Malayalam: a Grammatical Sketch and a Text

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Abbreviations

??    unknown
1     first person
2     second person
3     third person
ACC    accusative
AFF    affirmative
ATTR    attributive
CAUS    causative
COND1    first conditional (-aal)
COND2    second conditional (-engkil)
COORD    coordination
COP1    first copula (e.g. aaNE, aayiryunnu, aayiryikkyum)
COP2    second copula (e.g. aakunnu, aayi, aakum)
CVB    converb
DAT    dative
DNT    deontic
EMPH    emphatic
EX    existential
EXC:    exclusive
F    feminine
FS    false start
FUT    future
GEN    genitive
HON    honorific
HAB    habitual
HORT    hortative
IMP    imperative
INC    inclusive
INF1    first infinitive (-uka)
INF2    second infinitive (-aan)
INS    instrumental
INTR    intransitive
LOC    locative
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>masculine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEG</td>
<td>negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NMLZ</td>
<td>nominalizer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOM:</td>
<td>nominative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PFV</td>
<td>perfective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PL</td>
<td>plural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POT</td>
<td>potential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRF</td>
<td>perfect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROH:</td>
<td>prohibitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRS</td>
<td>present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PST</td>
<td>past</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q</td>
<td>interrogative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QUOT</td>
<td>quotative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RECP</td>
<td>reciprocal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REFL</td>
<td>reflexive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SG</td>
<td>singular</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOC</td>
<td>sociative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TR</td>
<td>transitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UQ</td>
<td>universal quantification</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Part I: A Grammatical Sketch of Malayalam

1. Introduction

Malayalam (ISO: mal) is a Dravidian language primarily spoken in the southwest of India. According to Lewis (2009), it is the official language of Kerala state and Lakshadweep union territory. Its alternative names include Allelum, Malayalani, Malayali, Malean, etc. Within India alone there were over 35 million speakers of Malayalam in 1997, not including the other nearly 500,000 speakers outside India.

The data used in this grammatical sketch mostly come from my consultant Sona Joseph, a 26-year-old female who speaks Malayalam natively and English fluently. She originally came from Kochi (formerly Cochin), Kerala, India, and is currently a graduate student at Rice University.

The methodology adopted here is primarily direct elicitation. To complement the elicitation data from the sole consultant, I also transcribed a small portion of a TV interview on the Onam Festival, which is the biggest festival in the state of Kerala (see Part II for details).

This grammatical sketch is divided into three major sections, namely, phonology, morphology, and syntax. Aside from the sketch, a glossary of some selected Malayalam words (about 420) is included in Appendix I.

2. Phonology

The starting point of data collection for Malayalam phonology is Comrie and Smith’s (1977) Basic Vocabulary. Most of the time, the words given by the consultant were retrieved from her memory. In some cases, however, the consultant used Gundert’s (1970) Malayalam and English Dictionary in order to find out words with some particular syllables.

The organization of this section is as follows: Section 2.1 introduces the phoneme inventory in Malayalam; Section 2.2 identifies some allophonic variations of the proposed phonemes; Section 2.3 slightly touches upon the syllable structure of Malayalam; finally Section 2.4 discusses the typological status of the phoneme inventory as a whole.

2.1. Phoneme Inventory

2.1.1. Consonants

Malayalam has 52 consonant phonemes, encompassing 9 places of articulation and 8 manners of articulation, as shown in Table 1 below. In terms of manner of articulation, plosives are the most complicated, for they demonstrate a five-way distinction in bilabials, dentals,
alveolo-palatals, retroflexes, and velars. A bilabial plosive, for example, is either voiceless or voiced. Within voiceless bilabial plosives a further distinction is made between aspirated and unaspirated ones whereas for voiced bilabial plosives the distinction is between modal-voiced and breathy-voiced ones. Additionally, an unaspirated voiceless bilabial plosive is either singleton (i.e. short) or geminate (i.e. long). The same five-way distinction is also found in dental, alveolo-palatal, retroflex, and velar plosives.

