

# Features of Telugu Grammar

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# Introduction

- Key features of Telugu
- With examples
- An entrance into the language
- Not an exhaustive study
- Not much into the script

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- 3 Sandhi
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# Bhattiprolu inscription (3rd-1st century BCE)

(On the lid)

vacho cagho negamā

jeto jabho tiso

reto acino ṣabhiko

akhagho kelo keso māho

seṭā chadiko okhabūlo

soṇutaro samaṇo

samaṇadāṣo sāmako

kāmuko cītako

(Around the lid)

arahadinānam goṭhiyā majūsa ca

ṣamugo ca tena kama yena kuvirako

rājā aki<sup>1</sup>

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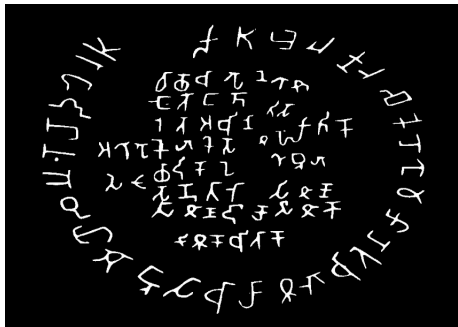


Figure: Inscription written in Brahmi<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*BWorld Robot Control Software*. [https://www.tamilheritage.org/kidangu/DrSwaminathan/scripts/07\\_Indian\\_Scripts2\\_Brahmi\\_to\\_Devanagari.pdf](https://www.tamilheritage.org/kidangu/DrSwaminathan/scripts/07_Indian_Scripts2_Brahmi_to_Devanagari.pdf).

<sup>2</sup>Sujay Rao Mandavilli. "Alphabetic Scripts and Other Forms of Literacy in Post-Harappan India ...". In: *Int. Jour. of Phil. & Soc. Sci.* (Mar. 2013).

# History of Telugu

- Satavahanas (2nd century BCE - 3rd century CE), also known as Andhras
- First attested Telugu, found in inscriptions of Renati Cholas (6th-8th centuries CE)
- Erragudipadu inscription<sup>3</sup> (600 CE),  
svastiśrī erika-lmutturājulla-  
kuṇḍikāḷḷu nivabukā-nu iccina  
pannasa-kujaya rājula-  
mutturājulu nava-priya  
mutturājulu-pallava dukarajulu  
śakṣi-kānu icci(na) pannassa

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<sup>3</sup> *Telugu Inscriptions - The Start.*

<https://cbkwgl.wordpress.com/2016/03/12/telugu-inscriptions-the-start/>



Figure: Satavahana bilingual coin (150 CE) Source: wikipedia.org

Prakrit text: *rāño vāsīṭhiputasa siri  
puḷumāvisa*

Dravidian text: *aracanaku  
vāciṭṭimakanuku tirupuḷumāviku*

## History Contd.

- Nannayya (11th century) composed Andhra Mahabharata (Adi parva), first available literary work, also gave first grammar
- Palkurki Somanatha (13th century) revived Dwipada meter (couplets)
- Golden age during Vijanagara empire (14th-17th centuries)
- Ashtadiggajas in the court of Krishnadevaraya(16th century): Dhurjati, Tenali Ramakrishna etc.
- Two among the Trinity of Carnatic music, Thyajaraja and Shyama Shastri composed in Telugu (18th century)
- C.P. Brown (1798-1884) revived Telugu literature
- Today Telugu is 11th most spoken native language
- Reference books,<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Alexander Duncan Campbell. *A Grammar of the Teloogoo Language*. Printed at the Hindu Press, 1816, Charles Philip Brown. *A grammar of the Telugu language*. printed at the Christian Knowledge Society's Press, 1857.

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# Alphabets

అ ఆ ఇ ఈ ఉ ఊ ఋ ఌ ఍ ఐ ఊ ఋ ఌ ఍ ఐ ఊ  
a ā i ī u ū ṛ ṝ e ē ai o ō au

అం అఁ అః  
am̐ aṅ aḥ

క ఖ గ ఘ ఙ  
ka kha ga gha ṅa

చ ఛ జ ఝ ఞ  
ca cha ja jha ṅa

ట ఠ డ ఢ ణ  
ṭa ṭha ḍa ḍha ṇa

త థ ద ధ న  
ta tha da dha na

ప ఫ బ భ మ  
pa pha ba bha ma

య ర ల వ శ ష స హ ళ క్ష ణ  
ya ra la va śa ṣa sa ha ḷa kṣa ṇa

## Alphabets contd.

- Consonant + Vowel

క కా కి కీ కు కూ కృ కృ కె కే కై కొ కో కౌ  
ka k̄ā ki k̄ī ku k̄ū kr̄ k̄r̄ ke k̄ē kai ko k̄ō kau  
కం కం కః క్  
kam̄ kaṅ kaḥ k

