

Future tense and habitual aspect in Malayalam^{*}

Gautam Ottur

ACLC, University of Amsterdam

In this paper, I describe the use of two constructions in Malayalam (Dravidian, South India) which are used to express the habitual aspect. Malayalam demonstrates a case in which one morpheme, -um, may express both the future tense and a present habitual. A previous investigation by Krishnamurti (2003) has aggregated evidence suggesting that Dravidian languages have long had a link between these two functions. I provide a brief review of this historical background on the future-habitual coexpression in Dravidian languages closely related to Malayalam in order to better explain the historical development of -um. A second morpheme, -ār-, expresses only the habitual aspect, and is unique to Malayalam. I provide a descriptive overview of how the two strategies are used in Malayalam, how they compare, how they overlap with other functions, and functional incompatibilities they exhibit.

1 Introduction

Over the course of this paper, I wish to cover two topics related to the status and function of the habitual aspect in the Dravidian language Malayalam, spoken in Kerala, India. The first of these is a review of the development of habituais in the more prevalent languages in the Dravidian family. In doing this, I hope to present the basic historical context for the habitual aspect in Malayalam. The second topic is the formal and functional behaviour of the strategies for encoding the habitual aspect from a descriptive standpoint.

I identify the habitual aspect in Malayalam and other Dravidian languages according to the definition provided by Comrie (1976: 27–28). He states that habituais “describe a situation which is characteristic of an extended period in time, so extended in fact that the situation referred to is not viewed as an incidental property of the moment but, precisely, as a characteristic feature of a whole period.” Malayalam has two morphemes which may be used to indicate this meaning: a dedicated habitual morpheme -ār-, which appears to be unique to

^{*} My gratitude to Eva van Lier for her help and support with this research, and to my two reviewers for their feedback on earlier versions of this article.

Malayalam, and the future tense morpheme *-um*, which has an established history in the literature.

Whereas the habitual *-ār-* is not found in any language other than Malayalam, the coexpression of the future and habitual is rather common among Dravidian languages, and so a review of the cognates of the *-um* morpheme and other future–habituals in closely related Dravidian languages constitutes informative background to introduce Malayalam habituals. I review these topics in the next section. Thereafter, I provide a descriptive account of the expression formats of the habitual aspect in Malayalam.

2 Habituals in the Dravidian languages

2.1 *Typology of Dravidian languages*

Before looking at the languages themselves, I present some basic typological information about the Dravidian language family here which will make the examples easier to understand.

Dravidian languages are all strongly agglutinative, and grammatical relations are expressed through suffixation. Nouns and pronouns are inflected for case, and verbal agreement with the subject generally occurs according to gender, number, and person (Krishnamurti 2003: 28); Malayalam, however, has lost verb agreement. Pronouns have a clusivity distinction in first person plural (Krishnamurti 2003: 20).

In terms of syntax, Dravidian languages are head-final and left-branching. Sentences are verb final (i.e., either SOV or OSV) and adjectives precede the nouns they modify. Clitics exist at various levels, and normally signify such things as “tag questions, emphasis, interrogation, surprise, doubt, etc.” (Krishnamurti 2003: 29).

The basic tense distinction in verbs across all Dravidian languages is past vs. nonpast. The expression of aspect, mood, and evidentiality varies significantly between Dravidian languages. Non-finite verbs head subordinate clauses. According to Krishnamurti (2003: 29), the basic structure of finite verbs is as follows:

- (1) [Root + [transitive] + [causative]] + Tense + Gender–Number–Person

From here, I examine the development of future–habitual coexpression in the three Dravidian languages which are (a) most widely spoken and (b) most closely related to Malayalam: Tamil, Kannada, and Telugu (see the simplified taxonomy in Figure 1). This will contextualize what kinds of changes led to the future–habitual in Malayalam.