Table 1: Consonant phonems of Malayalam

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plosive</th>
<th>Voice</th>
<th>Bilabial</th>
<th>Labiodental</th>
<th>Dental</th>
<th>Alveolar</th>
<th>Alveolo-palatal</th>
<th>Retroflex</th>
<th>Palatal</th>
<th>Velar</th>
<th>Glottal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
<td>- pː pʰ</td>
<td>ʈːː ʈʰ</td>
<td>ʈʰ</td>
<td>teː teː h</td>
<td>tː tʰ</td>
<td>kː kʰ</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
<td>- bː bʰ</td>
<td>ɖː ɖʰ</td>
<td>ɖʰ</td>
<td>ɖʒː ɖʒʰ</td>
<td>ɖː ɖʰ</td>
<td>gː gʰ</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+</td>
<td>mːː m</td>
<td>- mː mː</td>
<td>ɲːː ɲː</td>
<td>ɲː</td>
<td>ɲːː ɲːː</td>
<td>ṇː ṇː</td>
<td>ṇː ṇː</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+</td>
<td>rːː r</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>rːː rː</td>
<td>rː</td>
<td></td>
<td>rːː rː</td>
<td>rːː rː</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td>- sː s</td>
<td>cːː sː h</td>
<td>sː h</td>
<td></td>
<td>sː sː h</td>
<td>sː sː h</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>fːː f</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>fːː fː</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>vːː vː</td>
<td>vːː vː</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>lːː lː</td>
<td>lːː lː</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In terms of place of articulation, on the other hand, alveolars are the most complex because they involve all manners of articulation except for affricate. Even an alveolar tap/flap is distinguished from an alveolar trill, much like the case in Spanish (e.g. *pero* /pero/ ‘but’ vs. *perro* /pero/ ‘dog’). Unlike in Spanish, however, the alveolar tap/flap in Malayalam has an inherent palatal quality in it, which is indicated by the palatalized diacritic.

A conspicuous feature in the consonant inventory is that length is phonemic. Consonants that show this short/long contrast include all voiceless plosives (except for alveolars), all nasals (except for velars), and all lateral approximants. What these consonants have in common is an occlusion phase before the release of a segment, during which the air pressure is built up, and
this is also precisely the phase that is prolonged in the case of geminate consonants.

2.1.1.1. **Minimal pairs.**

To support the phonemes proposed in Table 1, some minimal or near minimal pairs of phonetically similar consonants are provided in Table 2 and Table 3.

**Table 2: Minimal pairs of phonetically similar consonants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Phonemes</th>
<th>Words</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>/p/-/m/</td>
<td>paŋam ‘money’ maŋam ‘smell’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>/p/-/pʰ/</td>
<td>apa- ‘bad’ apa ‘dad’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>/pʰ/-/b/</td>
<td>pʰalam ‘fruit; result’ balam ‘strength’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>/ʈ/-/ɖ/</td>
<td>naṭi ‘actress’ naḷi ‘lake’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>/ʈʰ/-/b/</td>
<td>pʰalam ‘fruit; result’ balam ‘strength’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>/ʈ/-/ʈː/</td>
<td>kaṭi ‘thick’ kaṭi ‘knife’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>/n/-/nː/</td>
<td>pana ‘palm tree’ pan ‘bad’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>/n/-/nː/</td>
<td>ṛanam ‘forest’ ṛaŋam ‘fat’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>/n/-/nː/</td>
<td>ṛan ‘snow; ice’ ṛa ‘soil; sand’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>/n/-/nː/</td>
<td>maŋa ‘yellow’ maña ‘manna’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>/v/-/t̪/</td>
<td>iɾikuka ‘hit’ iɾik ‘hit’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>/v/-/m/</td>
<td>maram ‘tree’ maŋam ‘smell’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>/v/-/v/</td>
<td>aɾa ‘half’ ara ‘storage; barn’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>/v/-/q̥/</td>
<td>mara ‘shade’ maɾa ‘rain’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>/v/-/q̥/</td>
<td>gʰɔːram ‘frightful’ gʰɔːcam ‘noise’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>/v/-/l/</td>
<td>mara ‘shade’ mala ‘mountain’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>/l/-/l/</td>
<td>mula ‘breast’ mula ‘jasmin’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>/l/-/ɾ/</td>
<td>ṭala ‘head’ ṭara ‘floor’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>/ɾ/-/ɾ/</td>
<td>ṭaːl ‘day’ ṭaːl ‘four’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>/ɾ/-/ɾ/</td>
<td>kaɾikuka ‘play’ kaɾik ‘eat’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>/ɾ/-/ɾ/</td>
<td>kaɾi ‘game’ kaɾi ‘female thief’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 3: Near minimal pairs of phonetically similar consonants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Phonemes</th>
<th>Words</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>/k/-/kʰ/</td>
<td>karənam ‘because’ kʰənanam ‘digging’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>/ɡ/-/ɡʰ/</td>
<td>ganəm ‘group’ gʰənam ‘heaviness’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>/n/-/ŋ/</td>
<td>vinu ‘person name’ viru ‘fall’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>/ɾ/-/ɾ/</td>
<td>kiɾi ‘mongoose’ kiɾi ‘bird’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Admittedly, more (near) minimal pairs are needed in order to justify the proposed phonemes. Some generalizations, however, can still be gleaned from the (near) minimal pairs found so far. For instance, Pair (2) and (5) show the phonemic contrast in length for voiceless bilabial and retroflex plosives respectively. Since there seems to be no phonetic reason whatsoever that would make bilabials and retroflexes the only voiceless plosives that demonstrate the short/long contrast, I expect voiceless dental and velar plosives to behave just like their bilabial and retroflex counterparts, even though I have not found any (near) minimal pairs to show this yet. In the same vein, I also believe that alveolars would not be the only nasals that show the short/long contrast, as in Pair (7). More importantly, crosslinguistically plosives and nasals tend to share the same pattern because they form the natural class of stops. Thus, in a case like Malayalam, where we find minimal pairs of the short/long contrast in voiceless bilabial and retroflex plosives as well as alveolar nasals, we may well infer that length is also phonemic in voiceless alveolar plosives as well as bilabial and retroflex nasals, which is confirmed by acoustic evidence (See Section 2.1.3.1 for details).

