

Habituals around the world

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Habituals and habitual auxiliaries

Université Paris 8, 7 Oct 2024

Outline

- 1 What are habituals?
- 2 Why and how?
- 3 Cross-linguistic findings
- 4 Conclusions

Acknowledgement



This presentation is based on joint work with Eva van Lier.

Section 1

What are habituals?

Habituals

- Linguistic forms expressing that something typically or usually happens
- Sometimes described as a subtype of imperfective aspect (Comrie 1976; Bertinetto & Lenci 2012), but see e.g. Fortuin (2023)
- Modify a predicate (like other TMA expressions) and appear in many different guises: affix, clitic, particle, auxiliary, etc.

Example: Yuchi *-ne*

(1) Yuchi (isolate, Oklahoma)

- a. *sahã:de 'i* *hẽ-wa-ne*
 always tobacco 3SG(Yuchi.M).ACT-chew-HAB
 ‘He chews tobacco all the time.’

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- a. *sahã:de 'i hẽ-wa-ne*
 always tobacco 3SG(Yuchi.M).ACT-chew-HAB
 'He chews tobacco all the time.'
- b. *'i hõ-wa =:le*
 tobacco 3SG(Yuchi.M).ACT-chew =EMPH
 'He's really chewing (and chewing) that tobacco!'
 (Linn 2001: 263, 77)

Repeated or characteristic situations?

- One tradition views habituals as inherently involving repetition, i.e. a kind of verbal plurality
 - e.g. Bertinetto & Lenci (2012), Brinton (1987), Bybee et al. (1994: 127), and Xrakovskij (1997), among many others

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- According to another school of thought, habituals describe “a characteristic feature of a whole period” (Comrie 1976: 28), not necessarily involving any repetition
 - In some languages, habitual markers may combine with individual-level state predicates (on this term see Carlson 2012)

English *used to* + individual-level state

(2) *Simon **used to** believe in ghosts.*

(Comrie 1976: 27)

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- Solution by some: English *used to* is not a habitual marker
 - e.g. Binnick (2005; 2006), Hantson (2005), and Boneh & Jędrzejowski (2019: 11)
 - But cf. e.g. Schulz (2010), Neels (2015), or Hengeveld et al. (2021)

Other discussions in the literature

- Differences/similarities between habitual and generic (gnomic) statements (Dahl 1985; Bertinetto 1994; Krifka et al. 1995; Langacker 1997; Carlson 2012)
 - *Beavers build dams* (or *The beaver builds dams*)

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 - *Beavers build dams* (or *The beaver builds dams*)
- Differences/similarities between habituais and ‘attitudinals’ (Bertinetto 1994; Lin 2003; Bertinetto & Lenci 2012)
 - *She teaches French* (cf. *She is a French teacher*)

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- Differences/similarities between habituais and ‘attitudinals’ (Bertinetto 1994; Lin 2003; Bertinetto & Lenci 2012)
 - *She teaches French* (cf. *She is a French teacher*)
- Habituais as the expression of *habits*?
 - Habituais describe habits or propensities of participants (Brinton 1987; Dik 1997: 236)
 - Habituais characterize situations (e.g. Lyons 1977: 716; Comrie 1976: 27–28; Carlson 2012: 831)

Working definition

Habitual marker

An overt morph or construction expressing that a situation typically occurs.

Some phenomena not included

- Frequentative or pluractional forms which may receive a habitual interpretation
 - e.g. CVC-reduplication in Squamish/Skw̓xwú7mesh (Salishan; Canada): sometimes translated ‘usually, always’, but used more broadly for situations that happen more than once (Bar-el 2008)
 - *kw’elh*- ‘spill’ → *kw’elh~kw’elh*- ‘always spill’ (bad habit)
 - *7exw*- ‘cough’ → *7exw~7exw*- ‘cough many times’
 - *sak*’- ‘cut’ → *sek*’~*sak*’- ‘slice’

Some phenomena not included

- Unmarked or underspecified tense/aspect forms which may occur in semantically habitual contexts
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- ‘Habitual nouns’ meaning ‘someone who usually does X’, etc.
 - e.g. the habitual nominalizer *tala(g)*- in Matigsalug Manobo (Austronesian, Philippines) (Wang et al. 2006: 32)
 - *suggal* ‘gamble’ → *tala(g)suggal* ‘gambler’
 - *bunù* ‘murder’ → *tala(g)bunù* ‘murderer’