- Consonant clusters

క్క క్ఖ క్త క్థ క్న క్మ క్య క్ర క్ల క్వ క్ష  
kka kkha kta ktha kna kma kya kra kla kva kṣa  
క్ష్మ్యం  
kṣmyāṁ

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# Sandhi

- Most commonly used:  
Short vowel a,i,u deletion at the end of a word  
if the word that follows begins with a vowel  
Example:  
rāmuṅḍu(Ram) + ekkāḍa(wher) = rāmuṅḍekkāḍa (Where is Ram?)  
variously called akāra/ikāra/ukāra sandhi
- Optional:  
rāmuṅḍuyekkāḍa (yaḍāgama sandhi)
- Others: āmrēḍita, trika, gasaḍadavādēśa, puṁpvādēśa, rugāgama, paḍvādi, ṭugāgama, sugāgama, prātādi, druta, muvarṅalōpa, ...
- For Sanskrit words: savarṅadīrgha, guṅa, vṛddhi, yaṅādēśa, ...

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# Sources of Telugu Words

- 1 Pure words native to the land or *acca-deśyamu*  
Eg: illu (house), nīru (water), nōru (mouth)
- 2 Borrowed from Sanskrit or *tatsamamu*  
Eg: puruṣuṅḍu (man), vastuvu (thing), vāḱku (word)
- 3 Corruptions from Sanskrit or *tadbhavamu*  
Eg: ānati (ājñapti/command), sunnā (śūnya/zero), diṣṭi (dṛṣṭi/malice-vision)
- 4 Specific to local provinces or *grāmyamu*  
Eg: Godavari dialect jōḷḷu for ceppulu (foot wear)
- 5 Foreign words or *anya-deśyamu*  
Eg: jamīndāru (zamīndār/land possessor), kaburu (khabar/news), asalu (asl/actual)

# Declensions

- Cases: Nominative, Accusative, Dative, Genitive, Locative and Vocative
- General case endings:

Case	Singular endings	Plural endings
Nom. (subject)	u/∅	lu
Accu. (object)	Gen. + ni/nu	lanu
Dat. (to)	Gen. + ki/ku	laku
Gen. (of)	i/∅	la
Loc. (at)	a/-	-
Voc. (O!)	lengthen last vowel	lū/llārā

- Post-positions, to express other cases

Case	Attaching Post-positions
Acc.	gurimci (about), kūrci (about)
Gen.	yokka(of), amdu(at), lō(in), kai(for), numci(from), ...
Loc./Gen.	cē (by), cēta (by)
Gen./Dat.	paina (on), pakka (side), krimda (below) ...

## Declensions contd.

- Four classes:
  - ▶ Ending in ṅḍu
  - ▶ Ending in mu
  - ▶ Regular
  - ▶ Irregular
- Example from last class (water):

Case	Singular	Plural
Nom. (subject)	nīru	nī!u
Accu. (object)	nīṭini	nī!anu
Dat. (to)	nīṭiki	nī!aku
Gen. (of/'s)	nīṭi	nī!a
Loc. (at)	nīṭa	-



## Declensions contd.

- Example from third class (father/noble man):

Case	Singular	Plural
Nom. (subject)	ayya	ayya <u>lu</u>
Accu. (object)	ayya <u>nu</u>	ayya <u>lanu</u>
Dat. (to)	ayya <u>ku</u>	ayya <u>laku</u>
Gen. (of/'s)	ayya	ayya <u>la</u>
Loc. (at)	-	-
Voc. (Oh!)	ayya <u>ā!</u>	ayya <u>llārā!</u>

- Similarly for other nouns

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# Pronoun declensions

- Declension of nēnu (I):

Case	Singular	Plural
Nom. (subject)	nēnu(I)	mēm <u>u</u> (we)
Accu. (object)	nann <u>u</u>	mamm <u>u</u>
Dat. (to)	nā <u>ku</u>	mā <u>ku</u>
Gen. (of/'s)	nā	mā
Loc. (at)	-	-

- Here we is exclusive
- Inclusive we, manamu
- Second person: nīvu (thou), mīru (you)

