

## The Modal Indefinites Spectrum of Dravidian

Ever since Haspelmath (1997)'s landmark survey of indefinites, which provided a vast cross-linguistic canvas of indefinites built on *wh*-pronouns in combination with various particles, there have been serious attempts to compositionally derive and explain the properties of these indefinites from their constituent pieces (Shimoyama 2006, Jayaseelan 2011, Chierchia 2013, Alonso-Ovalle & Menéndez-Benito 2013, Szabolcsi 2015, Erlewine 2019). In this talk we take a closer look at the spectrum of modal indefinites in the four major Dravidian languages, especially Malayalam and Telugu, and find some new and interesting properties and lines of composition which also have broader cross-linguistic application.

For one, we find that available identification schemes (naming, description and ostension; Aloni & Port 2010) for specifying the witness of the Epistemic indefinite (EI) *eed-oo/evar-oo* (which-DISJ/who-DISJ) 'something/somebody' of Telugu are insufficient, (1) & (2). We propose a solution along the lines of the familiarity theory of definiteness (Karttunen 1970, Heim 1983), formalizing it using mental referents and mental files (Recanati 2013). This has been shown to extend to EIs of other languages, including Indo-Aryan like Bangla (Saha 2018).

*Context:* Speaker can read the name-tag (with name and affiliation) of person standing on the table and singing, and says while pointing to that person:

- (1) Ravi Rao, HoD, EFLU ani evar-oo professor table ekki paaDutunnaaDu  
 Ravi Rao, HoD, EFLU QUOT who-DISJ professor table climbed singing  
 'Some Professor called Ravi Rao, HoD, EFLU, is singing on the table.'

*Context:* Speaker sees his next-door neighbor (of whom he knows nothing, except that he lives next door) slip and fall on the road:

- (2) # evar-oo jaari paDDaaru  
 who-DISJ slipped fell  
 'Somebody slipped and fell.'

Next, we contrast the Epistemic Random Choice (RC) indefinite *wh-oo oru* with the other RC Indefinite in Malayalam *wh-engil-um oru* and the EI in Malayalam *wh-oo*, and also contrast it with the Telugu RC Indefinite *wh-oo oka* and the Spanish RC Indefinite *un NP cualquiera*. We explain the distribution and meaning of *eed-oo oru* by proposing that it introduces a layer of quantification over possible worlds, and induces a presupposition of variation on epistemic worlds. We also find that the existential-Free Choice Item ( $\exists$ -FCI) *wh-engil-um (oru)* in Malayalam extends into the RC territory and appears to share the space with *wh-oo oru*, but it is clear that there is a distinct line between the two. While *wh-oo oru* gives rise to Speaker Ignorance readings, *wh-engil-um oru* is limited to Agent Indifference readings. We tie this to the epistemic nature of modality associated with *-oo*. On the other hand, the Epistemic indefinite *wh-oo* does not have the variation condition whereas the RC epistemic indefinite *wh-oo oru* is subject to the variation condition, coming from *oru*. We show that Malayalam makes fine-grained distinctions in the FC space, demarcated morphologically. The Malayalam indefinites clearly show us that the distribution and interpretation of a modal indefinite depends on other players in the space, (3).

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| (3) a. <i>plain indefinite</i> : oru NP           | d. <i>Existential FCI</i> : eed-engil-um (oru) NP              |
| b. <i>Epistemic indefinite</i> : eed-oo NP        | e. <i>Universal FCI</i> : eed-veen-engil-um NP                 |
| c. <i>Epistemic RC indefinite</i> : eed-oo oru NP | f. <i>Universal FCI (<math>\forall</math>-FCI)</i> : eed-NP-um |

Finally, we explore in some detail one kind of Dravidian FCI, seen in all the four languages - Malayalam, Tamil, Telugu and Kannada, which we show are universal Free Relatives (FR) built with the copular verb *-wh-aanə-engil-um/wh-aanə-aal-um/wh-ai-naa/wh-aad-ar-uu* = *wh-* + BE + IF + EVEN, (4)-(7). In turn, we show that Dravidian universal-FRs are EVEN-FRs built out of unconditionals (UNC), which are EVEN-conditionals, not the question and universal operator involving unconditionals that have been proposed for English (Rawlins 2008, 2013), (8) & (9). These FCIs of Dravidian can be  $\forall$ -FCI or  $\exists$ -FCI. The  $\forall$ -FCI is a result of the plain EVEN IF unconditional. The  $\exists$ -FCI is a result of exhaustification in the EVEN IF-unconditional with a covert scalar ONLY. Another kind of FCI (*wh-um*) doesn't have this unconditional structure. It is like *any* -EVEN based (Crnič 2018, Lahiri 1998), and show the exact same distribution as

