

A cross-linguistic survey of habitual markers

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SLE, Helsinki 22 Aug 2024

Outline

- 1 What are habituals?
- 2 Why and how?
- 3 Formal and functional patterns
- 4 Conclusions

Section 1

What are habituals?

Habituals

- Linguistic forms expressing that something typically happens
- Often described under the heading of aspect, specifically as a subtype of imperfective aspect (e.g. Comrie 1976)
- 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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'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)

Definition for this study

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 (cf. Mattiola 2019, 2020)
 - 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’

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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’

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

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

Some relevant earlier studies

- Dahl (1985: 95–102) on habitual (and ‘habitual-generic’) markers, part of a larger study of tense and aspect markers
 - 64 languages in the sample, habituals found in about 20
- 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

Main research questions

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- 1 What kinds of habitual markers are found in the world's languages? (EXPRESSION FORMAT)
- 2 What are the (probable) sources of habitual markers? (COEXPRESSION/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, coexpression patterns, and any other relevant information for each marker

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 - Noted expression format, coexpression patterns, 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

Formal and functional patterns

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 habituals

How are habitual meanings expressed? (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)

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- 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)

Coexpression patterns (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
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
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
Future/intention	Purépecha, Kristang, Odia
Indefinite object	Misantla Totonac
Nominal	Awa-Cuaiquer, Yauyos Quechua, Bunan, Dolgan, Halh Mongolian

Table 4: Selection of coexpression patterns (combined samples)

Coexpression: KNOW + habitual

(2) **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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- 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)

Coexpression: LIKE/LOVE + habitual

(3) **Khmu** (Austroasiatic; Laos)

- a. *kəə kù yəh mian_théey kùu pîi*
he HAB go Thailand each year
'He usually goes to Thailand each year'

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'He usually goes to Thailand each year'
- b. *nəə kù ʔwɛak pùuc*
they HAB/like drink wine.
'They usually drink wine./They like to drink wine.'
(Svantesson 1994: 272)

Habitual *belong* in Cornwall English

(4) 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

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

Olu blant go London fɔ̌ Krismɛs

O. HAB go London for Christmas

‘Olu always goes to London for Christmas’

(Yillah & Corcoran 2007: 181)

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- 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>	Hengeveld 2020 Kouwenberg 1994
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> (indiv.) vs. <i>mana</i> (sit.)	Wolvengrey fc.
Modality?	Tariana 'habitual prescribed' = <i>hyuna</i>	Aikhenvald 2003
Unclear	Pawnee 'habitual' - <i>u:ku</i> vs. 'usitative' <i>ut-</i> Mosetén habitual constructions A'ingae <i>atesû</i> vs. <i>kanse</i> Papuan Malay <i>taw</i> vs. <i>biasa</i> Washo 'usitative' - <i>enun</i> and 'traditional' - <i>emel?</i>	Parks 1976 Sakel 2004 Hengeveld 2020 Kluge 2023 Jacobsen 1964

Table 5: Distinctions in languages with multiple habituals

Plains Cree *-ski* and *mana*

(6) 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

Take-home messages

- Habitual markers are cross-linguistically common
 - 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 (RQ1)

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- Great variety of attested coexpression patterns
 - e.g. DO, KNOW, LIKE/LOVE, and WALK/GO; less common meanings include (BE) STRONG, BELONG, and CARRY (RQ2)
- More than one HAB marker in several languages
 - Relevant parameters include polarity, tense, and frequency (intensity) – in addition to several unclear cases (RQ3)

Conclusions in light of earlier work

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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 rather than different subtypes of habituality

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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)

Thank you!

Comments and questions are always welcome:

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