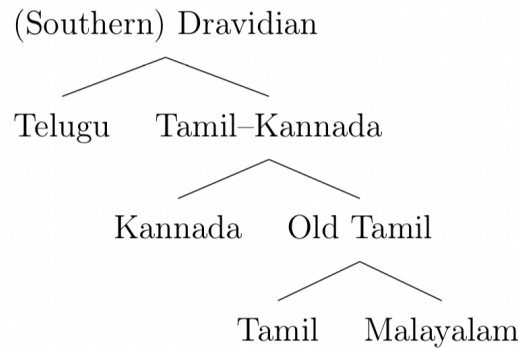


Figure 1: Taxonomy of Southern Dravidian languages

2.2 Old Tamil -um

Both Modern Tamil (now spoken in Tamil Nadu, east of Kerala, and northern Sri Lanka) and Malayalam are derived from Old Tamil (Krishnamurti 2003: 113). Old Tamil most often describes the history of the language from around 300 BCE to 300 CE, commonly called the *Sangam* period, and the main textual sources for this era are poetic in nature. Old Tamil had an ending which was identical in form to the modern Malayalam *-um*. Like its Malayalam counterpart, the Old Tamil suffix could be used for either a present habitual or generic meaning, or a simple future meaning (Wilden 2018: 82). This at least confirms that this feature is not an innovation specific to Malayalam.

It should be noted that the overlap between the future and the habitual was not restricted to *-um* in Old Tamil. Old Tamil also inserted *-v-* or *-pp-* before all the normal gender–number–person endings to derive future-habituals which agree with different subjects (Krishnamurti 2003: 302). The unrelated *-um* ending was apparently only ever used in the third person in Old Tamil, and thus verbs marked with *-um* are not contrastively marked for person or number as most finite verbs are. An example of the use of *-um* which seems to express a universal truth is found in (2).

(2) Old Tamil

Nīr	nīṭu	āṭ-iṇ	kaṇṇ-um	civakk-um
Water	long	play-if	eyes-CONJ	redde- <i>FUT</i>
ārnt-ōr		vāy-il	tēn-um	puḷikk-um
consumed.fully-they		mouth-LOC	honey-CONJ	sour- <i>FUT</i>

‘One’s eyes (will) turn red if one plays/bathes for long in the water. Even honey will turn/turns sour in the mouths of those who have had it to the full.’

(Kūṟuntokai 121: 16 from Rajam 1992: 623)

Other uses, such as the one in (3), more clearly involve single future events.

(3) **Old Tamil**

Aruku pati āka ampi-yil tālppikk-um ... vaiyai
 Close town be.although raft-LOC cause.to.delay-FUT Vaiyai
 ‘Although our town is close (to your town), the river Vaiyai will cause you
 to delay by means of the raft.’ (Paripāṭal 6: 75–77 from Rajam 1992: 530)

(4) is quite similar to the modern Malayalam predicate in (5), though Malayalam has lost verb agreement in all cases, leading to the generalization of this form. As before, in contexts with present time reference, the ending can only have a habitual meaning, i.e., a simple present reading is not allowed here.

(4) **Old Tamil**

Naṭakk-um.
 walk-HAB
 ‘(3rd person singular subject) walks’, ‘will walk’ (Krishnamurti 2003: 306)

(5) **Malayalam**

Naṭakk-um.
 walk-HAB
 ‘(any subject) walk(s)’, ‘will walk’

This shows that the ending retained functional stability over some two millennia. Incidentally, Old Tamil seems also to have very commonly used the same ending as a present or future relative participle (Subrahmanyam 1971: 248–249); examples are provided below in (6), (7), and (8).

(6) **Old Tamil**

Kaḷiru ... tēr nīrkku avā-[u]m kānam
 Elephant grasp mirage desire-REL.PTCP forest
 ‘The forest where a male elephant desires the mirage...’
 (Kalittokai 7: 1–3 from Rajam 1992: 723)

(7) **Old Tamil**

Taṇ tuṇai piruntu ayā-[u]m taṇi kuruku
 His mate separate.PST.REL agonize-REL.PTCP lonesome heron
 ‘The lonesome heron which is agonizing, being separated from its mate...’
 (Kalittokai 121: 16 from Rajam 1992: 723)

(8) **Old Tamil**

Maḷai vēṇṭ-u[m] pula-ttu māri nīrpa
Rain be.needed-REL.PTCP region remain rain.cloud

‘...as the rain clouds stay in the regions where the rain is needed.’

(Patirrupattu 13: 6 from Rajam 1992: 724)

The Malayalam predicate in (10) therefore mirrors the Old Tamil predicate in (9) in form, but the participial function is absent.