Two notes on terminology

- ‘Habitual’ very common in the linguistic literature, but may be used with different extensions (cf. Carlson 2012: 842)
- Sometimes other terms are found for expressions of typically occurring situations (especially in older sources)

Alternative terminology

Term	Example references
CONSUEUDINAL	O'Donovan 1845; Bliss 1972
CUSTOMARY	Lipkind 1945; Aikhenvald 2003; Mihas 2015
HABITUATIVE	de Angulo & Freeland 1930; Strange 1973; Hill 1975
NORMAL	Bromley 1981; Louwerse 1988
TRADITIONAL	Jacobsen 1964
USITATIVE	Ultan 1967; Parks 1976; Silverstein 1974

Table 1: Some other terms in the literature

Section 2

Why and how?

Habituals in the typological literature

- Much work on habituals in (some) individual languages, but few large-scale cross-linguistic surveys
- No chapter on habituals in WALS, Grambank, or the Eurotyp volumes
 - cf. Boneh & Jędrzejowski (2019: 1–2)
- Habituals generally receive less attention than more ‘central’ TMA categories

Some relevant earlier studies

- Dahl (1985: 95–102) on habitual (and ‘habitual-generic’) markers, part of a larger study of tense and aspect markers
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- Bybee et al. (1994: 151–160) on grammaticalization and lexical sources of TMA markers
 - 94 languages in the sample, data on habituals from 30
- Cristofaro (2004) on the relation between past habituals and irrealis marking
 - Convenience sample of “about two hundred” languages, unfortunately no full list of sources

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- Maurer (2013) on coexpression (or not) of habitual markers in creole languages
 - 76 languages in the APiCS, habitual meaning discussed for 59
- Fortuin (2023) on the relation between habituals and the perfective/imperfective distinction
 - 36 languages investigated

Main research questions

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- 2 What are the (likely) sources of habitual markers? (GRAMMATICALIZATION)
- 3 Are there languages with multiple habitual markers, and what are the differences between these? (SEMANTIC DISTINCTIONS)

Method

- Used 102-language variety sample from Audring et al. (2021)
 - Checked descriptive grammars (or other relevant literature) for habitual markers
 - Noted expression format, likely source meanings, and any other relevant information for each marker

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 - Checked descriptive grammars (or other relevant literature) for habitual markers
 - Noted expression format, likely source meanings, and any other relevant information for each marker
- Supplemented opportunistically with information on habituals from 85 additional languages and dialects
- Languages included in our variety sample are indicated with **brown** text; additional languages with **green**

Section 3

Cross-linguistic findings

How many relevant languages?

	<i>n</i>
One habitual	43
More than one habitual	14
None reported/unclear	45
Total	102

Table 2: Languages with reports of dedicated habituals

Forms of habitual markers (RQ1)

	<i>n</i>
Affix	40
Auxiliary/catenative verb	10
Particle	10
Clitic	7
Serial verb construction	6
Nominal	6
Variable/unclear	5
Reduplication	1
Total	85

Table 3: Expression formats in the 102-language sample

Summary on expression format (RQ1)

- Habitual markers reported for 57 of the 102 surveyed languages
- Many bound morphs: 48 out of 85 markers are affixes (including one ‘duplifix’) or clitics
- But this may partly be due to descriptive bias
 - Grammars usually have comprehensive coverage of bound morphs, whereas periphrastic constructions might be overlooked (especially in sketch grammars)

Source meanings (RQ2)

