Cognitive Construals underlying grammatical aspects and modalities in Dravidian Languages

by

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Cognitive Construals underlying grammatical aspects and modalities in Dravidian Languages

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Dravidian languages

- 20+ languages predominantly spoken in southern India. Four major literary languages Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam.

- Typologically SOV, free word order, PRO drop languages (Steever, Sanford B, 1988, 2015).

- Clausal connection is peculiar; sequence of non-finite verbs with one finite verb at the end (Steever, Sanford B, 1988, 2015, Jayaseelan 2004).

- Problem of what finiteness even means (Sandhya Sundaresan 2014), Separation of tense and finiteness (Amritavalli 2014).


- Finite clauses cannot be coordinated; Relative clauses are non-finite Jayaseelan 2014, Sandhya Sundaresan 2014)

- Lack of distinct function words – verbal non-finite inflections (Steever Stanford B, 1988)
Construction patterns to express grammatical aspects & modalities

• Current discussion – part of a larger theoretical work to understand Dravidian syntax from Construction Grammar perspective

• Discussion restricted to constructions involving grammatical aspects and modalities

• Grammatical aspects and modalities are expressed as MainVerb-AuxV1-AuxV2.. sequences

• Every verb in this sequence takes non-finite inflection and the final auxiliary verb shows the finite inflection

• Aspects show conjunctive participial inflection; modalities show infinitive participial inflection.
Example constructions for grammatical aspects

av-an     va-ndu     iru-pp-An (Ta)
‘He would have come’

vA-Du     chepp-i     un-nA-Du (Te)
dist-H.MASC.  say-CONJ  exist-PRES-3.H.SG
‘He has said (something)’

* avan vA iruppAn
* vADu cheppu unnADu

- Main verb shows Conjunctive participial inflection (non-finite). Auxiliary verb shows the finite inflection
- Conjunctive participial form shows the so-called past morpheme
- When bare stem of the verb is used, the sentence becomes ungrammatical
- The auxiliary verb is the syntactic head. Carries agreement (if marked by the language) and tense.
Example constructions for modalities

av-an  var-a  vEND-um (Ta)
dist-H.MASC.  come-INF  want-3.NH.SG
‘He should come’

vADu  chepp-a  galig-A-Du (Te)
dist-H.MASC.  say-INF  able-PST-3.H.SG
‘He could say (it)’

* avan vA vENDum
* vADu cheppu galigADu

- Again, using bare stem sequence makes the sentence ungrammatical
- Auxiliary verb shows finite inflection. Sometimes the finite inflection agrees with subject; in other cases it doesn’t. Reason?
  - E.g. ‘cheppa galigADu’ – he could say - agreement with subject ‘he’.
  - But ‘nuvvu rA kUDadu’ – you should not come - does not agree with ‘you’
Example constructions for modalities

\[ \begin{align*} 
\text{av-an} & \quad \text{var-a} & \quad \text{vEND-um (Ta)} \\
\text{dist-H.MASC.} & \quad \text{come-INF} & \quad \text{want-3.NH.SG} \\
\text{‘He should come’} & \\
\text{vADu} & \quad \text{chepp-a} & \quad \text{galig-A-Du (Te)} \\
\text{dist-H.MASC.} & \quad \text{say-INF} & \quad \text{able-PST-3.H.SG} \\
\text{‘He could say (it)’} & \\
\end{align*} \]

\[ \begin{align*} 
* \text{avan vA vENDum} \\
* \text{vADu cheppu galigADu} \\
\end{align*} \]

- Again, using bare stem sequence makes the sentence ungrammatical

- Auxiliary verb shows finite inflection. Sometimes the finite inflection agrees with subject; in other cases it doesn’t. Reason?

- E.g. ‘cheppa galigADu’ – *he could say* - agreement with subject ‘he’.

- But ‘nuvvu rA kUDadu’ – *you should not come* - does not agree with ‘you’
Thesis: Non-finite inflections are meaningful

- Traditional notion: Tense, grammatical Aspects, modalities are formal semantic properties of an event denoted by a verb.

- The usual analysis - these non-finite inflections are just formal morphological patterns

- *avan Urukku pOnAn matRum naNbargaLai sandittAn.*
- avan Urukku pOy naNbaragaLai sandittAn.
- He went to his town and met his friends.

- Our thesis: Grammatical aspects and modalities emerge as a result of meaningful discourse interactions between ‘processes’.

- We argue that there are systematic discourse construals underlying these surface inflections.
Why should non-finite inflections be treated as more than formal patterns in V-Vaux sequence – Scope of negation

(1) av-an va-ndu iru-pp-An
‘He would have come’

Negating the process and inception state

av-an va-ndu irukk-a mATT-An
Dist-H.MASC. come-CONJ exist-INF negate-3.H.M.SG
‘He would not have come’

‘He would not have come’ - Literally ‘He would have remained, [in a state of] having not come’

Here the process is negated and the inception state is described in discourse

* av-an var-A-mal iru-pp-An -> Infelicitous negation of (1)

(2) av-an var-a vEND-um
Dist-H.MASC. come-INF aux-FIN
‘He should come’

Negating the process and inception state

av-an var-a kUDAdu
Dist-H.MASC. come-INF aux-FIN
‘He should not come’

av-an var-A-mal iru-kka vEND-um
D.H.MASC come-NEG-CONJ exist-INF aux-FIN
‘He should not come’

Literally, ‘He should be in a state of having not come’

* avan varAmal vENDum -> infelicitous negation of (2)
Why should non-finite inflections be treated as more than formal patterns in V-Vaux sequence – Multiple interpretations

• ravi kuDi-ttu iru-kkiR-An (Ta)
  ravi drink-CONJ exist-PRES-AGR.
  ‘Ravi has drunk (recently)’
  ‘He has the experience of drinking (sometime in his life)’
  ‘He is drunk (currently)’

• Negation of the original sentence varies based on how it is interpreted.