(9) **Old Tamil**

Ceyy-um(...)

do-REL.PTCP

‘that/who does,’ ‘that/who will do’

(Wilden 2018: 99)

(10) **Malayalam**

Ceyy-um.

do-FUT

‘does,’ ‘will do’

It is unclear what the relationship between these two usages of the suffix is. One possibility is that the participial usage stems from another origin entirely and the cosmetic similarity between the two is purely coincidental. Given the similarity in time reference, this seems unlikely. Another possibility is that the one usage derives somehow from the other, or that both derive from a common source. In either case, this requires further explanation.

In the next subsection, I will review the future–habitual tendencies in Kannada, which separated from Tamil–Malayalam at an earlier point.

2.3 *The future tense and habitual aspect in Kannada*

The closest widely-spoken relative of Tamil and Malayalam is Kannada, spoken in Karnataka, north of Kerala. While Kannada is morphologically quite similar to Tamil and Malayalam, it is understood to have branched off at an earlier point (Krishnamurti 2003: 20).

Like Tamil and unlike Malayalam, Kannada normally conjugates verbs for person, number, and gender, and as with Old Tamil, the suffix *-um* was originally used exclusively in the third person. According to Krishnamurti (2003: 306), the form occupied the gender–number–person marker’s slot, thereby encoding both tense and person features. In Medieval Kannada, *-um* was being used as the general future tense marker without gender–number–person agreement, similar to

the future in Malayalam¹ (Krishnamurti 2003: 306). Illustrating this, Krishnamurti (2003: 306) gives as examples *ālg-um* ‘will rule’, *ārg-um* ‘will be satisfied’, *akk-um* ‘will be’ (cf. Malayalam *ākum* ‘will be’), and *bark-um* ‘will come’² (cf. Malayalam *varum* ‘will come’/‘comes’). Crucially, a habitual reading of the *-um* morpheme in Kannada is not acknowledged in the literature.

Modern (spoken) Kannada seems to have lost both the *-um* morpheme and other future–habitual forms, outside of (a) the copula *iru*, which retains the future–habitual form *irt-* in all genders, numbers, and persons (Schiffman 1983: 57), and (b) a “nonpast” form marked by *-utt-* identified by Sridhar (1990: 223) and Schiffman (1983: 89) which is used to mark future–habituals on other verbs. For example:

(11) **Kannada**

Avanu huṭṭ-utt-aane.

He rise-NPST-3PSG

‘He rises’, ‘He will rise’

(Sridhar 1990: 223)

Schiffman (1983: 59) notes that a dedicated future–habitual tense does survive in Literary Kannada, but this is also apparently not related to *-um*. Instead, like Tamil, Kannada makes use of the insertion of *-v-* or *-pp-* before the normal gender–number–person endings (Krishnamurti 2003: 302); again, this differs from *-um* which was restricted to the third person in both languages.

Haspelmath (1998: 40) interprets that Kannada experienced a shift in present tense verb constructions, wherein the *-v-/pp-* construction was originally a pure present tense that was displaced by the *-utt-* construction, leaving behind only habitual and future readings. Spoken Kannada has, according to Haspelmath, recently displaced the *-utt-* construction with again another present tense, limiting *-utt-* to habitual and future readings in the spoken language. However, evidence from the use of the *-v-/pp-* construction in Old Tamil seems to suggest that the future–habitual coexpression predates relatively recent developments within Kannada; the other explanation would be that identical developments took place in both languages after they had split.

2.4 *Related markers in Telugu*

Of the four widely spoken (South) Dravidian languages, Telugu is the most distant from Malayalam. Similar to Old Tamil and Medieval Kannada, Old Telugu had an ending which had both present and future functions, *-un(u)* (Subrahmanyam

¹ The temporal reference seems to have been in the future; the term is used to accentuate the non-specificity of the point in time being referenced.

² Through analogical levelling, Kannada epenthesized velar stops before every instance of this morpheme.

1971: 322). The term “aorist” is used in the literature to refer to how the temporal reference of this tense form was more general than that of other tenses; in practice, it represented both the present and future. According to Krishnamurti (2003: 306), the distribution of this ending closely mirrors that of the Old Tamil *-um* in terms of tense (present and future) and aspect (habitual and generic, in the present) readings. This form very occasionally continues into modern Telugu, as in (12).