Moreover, Pair (9) and (10) show that geminate nasals make a distinction among alveolars, retroflexes, and palatals. Crosslinguistically geminate segments are more marked than their singleton counterparts, and if the marked category makes a distinction along some parameter (or length for that matter) the unmarked category is very likely to do so as well, but not vice versa. Thus, I expect singleton nasals also make a distinction among alveolars, retroflexes, and palatals, just as their geminate counterparts do, even though I have not yet found any (near) minimal pairs for the former case.

Finally, Pair (22) shows the contrast between voiceless unaspirated and aspirated velars while Pair (23) illustrates the contrast between modal-voiced and breathy-voiced velars. Here we see aspiration and phonation type are phonemic in voiceless and voiced velars respectively. Again, it is highly unlikely that velars are the only plosives that demonstrate these two parameters, so I assume bilabial, dental, and retroflex plosives also make the distinction between voiceless unaspirated and aspirated ones as well as modal-voiced and breathy-voiced ones.

2.1.1.2. Distribution

Table 4 shows the distribution of each consonant phoneme within a word, i.e., whether a particular phoneme occurs at the word-initial, word-medial, or word-final position.

---

1 The alveolar plosive is a bit tricky. Nevertheless, since it is the sole member in that category, I do not expect it to demonstrate a phonemic contrast in length.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>W-Initial</th>
<th>W-Medial</th>
<th>W-Final</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>/p/</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>paːle ‘milk’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>peːn ‘louse’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>para ‘rice barn’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>paːqm ‘banana’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>paːlam ‘bridge’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/pʰ/</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pʰalam ‘fruit; result’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(also falam)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pʰalikuka ‘bear fruit’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(also falikuka)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>falagam ‘(wood) plank’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>faːgunam ‘Aquarius’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>faːn ‘head of a serpent’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/b/</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>balam ‘strength’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>balaːram ‘strong man’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>badlika ‘girl’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/bʱ/</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bʱumi ‘earth’ (also fumi)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bʱajam ‘fear’ (also fajam)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bʱar’a ‘wife’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bʱar’am ‘husband’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bʱar’am ‘heavy’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/ʈ/</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ʈaːra ‘floor’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ʈoli ‘skin’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ʈen ‘honey’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ʈirijuka ‘turn’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/ʈʰ/</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>paːʈa ‘bubble’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>paːʈa ‘road’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>maːʈi ‘enough’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>maʈil ‘barrier’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/k/</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kaːʈi ‘knife’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fiːʈa ‘dirty’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>viːʈa ‘seed’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kaɾʡa ‘neck’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uŋːamam ‘perfect’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
atən’ ‘otherwise; also’

adə ‘lake’

maqəə ‘mother’

ekə ‘what’

