 2. Akanānūru 60:5 | ayilai | 'a kind of fish' |
| Kuruntokai 128:3 | ayirai | 'a kind of fish' |
| 3. Narrinai 121:4 | aralai | 'Oleander' |
| Puranānūru 371:3 | alari | 'Oleander' |
| 4. Puranānūru 372:6 | kūvilam | 'a kind of flower' |
| Kurincippattu 65 | kūviram | 'a kind of flower' |
| 5. Akanānūru 152:9 | paṭṭal | 'container' |
| Narrinai 92:6 | pattar | 'container' |

We can provide more examples from the Cankam works to show that l/r confusion had been existing from ancient time. Tamil literary compositions throughout the ages have exhibited this confusion. Therefore, as Ohno suggested, the l and r confusion in Japanese might have developed due to the influence of Tamil which itself has been possessing such a confusion from the time of its literary age. Later, Japanese must have dropped l completely from its consonant list.

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