(12) **Telugu**

Dēvuḍu erug-u(n).

God know-PRES

‘God knows.’

(Krishnamurti 2003: 306)

Recall that Old Tamil used *-um* for both the future–habitual and a present participle. As with the Old Tamil *-um*, variants of the *-un(u)* ending in modern Telugu also serves participial functions, as in the Telugu phrase in (13).

(13) **Telugu**

Cey-u-pani.

do-REL.PTCP-work

‘the work one does’

(Krishnamurti 2003: 306)

Not unlike Kannada, modern Telugu has largely lost the third person future–habitual morpheme, with the exception of a semantically-restricted subclass of verbs, as in example (12) (Krishnamurti 2003: 306). While this may be due in part to language contact (Kannada and Telugu are nowadays spoken in regions neighbouring those where Indo-European languages are spoken), this also potentially represents a case where a redundancy in function among suffixes led to the abandonment of some forms.

Like the other two languages, Telugu also shows an overlap in the morphology used to express the future and habitual outside of the aforementioned morpheme. However, as shown in (14), not only these two meanings, but all non-past time reference uses the same tense morphology, so the direct connection between the habitual and the future is not apparent as in Old Tamil and Kannada.

(14) a. Nēnu baḍi-ki ippuḍu veḷtānu.

I school-DAT now go:NPST.1SG

‘I am going to school right now.’

b. Nēnu baḍi-ki rōju veḷtānu.

I school-DAT every.day go:NPST.1SG

‘I go to school every day.’

- c. Nēnu baḍi-ki rēpu veḷtānu.
 I school-DAT tomorrow go:NPST.1SG
 ‘I will go to school tomorrow.’ (Veerraghava 2019: 949.6)

This review of future–habituals in South Dravidian languages gives us some information about their formal and functional history, which in turn partly contextualizes the case of the *-um* suffix in modern Malayalam. In the next subsection, I will summarize what is known about the evolution of *-um* before Malayalam, before proceeding to the Malayalam data.

2.5 *Tracing the evolution of -um in Malayalam*

The previous subsections cover the cognates of the Malayalam future–habitual *-um*; in this subsection, I will cover the development of this morpheme leading to the present situation in modern Malayalam. As mentioned before, Dravidian languages canonically separate tenses between past and nonpast. *-um* was added to the nonpast stems of verbs (typically ending in *-kk-*), and was only used in the third person, without any link to gender–number–person markers. Caldwell (1856: 513–19) considers **-um* to have originally been an “aoristic future.” The historical development of this morpheme from Proto-Dravidian to Malayalam is broadly traceable, and can be summarized as below:

- (i) The principal reconstructible tense distinction in Dravidian was past vs. nonpast. As such the earliest use of this morpheme presumably had a nonpast reference.
- (ii) So-called “future–present” tenses existed in prehistoric Dravidian varieties. There was always some degree of functional overlap between constructions encoding the present tense and those encoding the future tense (Krishnamurti 2003: 302).
- (iii) As evidenced by the parallels between Old Tamil, Medieval Kannada, and Telugu, the latest common ancestor of the *-um* morpheme in South Dravidian languages had at least a clear future reading. Because the morpheme itself was not strictly present or future in temporal reference, at this stage it could still be considered an aoristic tense.
- (iv) As seen in Old Tamil and Literary Kannada, the use of the future overlaps with the use of the habitual even in the case of other morphemes. This demonstrates the broad tendency across Dravidian languages to associate predictive markers with habituals.
- (v) By the emergence of Old Tamil, a future–habitual overlap had become petrified. *-um* was used as both a future tense marker and a present habitual

marker in Old Tamil, but still only in third person contexts. Other markers filled this role in the first and second persons.

- (vi) Early stages of Malayalam were largely comparable to its ancestor, Old Tamil, in terms of person marking, and thus *-um* was used in largely the same way as a tense/aspect marker. Personal suffixes for other finite verb forms were lost in Medieval Malayalam, around the fourteenth century (Krishnamurti 2003: 307). Inscriptions indicate that this process in essence led the way for *-um* to be extended to all persons by the fifteenth century (Aiyar 1936: 67–69).