ənləka ‘push’

cərdikəka ‘vomit’

adə ‘money’

katə ‘wind’

matə ‘mat’

çaqəəm ‘foul smell’

tətə ‘tattoo’

mərə ‘sharp’

aʃən ‘father’

kuraʃi ‘few’

paʃə ‘green’

iraʃə ‘flesh’

aŋdə ‘five’

nepdə ‘chest’

??

??

??

kaʃi ‘bite’

naʃi ‘actress’

iʃi ‘here’

rənə ‘two’

aʃiə ‘beat’

kaʃi ‘thick’

paʃi ‘dog’

kuʃi ‘child’

mutə ‘knee; joint’

mutə ‘egg’
| /tʰ/  | tʰipu ‘name of a king’  |
| /d/   | dɔktɔ ‘doctor’          |
|       | ɖamə ‘a small drum’     |
|       | ɖak ‘rubber’            |
|       | ɖadjimam ‘pomegranate tree’ |
| /dʱ/  | dʱak ‘large drum’       |
|       | dʱamanam ‘kettle’        |
| /k/   | ka ‘leg’                |
|       | kai ‘hand’              |
|       | karup ‘black’           |
|       | kaļ̪ikuka ‘play’         |
|       | kar’anam ‘because’      |
| /kʱ/  | kʰèqamaged ‘distress; sorrow’ |
|       | kʰaʃ ‘expense’          |
|       | kʰani ‘(gold) mine’      |
|       | kʰananam ‘digging’      |
| /g/   | gaŋam ‘group’           |
|       | gar ‘pride’             |
|       | gunəm ‘virtue’          |
|       | gur ‘guru’              |
|       | goʃambə ‘wheat’         |
| /gʱ/  | gʱatikərəm ‘clock’       |
|       | gʱanam ‘heaviness’       |
|       | (also kanam)             |
|       | gʱatəm ‘landing place’   |
|       | gʱəm ‘frightful’         |
|       | gʱəm ‘noise’             |
| /m/   | maçi ‘ink’              |
|       | maqa ‘rain’              |
|       | meliŋə ‘thin’            |
|       | muti ‘hair’              |
|       | muri ‘room’              |
|       | bʱumi ‘earth’            |
|       | kombo ‘cattle horn’      |
|       | mamsəm ‘flesh’           |
|       | goʃambə ‘wheat’          |
|       | vicamam ‘sadness’        |
|       | ḡivasam ‘day’            |
|       | vanam ‘forest’           |
|       | pəm ‘banana’             |
|       | vəm ‘year’               |
|       | pasəm ‘foot’             |
/m/ namal ‘we’
    amā ‘mom’
/p/ ḡanaŋa ‘wet’
  ēnda ‘what’
  ḡanaŋa ‘wetness’
   QLatin ‘push’
  ḡeː’e ‘straight’
   QLatin ‘moon’
  ḡeːjja ‘fat; butter’
  ēnda ‘important’
/pi/ ḡisaːm ‘unimportant’
/n/ naŋi ‘lake’
  manuːen ‘person’
  naːkːo ‘tongue’
  eŋaːne ‘how’
  niŋaː ‘full’
   QLatin ‘sky’
  neŋdə ‘chest’
  aŋa ‘elephant’
  ḡeːː ‘straight’
   QLatin ‘five’
/nː/ aŋa ‘Anna’
  pana ‘bad’
  mana ‘manna’
  pīnə ‘then; later’
/p/  naːn ‘I’
  naŋaː ‘us’
/pː/ maŋa ‘yellow’
   QLatin ‘wet’
   QLatin ‘narrow’
  niŋaː ‘full’
  kuŋa ‘child’
/n/ viŋi ‘fall’
  maŋam ‘smell’
  pana ‘money’
  aŋa ‘male’
  peŋa ‘female’
/nː/ kaŋa ‘eye’
  maŋam ‘fat’
  maŋa ‘soil; sand’
/ŋ/ manam ‘smell’
  maŋam ‘money’
  aŋa ‘male’
  peŋa ‘female’
/ŋː/ kaŋa ‘eye’
  maŋam ‘fat’
  maŋa ‘soil; sand’
/ŋː/  maŋam ‘smell’
  maŋam ‘money’
  aŋa ‘male’
  peŋa ‘female’
/ŋː/ kaŋa ‘eye’
  maŋam ‘fat’
  maŋa ‘soil; sand’
/ŋ/  
ŋaŋ 'you'  
ʔenaŋ 'coconut tree'  
uraŋuka 'sleep'  
unaŋia 'dry'