*any* (in the FCI space). There is a division of labour between these two players in the FC space in Malayalam, (10), and in Tamil. The copular-concessive (BE+IF+EVEN) also forms concessive scalar additive particles (CSAP) when attached to non-*wh* items. They again can be interpreted ‘plain’ or exhaustified (with covert scalar ONLY), giving rise to ‘*even*’ and ‘*at least*’ interpretations respectively, (4)-(7). The morpheme that is interpreted as *at least* is the one that forms the  $\exists$ -FCI and the morpheme which is interpreted as *even (if)* is the one that forms  $\forall$ -FCIs –this is a bifurcation clearly visible in Malayalam and Tamil where the two morphemes are distinct, *engil-um* and *aanə-engil-um* in Malayalam, *aavade* and *aan-aal-um* in Tamil, whereas in Telugu and Kannada the same morpheme, *ai-naa* and *aad-ar-uu* respectively, has both an *at least* and *even (if)* interpretation and thus forms both  $\exists$ -FCIs and  $\forall$ -FCIs. The Dravidian CSAP also forms a free-standing concessive connective by itself, (11). This takes a sentential anaphor as its argument. Cross-linguistically, similar patterns (with some variation) like these in Dravidian are observed in Tibetan (Erlewine 2019) and Japanese (Watanabe & Nakanishi 2019) and can be broadly extended to the language type discussed in Haspelmath & König (1998) that uses concessive conditionals for free choice and unconditionals.

(4)	KANNADA	sub-clausal		clause-final		sentential
		non- <i>wh</i>	<i>wh</i> -	non- <i>wh</i>	<i>wh</i> -	
	- <i>ar-uu</i>			EVEN IF	UNC	
	<i>aad-ar-uu</i>	AT LEAST / EVEN IF	$\exists$ -FCI / $\forall$ -FCI			still/but

(5)	TELUGU	sub-clausal		clause-final		sentential
		non- <i>wh</i>	<i>wh</i> -	non- <i>wh</i>	<i>wh</i> -	
	- <i>naa</i>			EVEN IF	UNC	
	<i>ai-naa</i>	AT LEAST / EVEN IF	$\exists$ -FCI / $\forall$ -FCI			still

(6)	MALAYALAM	sub-clausal		clause-final		sentential
		non- <i>wh</i>	<i>wh</i> -	non- <i>wh</i>	<i>wh</i> -	
	<i>engil-um</i>	AT LEAST	$\exists$ -FCI	EVEN IF	UNC	still/but
	<i>aane-engil-um</i>	EVEN IF	$\forall$ -FCI			still/but
	- <i>um</i>	EVEN	$\forall$ -FCI			

(7)	TAMIL	sub-clausal		clause-final		sentential
		non- <i>wh</i>	<i>wh</i> -	non- <i>wh</i>	<i>wh</i> -	
	- <i>aavadu</i>	AT LEAST	$\exists$ -FCI			
	( <i>veen/aan</i> )- <i>aal-um</i>	EVEN IF	$\forall$ -FCI	EVEN IF	UNC	still/but
	- <i>um</i>	EVEN	$\forall$ -FCI			

- (8) a. **endə unD-engil-um** tinn-um  
 what EX-IF-EVEN eat-will  
 ‘I will eat whatever is there.’ (universal)
- b. **end-aane-engil-um** tinn-um  
 what-EQ-IF-EVEN eat-will  
 ‘I will eat anything.’
- c. **id-aane-engil-um** tinn-um  
 this-EQ-IF-EVEN eat-will  
 ‘I will eat even (if it is) this.’

- (9) a. [EVEN [IF [<sub>CP</sub> what is there] I will eat [<sub>FR</sub> what is there]]]  
 b. [EVEN [IF [<sub>CP</sub> what it be] I will eat [<sub>FR</sub> what it be]]]  
 c. [EVEN [IF [<sub>CP</sub> it be this] I will eat [<sub>FR</sub> this]]]

- (10) end-um / end-engil-um sambhaviky-aam (11) njaan vaayiccu. engil-um njaan tooTu  
 what-EVEN / what-IF-EVEN happen-may I read ENGIL-UM I failed  
 ‘Anything/something-or-other may happen.’ ‘I read. Still I failed.’