In summary, one can identify two key features of the future–habitual coexpression in Dravidian languages; first, a fundamental tense opposition between past and nonpast (and not, for instance, past, present, and future) underlies the relationship between the future tense and the habitual or generic aspects in finite verbs and participles. Second, this relationship has maintained functional polysemy for centuries, in that neither function seems to have overpowered the other over time. With this context, in the next section, I will describe the behaviour of *-um* in Malayalam in greater detail, and then contrast it with that of the dedicated habitual morpheme *-ār-*.

3 Habituals in Malayalam

In this section, I will demonstrate the two strategies for encoding the habitual aspect in Malayalam. I will introduce the future–habitual ending *-um* first, and then compare it to the pure habitual morpheme *-ār-*. Finally, I will discuss some examples of similar meanings expressed without these strategies.

3.1 The future–habitual *-um*

The future tense marker *-um* may take the habitual meaning described above, depending on its context in speech. In (15), we see two cases of the verb *var-* ‘come.’ In (15a), it is being used as a simple future tense, but in (15b), it expresses a habitual meaning.³ Crucially, there is no mechanism for expressing both habituality and the future tense. A verb can carry at most one of the two functions.

- (15) a. Avarũ nāle var-um.
 they tomorrow come-FUT
 ‘They will come tomorrow.’

³ The author is a native speaker of Malayalam. Unless otherwise mentioned, Malayalam examples are supplied by the author.

- b. Avarũ ella divasa-vum var-um.
 they every day-CONJ come-FUT
 ‘They come by every day.’

There are even cases where an ambiguous adverb can lead to both readings. As an example, the adverb *cilappōl* ‘sometimes’ can also informally mean ‘maybe.’ In (16), this results in both the simple future and habitual present readings.

- (16) a. Avarũ cila-ppōl var-um.
 they some-then come-FUT
 ‘Maybe they will come.’
- b. Avarũ cila-ppōl var-um.
 they some-then come-FUT
 ‘They come by sometimes.’

3.2 *The habitual -ār-*

Malayalam also has a dedicated habitual aspect morpheme *-ār-*. It must be suffixed by the auxiliary *uṇṭũ*. The origin of this morpheme is unclear, as it is apparently not used in Old Tamil or any other major Dravidian language. It is also much less common in writing than *-um*⁴, and it is only explained briefly in some recent grammars (e.g., Nair 2012: 57). A comparison of both forms can be seen in (17).

- (17) a. Avarũ iṭaykkũ var-um.
 they in.between come-FUT
 ‘They (will) come by occasionally.’
- b. Avarũ iṭaykkũ var-ār-uṇṭũ.
 they in.between come-HAB-exist.PRES
 ‘They have a habit of coming by occasionally.’

Negative forms exist for both of these as well:

⁴ It is difficult to isolate habitual uses of *-um*, but a Google search would find a disparity between the frequency of the two expression formats, for example, *paṛay-ār-uṇṭ-āyirunnu* ‘had the habit of saying’ (17,000 results) vs. *paṛay-um-āyirunnu* ‘would say’ (77,200 results). Because annotated corpora do not exist for habituals in Malayalam, it is difficult to know how many of the *-um* results are conditionals.

- (18) a. Avarũ orikkalum var-illa.
 they even.once come-FUT.NEG
 ‘They won’t ever come.’ / ‘They never come by.’
- b. Avarũ orikkalum var-ār-illa.
 they even.once come-HAB-exist.PRES.NEG
 ‘They have no habit of coming by.’

(19) is the same as (17), but expressed in the past tense by adding an auxiliary. The past tense habituals are interpreted as contrastive, i.e., the state of affairs being described would contrast with the state of affairs at the speech moment.

- (19) a. Avarũ itaykkũ var-um-āyirunnu.
 They in.between come-FUT-be.PST
 ‘They would/used to come by occasionally.’
- b. Avarũ itaykkũ var-ār-uṇṭ-āyirunnu.
 they in.between come-HAB-exist.PRES-be.PST
 ‘They were in the habit of coming by occasionally.’

The past tense of *-um* is also used as a conditional mood, (cf. English *would*) as in (20).