# On Gender

- Three genders: male animate (M.), female animate (F.) and inanimate (N.)
- Thus the pronouns of the third person:
- Third person singular: vāñḍu/atañḍu (he far), vīñḍu/itañḍu (he near), adi (she far/that thing), idi (she near/this thing)
- Third person singular respect: āyana (he far), īyana (he near), āme (she far), īme (she near)
- Third person plural: vāru (they), vīru (these people), avi (those things), ivi (these things)
- Notice 'a' indicates farness while 'i', nearness

## Other Pronouns

- Interrogatives: evaṅḍu (who M. sing.), ēdi (who F. sing./which sing.), evaru (who M./F. plur./respect), ēvi (which plur.), ēmi (what)
- Relative pronouns, same as interrogatives
- Indefinite pronouns: indaru (these many), andaru (those many), kondaru (few), endaru (how many?)
- Notice 'e' indicates a question
- Reflexive pronoun tānu (self sing.), tāmu (self plur., you respect)
- Place: indu/ikkāḍa(here), andu/akkāḍa(there), endu/ekkaḍa(when)
- Similarly for time (ippuḍu), manner (ilā) ...

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# Adjectives

- *deśyamu* are indeclinable:  
Eg: maṁci (good), calla (cold), pacca (green), tīpi (sweet)
- *tatsamamu* are declinable:  
Eg: dhanyuṅḍu (M. virtuous), dhanyurālu (F.), dhanyamu (N.)
- Numbers: okaṭi, reṅḍu, mūḍu . . . , decline separately for gender
- Ordinals: okaṭava, reṅḍava, mūḍava . . . , do not decline
- Adverbs are indeclinable, formed by suffixing with *gā*  
Eg: vēgamu**gā** (speedily) , maṁci**gā** (nicely), nemmadigā (slowly)

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# Verbs

- Verbal nouns  
Eg: **cēy**uṭa (doing/to do), in Dat. cēyuṭaku ...  
Here, √**cēy**u is the root
- Three classes of verbs:
  - ▶ Ending in cu  
Eg: √ālakimcu (listen), √talañcu (think), √dīvimcu (bless)
  - ▶ Ending in yu  
Eg: √cēyu (make), √vrāyu (write), √kuruyu (rain)
  - ▶ All others  
Eg: √caduvu (read), √aḍugu (ask), √kaḍugu (clean)
- Tenses: present indicative, past indicative, future indicative, aorist, negative aorist, imperative, negative imperative all in active voice
- Other tenses, formed by various auxiliary verbs

# Conjugations - Endings

- Present indicative

Person	Singular	Plural
First	tānu	tāmu
Second	tāvu	tāru
Third	tāñḍu (M.) tadi (F./N.)	tāru (M./F.) tavi (N.)

- Past indicative

Person	Singular	Plural
First	tini	timi
Second	tivi	tiri
Third	enu	ri (M./F.) enu (N.)

## Conjugations - Endings Contd.

- Future indicative

Person	Singular	Plural
First	edanu	edamu
Second	edavu	edaru
Third	eḍini	edaru(M./F.) eḍini (N.)

- Aorist

Person	Singular	Plural
First	dunu	dumu
Second	duvu	duru
Third	nu	duru(M./F.) nu (N.)

- Imperative

Person	Singular	Plural
Second	mu	ṅḍu

# Conjugations of √cēyu (do)

- Present indicative (does)

Person	Singular	Plural
First	cēstānu	cēstāmu
Second	cēstāvu	cēstāru
Third	cēstāṅḍu (M.) cēstadi (F./N.)	cēstāru (M./F.) cēstavi (N.)

- Past indicative (did)

Person	Singular	Plural
First	cēsitini	cēsitimi
Second	cēsitivi	cēsitiri
Third	cēsenu	cēsiri (M./F.) cēsenu (N.)

## Conjugations of √cēyu (do) contd.

- Future indicative (will do)

Person	Singular	Plural
First	cēsedanu	cēsedamu
Second	cēsedavu	cēsedaru
Third	cēseḍini	cēsedaru (M./F.) cēseḍini (N.)

- Aorist (shall do/did)

Person	Singular	Plural
First	cēyudunu	cēyudumu
Second	cēyuduvu	cēyuduru
Third	cēyunu	cēyuduru (M./F.) cēyunu (N.)

- Imperative (do!)