Meaning	Languages
ALWAYS/STILL	Hup, Pennsylvania Dutch English, Tapieté
(BE) GOOD	Ambel (Waigeo), Ma'ya, Matbat
(BE) STRONG	Abawiri, Mandan, Mungbam
BEFRIEND	Wari'
BELONG	Cornwall English, Krio
CARE	Danish, German, Yiddish
CARRY	Northern Paiute, older Basque
CONTINUE	Lavukaleve
DO	Kwomtari, Tariana, Anamuxra, Irish English, Kulsab, Southern Nisu
EXIST/STAY	A'ingae, Bora, Mosetén, Tariana, Abipon, Dhivehi
HAVE A LOT	Central Alaskan Yupik
KNOW	Mosetén, A'ingae, BCS, Bizkaian Basque, Palenquero, Tok Pisin, Vitu
LIKE/LOVE	Lao, Ancient Greek, Hualapai, Khmu, Saramaccan
USE	East Danish, Standard English, Swedish
THROW	Kulsab
WALK/GO	Kokama-Kokamilla, Ute, Gants, Sezo
WITH	Seeku

Table 4: Some likely source meanings (combined samples)

KNOW → HABITUAL

(3) A'ingae (isolate; Colombia/Ecuador)

- a. *Je'nda pûshesû=ndekhû=khe=ti setha'pue-ñe atesû='fa.*
 then woman=HUMPL=ADD=INT sing-INF HAB=PLS
 'So the women too used to sing?'

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‘So the women too used to sing?’

- b. *Munda=ma fi'thi-ye atesû=mbi=chu a'i*
 peccary=ACC1 kill-INF know=NEG=SUBORD person

‘There was a man who didn't know how to kill
 white-lipped peccary.’

(Hengeveld 2020)

LIKE → HABITUAL

(4) **Khmu** (Austroasiatic; Laos)

- a. *kəə kù yəh mɛ̌aŋ_ théey kùu pɛ̌i*
 he HAB go Thailand each year
 ‘He usually goes to Thailand each year’

LIKE → HABITUAL

(4) **Khmu** (Austroasiatic; Laos)

- a. *kəə kù yəh mɛ̌aŋ_ théey kùu pîi*
 he HAB go Thailand each year

‘He usually goes to Thailand each year’

- b. *nə̀ə kù ʔwɛ́ak pùuc*
 they HAB/like drink wine.

‘They usually drink wine./They like to drink wine.’

(Svantesson 1994: 272)

Indefinite object → HABITUAL

(5) Misantra Totonac (Totonacan; Mexico)

a. *ut šqaa-nan*

3SG harvest-INDF.OBJ

‘s/he harvests (something)’

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(5) *Misantla Totonac* (Totonacan; Mexico)

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‘s/he harvests (something)’

b. *ut qawa-nan*

3SG talk-INDF.OBJ

‘s/he (always) talks’

(MacKay 1999: 321–323)

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(MacKay 1999: 321–323)

- “When translating verbs with /-nan/ out of context [also transitive verbs, SG], speakers almost invariably qualify the meaning of the verb with ‘always.’” (MacKay 1999: 322)

Habitual *belong* in Cornwall English

(6) Cornwall English (Indo-European; England)

*I am not so ill as I **belong** to be*

‘I am not so ill as I usually am’

(Wright 1898–1905: s.v. *belong*)

Habitual *blant* (← *belong to*) in Krio

(7) **Krio** (English-lexifier creole; Sierra Leone)

Olu blant go London fo Krismes

O. HAB go London for Christmas

‘Olu always goes to London for Christmas’

(Yillah & Corcoran 2007: 181)

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‘Olu always goes to London for Christmas’

(Yillah & Corcoran 2007: 181)

- Also in Gullah; both constructions are assumed to derive from Cornwall English *belong to* (Hancock 1971; 1994)

Multiple habituals (RQ3)

- More than one habitual marker reported for 14 languages in our variety sample
- Which distinctions are relevant in such cases?

Multiple habituals (RQ3)