- (20) Yēśuv-āyirunn-eṅkil entũ ceyy-um-āyirunnu?
 Jesus-be.PST-if what do-FUT-be.PST
 ‘What would Jesus do?’ [title of a book by Charles Sheldon]

One significant asymmetry exists in the use of these two strategies; they are not equally acceptable in the negative past tense. *-um* is rather unnatural in the negative past tense, whereas *-ār-* is fine, as shown in example (21).

- (21) a. #Avarũ orikkalum var-um-āyirunn-illa.
 They even.once come-FUT-be.PST-NEG
 ‘They would never come by.’
- b. Avarũ orikkalum var-ār-uṇṭ-āyirunn-illa.
 they even.once come-HAB-exist.PRES-be.PST-NEG
 ‘They never used to come by.’

Moreover, Bybee et al. (1994: 152) distinguish between habitual and generic aspects on the basis of the relationship between the State of Affairs being communicated and the participant involved. The habitual aspect is participant-

oriented, whereas the generic aspect is not. The two morphemes differ along these lines in that *-um* can also be used to encode generic aspect (i.e., participant-orientation does not matter), whereas *-ār-* cannot. In (22b), a generic reading where the propensity for barking is not bound to the dogs is not possible, while in (22a) this propensity need not be bound to the dogs.

- (22) a. Paṭṭi-kaḷ uṛakke kuraykk-um.
 Dog-PL loudly bark-FUT
 ‘Dogs bark loudly.’
- b. Paṭṭi-kaḷ uṛakke kuraykk-ār-uṇṭū.
 Dog-PL loudly bark-HAB-exist.PRES
 ?? ‘Dogs bark loudly.’
 ‘The dogs bark loudly.’

3.3 *Comparison of -um and -ār-*

The most noticeable difference between the two morphemes is that *-ār-* is unambiguously habitual and usable in the present and past, and with both polarities, whereas the reading of *-um* as a habitual seems to have limitations as only appropriate contexts in discourse and a positive polarity make a that reading fully acceptable.

There is also perceptibly a difference in strength or specificity, in that *-ār-* more directly and specifically communicates habituality, whereas *-um* with the present time reference merely carries the interpretation that an event is expected to continue to happen. As such, *-um* readily accepts generic readings in non-participant-oriented utterances, whereas *-ār-* only allows habitual readings.

3.4 *Habits vs. states*

In this subsection, I briefly review the issue of stativity with respect to habituals in Malayalam. Sentences such as the representative example for habituals given by Comrie (1976: 27), “the Temple of Diana used to stand at Ephesus,” could not be paraphrased in Malayalam with either of the two strategies reviewed previously, as observed in (23).

- (23) a. * Ḍayāna-yuṭe kṣētram ephesas-il sthiti ceyy-um-āyirunnu.
 Diana-GEN temple Ephesus-LOC stay do-FUT-be.PST
 ‘The Temple of Diana used to stand at Ephesus.’
- b. * Ḍayāna-yuṭe kṣētram ephesas-il sthiti ceyy-ār-uṇṭ-āyirunnu.
 Diana-GEN temple Ephesus-LOC stay do-HAB-exist-be.PST
 ‘The Temple of Diana used to stand at Ephesus.’

The reason for this seems to be that both strategies only target habitual events, while a non-event state is expressed in this sentence. Indeed, as Binnick (2005: 344) notes, the sentence “the Temple of Diana used to stand at Ephesus” is in fact a stative utterance, and not a habitual one.

The simple perfect in Malayalam (using the verb ‘sit’ as an auxiliary, see Nair 2012: 56) would be used to express this state of being, as in (24).

- (24) *Ḍayāna-yuṭe kṣētram ephesas-il sthiti ceyt-irunnu.*
 Diana-GEN temple Ephesus-LOC stay do.PST-sit.PST
 ‘The Temple of Diana used to stand at Ephesus.’

The simple perfect primarily indicates that the State of Affairs described is different from that of the speech moment, and it does not indicate habituality as described by Comrie. It simply communicates in (24) that the state (and not any habit) of the Temple standing was the case at some point in the past and no longer is the case at the time of speaking. This tense is equally used in characteristically non-habitual and non-stative contexts, for example:

- (25) *Innale maḷa peyt-irunnu.*
 yesterday rain fall.PST-sit.PST
 ‘It rained yesterday (but not today).’