Person	Singular	Plural
Second	cēyumu	cēyuhnḍu

# On Negation

- In English,  
¬(I go) → I **don't go**  
¬(I went) → I **didn't go**
- Lesson: Need not be straight forward
- Negative aorist of √cēyu (do):

Person	Singular	Plural
First	cēy <b>anu</b>	cēy <b>amu</b>
Second	cēy <b>avu</b>	cēy <b>aru</b>
Third	cēy <b>aṅḍu</b> (M.) cēy <b>adu</b> (F./N.)	cēy <b>aru</b> (M./F.) cēy <b>avu</b> (N.)

- Negative aorist = negative present indicative = negative future indicative

## Negation contd.

- Special forms: negative aorist of √umḍu (be)

Person	Singular	Plural
First	lēnu	lēmu
Second	lēvu	lēru
Third	lēḍu (M.) lēḍu (F./N.)	lēru(M./F.) lēvu (N.)

- Similar for √avu (become), kādu
- Negative imperative:

Person	Singular	Plural
Second	cēyakumu	cēyakuṅḍu

- Negative past indicative: cēyalēdu, doesn't conjugate

## Other tenses/voices

- Causative: cēy√**iccu** (to make *obj.* do)
- Passive voice: cēyañ√**baḍu** (be done)
- Middle voice: cēsu√**konu**
- Present Progressive: cēst+*special pres. of*√**umḍu** (is doing)
- Imperfect: cēstū+ *past ind. of*√**umḍu** (was doing)
- Pluperfect: cēsi+*past ind. of*√**umḍu** (had done)
- cēyañ√**galugu** (can do)
- cēyañ**lēnu** (cannot do), conjugates
- Periphrastic future: cēyañ+*pres. prog. of*√**bōvu** (going to do)
- Conditional, by replacing last syllable with **nēni** in every conjugation, Eg: cēsitini (I did) → cēsiti**nēni** (If I did)
- ...



# Participles

- Relative participles, adjectives serving the purpose relative pronouns
- Present participle: cēyucunna (that does)  
Eg: cēyucunnavāñḍu (he who does), pārucunnaṅṅīru (water which flows)
- Past participle: cēsina
- Indefinite participle: cēyu (that does/will do)
- Negative participle: cēyani (that does/did/will do not)

# Verbal participles

- Already seen verbal nouns which decline: cēyuta
- Infinitive: cēyutaḥ (to do)
- Past verbal participle: cēsi (having done)
- Negative verbal participle: cēyaka (having not done)
- Verbal participles also called Gerunds
- Can form complex participles:  
cēyimcangōruvāniki = for he who wants to make *obj.* do

cēyimca	kōru	vāniki
causative	desirative indefinite	dative

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# Formation of nouns

- From verbs,  
√navvu (laugh) → navvu (laughter),  
√talañcu (think) → talapu (thought),  
√pāḍu (sing) → pāṭa (song)
- Abstract nouns by suffix tanamu,  
mamci (good) → mamci**tanamu** (goodness),  
teliyani (that does not know) → teliyan**itanamu** (ignorance)
- With ta or tvamu in tatsamamu,  
guru**tvamu** (heaviness), śūr**ata** (valor)

# Syntax

- Free word order, preferred Subject-Object-Verb,  
Eg: dēvadattuñḍu imṭiki pōvucunnāñḍu (Devadatta is going home )
- Sometimes verb is not necessary,  
Eg: rājuku naluguru koḍukulu (The King has four sons)
- Personal Endings, first person: nu(sing.), mu(plur.), second person: vu(sing.), ru(plur.)
- Used along with participles,  
nēnu ceppinavāñḍu**nu** (I told/I am the one who told)

## Syntax contd.

- A note on relative participles,  
ceppu guruvu (The teacher who says/teaches)  
pāṭhamunu ceppu guruvu (The teacher who teaches the lesson)  
guruvu ceppu pāṭhamu (The lesson which the teacher teaches)
- Question phrases,  
nīvu ceppedavu (You will say)  
nīvu ceppedavā? (Will you say?)
- Compounds,  
Eg: tallitaṇḍrulu (mother-father) = talli (mother) + taṇḍri (father)
- tatsama verbs:  
ādēśimcu (command), nirdēśimcu (direct), upadēśimcu (instruct)
- Conjunctions, Eg: mariyu (and), kānī (but), kanuka (hence) ...

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# Conclusions

- Telugu has a long history
- Has many features in common with other Indian languages
- Has variety of participle constructs and usage similar to other Dravidian languages but different than Indo-Aryan languages
- Many aren't covered, other topics: meters (chandassu), rhetorical devices (alaṅkāraḷu), variations among spoken dialects