

A cross-linguistic survey of habitual markers

Sune Gregersen (Kiel) & Eva van Lier (Amsterdam)

ALT 15, Singapore, 4–6 Dec 2024

What?

Cross-linguistic study of dedicated habitual markers. Three RQs:

- 1 What kinds of habitual markers are founds across the world?
- 2 What are the diachronic sources of habitual markers?
- 3 If a language has more than one habitual markers, what are the differences between them?

Definition used for the investigation: *an overt morph or construction expressing that a situation typically occurs.*

Diachronic sources (RQ2)

At least 25 distinct source meanings attested in the combined samples (187 languages). A selection:

ALWAYS	Tapieté <i>-pi</i>	EXIST	Dhivehi <i>uḷenī</i>
ATTEND TO	German <i>pflegen</i>	GO	S. Paiute <i>mi(ya)</i>
BE GOOD	Ambel <i>hey</i>	KNOW	A'ingae <i>atesû</i>
BELONG	Krio <i>blant</i>	LIKE	Lao <i>mak1</i>
CARRY	N. Paiute <i>-yakwi</i>	STRONG	Mandan <i>ṣih-</i>
DO	Kwomtari <i>a</i>	THROW	Kulsab <i>kev</i>

Why?

Little cross-linguistic work on habituals [2, 3, 5]; not surveyed in several major reference works [4, 6, 7].

Some language-particular analyses suggest that languages may have multiple distinct habitual markers [8, 9]. This phenomenon has otherwise received little attention.

Functional differences (RQ3)

Multiple habituals in 14 languages in the variety sample. Relevant semantic parameters include **tense** (PST vs. NPST), **polarity** (POS vs. NEG), and **inclination** (3a) vs. **regularity** (3b):

- (3) Plains Cree (Algic; Canada)
 - a. māka kī-minihkwē-**ski**-w mīna
but PST-drink-HAB-3SG also
'... , but he also drank all the time.'
 - b. n-ohtāwiṃ **māna** kī-matwē-nikohtē-w sakāw-ihk
1-father HAB PST-EVI-get.firewood-3SG bush-LOC
'I used to see my father getting wood in the bush.' [11]

How?

Grammar survey for information on habituals using a **102-language variety sample** (adapted from an earlier study [1]).

For most languages, little or no diachronic information; for this reason we added a **85-language convenience sample** for RQ2.

Take-home messages

Dedicated habitual markers are **cross-linguistically widespread**; most common marking type in our variety sample are affixes.

Some **25 different source meanings** identified.

Languages may distinguish **multiple types of habituals**.

Form and frequency of habituals (RQ1)

Dedicated habitual markers in **57 of 102 languages**. Affixes the most common marking type (40 of 85 markers):

- (1) Maidu (Maiduan; California)
péne-m ník-kotò-c'o-m 'yhéj-'-**us**-a-n
two-NOM 1POSS-granny-DU-NOM go.along-PST-HAB-IND-3
'My two grannies used to go along.' [10, p. 48]

Other strategies are particles and auxiliaries (10/85 each), clitics (7/85), serial verbs (6/85), and various complex constructions:

- (2) Japanese (Japonic; Japan)
[hebi=o mikakeru to, ishi=o hiro-tte
snake=ACC catch.sight when stone=ACC pick.up-CNJ
hebi=ni muka-tte nage-ta] **mono da-tta** yo
snake=DAT face-CNJ throw-PST NMLZ COP-PST AFF
'When I saw a snake, I would pick up a stone and throw it at the snake.' [own data]

References

[1] J. Audring et al. Small events. Verbal diminutives in the languages of the world. *Linguistic Typology at the Crossroads* 1 (2021), pp. 223–56. DOI: [10.6092/issn.2785-0943/13427](https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.2785-0943/13427).

[2] N. Boneh and Ł. Jędrzejowski. Reflections on habituality across other grammatical categories. *STUF* 72 (2019), pp. 1–20. DOI: [10.1515/stuf-2019-0001](https://doi.org/10.1515/stuf-2019-0001).

[3] J. Bybee et al. *The evolution of grammar*. The University of Chicago Press, 1994.

[4] The Grambank Consortium. *Grambank*. 2023. URL: <https://grambank.clld.org/>.

[5] S. Cristofaro. Past habituals and irrealis. *Irrealis i irreal'nost'*. Ed. by Y. Lander et al. Gnosis, 2004, pp. 256–72.

[6] Ö. Dahl, ed. *Tense and aspect in the languages of Europe*. Mouton de Gruyter, 2000.

[7] M. S. Dryer and M. Haspelmath, eds. *WALS*. 2013. URL: <https://wals.info/>.

[8] R. Genis and P. Kyselica. Habitual constructions in Slovak. *A layered approach to habitual expressions*. Ed. by S. Gregersen and K. Hengeveld. Forthcoming. John Benjamins.

[9] K. Hengeveld et al. A layered approach to (past) habituality in English. *Linguistics in Amsterdam* 14 (2021), pp. 65–80.

[10] W. Shipley. *Maidu grammar*. University of California Press, 1964.

[11] A. Wolvengrey. Habitual constructions in *nēhiyawēwin* (Plains Cree). *A layered approach to habitual expressions*. Ed. by S. Gregersen and K. Hengeveld. Forthcoming. John Benjamins.

LaTeX template: uioposter, © 2020 by Martin Helso (CC BY 4.0).