- (26) *Prḍhānamanṭri at-ine-kkuṛiccū ālōcicc-irunnu.*
 Prime.minister that-ACC-about think.PST-sit.PST
 ‘The Prime Minister had (already) thought about it.’

(Adapted from Nair 2012: 56)

The simple perfect therefore variously expresses states, non-continuous events, and continuous events. The reading of this tense is still contrastive in all cases. It may be used for functions similar to the habitual, as shown in (24), but it is not a habitual marker itself. There is no present tense equivalent to this construction. For a present time reference, a simple present could be used, as in (27).

- (27) *Ḍayāna-yuṭe kṣētram ephesas-il sthiti ceyunnu.*
 Diana-GEN temple Ephesus-LOC stay do.PRES
 ‘The Temple of Diana stands/is standing at Ephesus.’

In summary, the two strategies in Malayalam for marking the habitual are only used to talk about series of events being perceived as a whole. Lasting states, which are not events, are semantically incompatible with these expression

formats, and other tenses – which themselves are not restricted to statives – are used to communicate lasting states.

4 Conclusions

The aims of this paper were to first provide some historical background on the habitual aspect in Dravidian languages closely related to Malayalam, and then to provide a descriptive overview of strategies modern Malayalam uses to communicate habitual events. In section 2, I reviewed previous literature on the coexpression of the future tense and habitual aspect in Dravidian languages closely related to Malayalam. The evidence seems to suggest that this coexpression has been relatively stable across time. The modern Malayalam *-um*, which is used in all persons, derives from a third-person future–habitual ending which can be traced back to Proto-Dravidian.

In section 3, I provided an overview of the future–habitual *-um* and the habitual marker *-āṛ-* in terms of form and meaning. I illustrated how *-um* is used to express the future tense, the habitual aspect, the generic aspect, and in the past, the conditional mood. This contrasts with *-āṛ-* which is restricted to habitual usages. I also demonstrated that *-āṛ-* is more natural than *-um* in the negative past tense. I finally reviewed the incompatibility between the two habitual strategies and stative meanings. From this incompatibility, it seems that the language distinguishes between lasting habitual events and lasting states, and therefore other verb forms are needed to express the latter. Unfortunately, the historical development of the *-āṛ-* morpheme has yet to be explained, so further inquiry is required to shed light on this.

5 References

- Aiyar, L. V. R. 1936. *The Evolution of Malayalam Morphology*. Ernakulam: Cochin Government Press.
- Binnick, R. I. 2005. The Markers of Habitual Aspect in English. *Journal of English Linguistics* 33(4): 339–369.
- Bybee, J., R. Perkins & W. Pagliuca. 1994. *The evolution of grammar: Tense, aspect, and modality in the languages of the world*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Caldwell, R. 1856. *A Comparative Grammar of the Dravidian Or South-Indian Family of Languages*. 3rd edn. London: Williams and Norgate.
- Comrie, B. 1976. *Aspect*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Haspelmath, M. 1998. The Semantic Development of Old Presents: New Futures and Subjunctives Without Grammaticalization. *Diachronica* 15(1): 29–62.

- Krishnamurti, B. 2003. *The Dravidian Languages*. Cambridge Language Surveys.
- Rajam, V. S. 1992. *A Reference Grammar of Classical Tamil Poetry*. Volume 199. Philadelphia, PA: American Philosophical Society.
- Schiffman, H. F. 1983. *A Reference Grammar of Spoken Kannada* (Publications on Asia of the School of International Studies II). Vol. 39. Seattle: University of Washington Press.
- Sridhar, S. N. 1990. *Kannada*. London: Routledge.
- Subrahmanyam, P. S. 1971. *Dravidian Verb Morphology: A Comparative Study*. Annamalainagar: Annamalai University.
- Veerraghava, P. 2019. Tense is Aspect in Telugu. *International Journal of Research and Analytical Reviews* 6(1): 947–950.
- Wilden, E. 2018. *Grammar of Old Tamil for Students* (Collection Indologie). 1st edn. Vol. 137. Ponichery, India: Institut français de Pondichéry, École française d'Extrême-Orient.

Gautam Ottur

ACLC, University of Amsterdam

gautam.ottur@student.uva.nl