• ‘kuDikkavillai / kuDittadillai/ kuDittu illai’
  ‘ravi ippo kuDittirukkiRAna?’ - If the interpretation of this sentence is ‘Is ravi drunk now?’, the answer is:
  ‘kuDittu ellam onRum illai. teLivAga tAn irukkAn’
  ‘drink-CONJ..... .. ...No-exist-FIN. Sober only exist-AGR
  ‘No, he is not drunk or anything. He is sober indeed’.
Discourse interactions underlying non-finite inflections

• **rAman uRang-An srami-ccu (Ma)**
  
  Ram  sleep-INF  try-PST-FIN
  
  ‘Ram tried to sleep’

• Negation scopes:

  ➢ **rAman uRang-An srami-cc-illa**
  
  Ram  sleep-INF  try-PST-NEG
  
  ‘Ram did not try to sleep’

  ➢ **rAman uRang-A-te irikk-An srami-ccu**
  
  Ram  sleep-NEG-CONJ  remain-INF  try-PST-FIN
  
  ‘Ram tried not to sleep’ (Literally: He tried to remain, having not slept)

• There is no ‘not to Verb’ construction in Dravidian languages. You say ‘Ram tried to remain [in a state], having not slept’.
Our analysis

• Four major construals underlying process – process interactions in discourse
• Conjunctive, Concurrent, Conditional, infinitive schemas
• Aspects arise as special cases of conjunctive schema meaningfully
• Modalities arise as special cases of infinitive schema meaningfully
Conjunctive schema – The general Construal
Concurrent schema – The general Construal
Conditional schema – The general Construal
Infinitive schema – The general Construal

- P2: Some process yet to be described in discourse
- P1: Process in inception
  - The Inceptive state

- Describes Continuance from here
- Description time line
- Moment of Description
Conjunctive subtype 1 – Process continuance

Conjunctive subtype II – Grammatical aspect
### How grammatical aspects are composed of the conjunctive schema

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expression</th>
<th>Literal meaning</th>
<th>Intended function</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>vandu irukkiREn</td>
<td>Having come, I exist (in the inceptive state)</td>
<td>I have come (recent event)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vandu irundEn</td>
<td>Having come, I existed (in the inceptive state)</td>
<td>I had come</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vandu koNDu irukkiREn</td>
<td>Having come, having held (the i.state), I existed (in it)</td>
<td>I am coming (progressive event)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vandu viTTEn</td>
<td>Having come, I let go (the i. state)</td>
<td>I have come (completive interpretation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vandu viTTu irundAL</td>
<td>Having come, having let go (the i.state), she remained (in the state)</td>
<td>She had come already (finished/completed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ODi pOnAn</td>
<td>Having run, he went (to such a state)</td>
<td>He ran away</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uDaittu pOTTAn</td>
<td>Having broken, he put (in the i.state)</td>
<td>He has broken [something] (Finished the activity)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How this discourse continuance explains spoken language data as well

• Explains both written and spoken data
• Written language: **vandu viTTAn** - having come, he let go. Meaning - He has come (‘completed already ‘sense)
• Spoken language: **vanduTTAn** - he has come (‘completed already ‘sense)
• Negation scopes of the above spoken form:
  1. Scope 1 **varalæ** - ‘He has not come’; action negated, state is left undescribed in discourse.
  2. Scope 2 **varAma irunduTTAn/viTTuTTAn/pOyiTTAn** - ‘ He has not come’; action negated, state is described with another functionally salient verb.
     ‘He has remained (in a state), having not come’
     ‘He has let go(of a state), having not come’
     ‘He has gone (to a state), having not come’
- Different valid ways to negate with scope 2.
Infinitive subtype 1 – Process expectance

Infinitive subtype 1 – Modalities

Diagram showing the relationship between process in inception and the moment of description.
How modalities are composed of the infinitive schema

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Intended function</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>solla vENDUm</td>
<td>To say, [such a state] wanted.</td>
<td>One should say</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>solla kUDAdu</td>
<td>To say, [such a state] will not join.</td>
<td>One should not say (Scope 1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sollAmal irukka vENDUm</td>
<td>Having not told, to remain [in such a state], wanted.</td>
<td>One should not say (Scope 2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vara muDiyum</td>
<td>To come, [such a state], will be capable</td>
<td>One can come (ability)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vara muDiyAdu</td>
<td>To come, [such a state], won’t be capable</td>
<td>One cannot come</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>varAmal irukka muDiyum</td>
<td>Having not come, to remain [in the state], will be capable</td>
<td>One can choose not to come</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Auxiliary verbs are not just syntactic heads

• Even when original lexical meaning is lost – the construals hold good. 
  e.g. Spoken language has fully grammaticalized the historical verbs as morphemes; still 
  the conceptions hold good

• Because grammatical aspects and modalities are dynamically constructed as discourse 
  interactions between processes describing an event and inception state of the event.

• Grammatical aspects of an event describe, not the event itself, but the state that is 
  conceived by the speaker once the process verb which describes the event is 
  brought into the discourse

• Modalities of an event describe, not the event itself, but the state that is conceived by 
  the speaker while the process verb which describes the event is expected in 
  discourse

• Explains why conjunctive participial inflection shows the ‘perfect aspect’ and infinitive 
  inflection shows ‘imperfective aspect’

• Auxiliary verbs describing aspects/modalities are not just syntactic heads, but semantic 
  heads as well.
References