	Language	Source
Polarity	A'ingae POS habituals vs. NEG = <i>masia</i> Berbice Dutch POS <i>justu</i> + <i>das</i> vs. NEG <i>dasn</i> Coptic POS <i>ša(re)</i> vs. NEG <i>me(re)</i>	Hengeveld 2020 Kouwenberg 1994 Zakrzewska & Vliet fc.
Tense	Ket PST <i>ba</i> /PRS <i>an</i> /FUT <i>as</i> Berbice Dutch PST <i>justu</i> vs. NPST <i>das/dasn</i>	Georg 2007 Kouwenberg 1994
Frequency	Lao 'tendency' <i>mak1</i> vs. 'regular' <i>lùajə-lùaj4</i> Krio 'usual' <i>kin</i> vs. 'emphatic' <i>blant</i>	Enfield 2007 Yillah & Corcoran 2007
Scope	Plains Cree - <i>ski</i> vs. <i>mana</i> Slovak - <i>va</i> vs. <i>zvyknúť</i>	Wolvengrey fc. Genis & Kyselica fc.
Modality?	Tariana 'habitual prescribed' = <i>hyuna</i>	Aikhenvald 2003
Unclear	A'ingae <i>atesû</i> vs. <i>kanse</i> Mosetén habitual constructions Pawnee 'habitual' - <i>u:ku</i> vs. 'usitative' <i>ut-</i> Papuan Malay <i>taw</i> vs. <i>biasa</i> Washo 'usitative' - <i>enun</i> and 'traditional' - <i>emel?</i>	Hengeveld 2020, p.c. Sakel 2004 Parks 1976 Kluge 2023 Jacobsen 1964

Table 5: Distinctions in languages with multiple habituals

Plains Cree *-ski* and *mana*

(8) Plains Cree (Algonquian; Canada)

a. *māka kī-minihkwē-ski-w mīna*

but PST-drink-HAB-3SG also

‘..., but he also drank all the time.’

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b. *n-ohtāwiy māna kī-matwē-nikohtē-w sakāw-ihk*

1-father HAB PST-PERCP-get.firewood-3SG bush-LOC

‘My father used to be visible preparing firewood in the bush.’

(Wolvengrey fc.)

Section 4

Conclusions

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 - Our results do not contradict this – Dahl has a quite specific (frequency-based) definition of “major TMA category”

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 - We found more than one marker in 14 languages, i.e. c. 25% of languages with habituals ($n = 57$)
 - Of course, some of these reflect tense or polarity distinctions, but others do in fact express different kinds of habituality

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- Kuteva et al. (2019) identify nine sources of habitual markers, e.g. KNOW, SIT, GO, and USE

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- Kuteva et al. (2019) identify nine sources of habitual markers, e.g. KNOW, SIT, GO, and USE
 - To these we may add at least fifteen additional possible sources, some of them well attested across languages (e.g. DO and LIKE)

Take-home messages

- Habitual markers are cross-linguistically common (RQ1)
 - Identified in 57 of 102 languages in the variety sample
 - About half are bound morphs (affixes, clitics); other strategies include particles, auxiliaries, and serial verbs

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- Great variety of likely source meanings (RQ2)
 - e.g. DO, KNOW, LIKE/LOVE, and WALK/GO; less common meanings include (BE) GOOD, (BE) STRONG, BELONG, and CARRY
- More than one HAB marker in several languages (RQ3)
 - Relevant parameters include polarity, tense, frequency (intensity), and individual vs. situational scope
 - Many cases are unclear – more work on ‘multiple-habitual’ languages is needed

Thank you!

Comments and questions are always welcome:

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Habitual *still* in Pennsylvania Dutch English

(9) Pennsylvania Dutch English (Southern Pennsylvania)

a. *I go to that church **still**.*

‘It is my habit to attend that church.’

b. *He liked pepperoni pizza **still**.*

‘He used to like/always did like pepperoni pizza.’

(Anderson 2014: 35–36)

A lexical habitual (and its source)

(10) Danish (Indo-European; Denmark)

a. *Jeg **plej-er** at vær-e heldig på casino.*

I HAB-NPST to COP-INF lucky on casino

‘I’m usually lucky in the casino’

b. *Han **plej-er** sit forhold til*

he care.for-NPST REFL.POSS.N relationship(N) to

fagbevægelse-n

labour_movement-DEF

‘He is caring for his relationship with the labour unions’

(examples from KorpusDK; cf. Gregersen et al. 2021)

Future + habitual in Southern Kiwai

(11) Southern Kiwai (Kiwaian; PNG)

wi-du-m-a-ri-iarug-uti-ri-go

2/3-FUT-PL.A-HAB-FUT-say[PL.OBJ]-DISTR-FUT-HAB?

‘They will habitually speak (many things on many occasions)’

(Wurm 1977: 899)