/r/  
rača 'Rava flower'  
ramsaän 'Festival'  
raŋqi 'place name'  
raŋqi 'queen'  
rupa 'rupee'

/ɾ/  
ɾakṝam 'blood'  
ɾavile 'morning'  
ɾanŋŋa 'two'  
ɾaʈri 'night'  
ɾaḍʒaⁿa 'king'

/s/  
saŋṭocean 'happiness'  
samajam 'time'  
sukʰam 'good; health'  
simhaṁ 'lion'  
ṣtri: 'female'

/c/  
caɾiɾam 'body'  
caɾiɾam 'beauty'  
caɾi 'correct'  
caɾḍikuka 'vomit'  
caɾiɾam 'ink'

/g/  
ḥaːnikaɾam 'dangerous'  
himam 'snow'  
hṝḍajam 'heart'

/f/  
fajam 'fear'  
fumi 'earth'  
fanaṃ 'head of a serpent'  
falaɣam '(wood) plank'  
safalam 'come true'

/v/  
vini 'fall'  
vati 'stick'  
vere 'other'  
avan 'he'  
ʧevi 'ear'
In terms of the distribution in Table 4, the following generalizations can be made.

1. All geminate consonants occur only at the word-medial position.
2. Only some nasals (i.e. /m/, /n/, and /ŋ/) and approximants (i.e. /l/ and /ɭ/) are allowed to
   occur at the word-final position.
3. /ɲ/ and /ʧ/ occur only at the word-initial position.
4. /ʰʲ/, /ŋ/, and /ɻ/ occur only at the word-medial position.
5. No consonant occurs only at the word-final position.
6. /ɭ/ and /ɳ/ never occur at the word-initial position.
7. The voiceless aspirated dental and breathy-voiced dental plosive (i.e. /tʰ/ and /dʰ/) are extremely restricted (in terms of both the consultant’s personal lexicon and the words that can be found in the dictionary), and so are their retroflex counterparts (i.e. /ʈʰ/ and /ɖʰ/).

With regard to the last point, two hypotheses can be made. For one thing, it may suggest that some historically vigorous phonemes have now been marginalized over time so that they can only be found in some archaic words. For the other, this may also be the result of language contact through which some new phonemes are created. Since the lingua franca in India is Hindi, which is famous for its four-way distinction in plosives (i.e. voiceless aspirated, voiceless unaspirated, modal-voiced, and breathy-voiced), the language contact hypothesis seems to be more plausible.

Also relevant is the fact that the consultant has a hard time pronouncing breathy-voiced plosives and tends to substitute them with voiceless aspirated ones in the same place of articulation. During an independent elicitation session with the consultant (see the file Haowen_11.18.2009 in the database), I asked her to come up with words that have the voiceless aspirated dental plosive (i.e. /tʰ/) in it, and she gave me [tʰanam] ‘money’ and [atʰipan] ‘honor’. However, after looking up these two words in the dictionary, she confessed having made a mistake. As it turns out, they should in fact be [ɖʰanam] and [aɖʰipan] respectively. She also admitted that Malayali people always have problems with breathy-voiced plosives and oftentimes confuse them with their voiceless aspirated counterparts. This anecdote might suggest breathy-voiced plosives are probably not part of the original Malayalam phoneme inventory and that their existence in contemporary Malayalam is due to contact with Hindi or other Indo-Aryan languages in India (e.g. Marathi, which is spoken to the north of Kerala).

Finally, an interesting thing about Malayalam consonants is that the voiceless aspirated bilabial plosive /pʰ/ alternates with [f], at least in some words. For instance, the word for “fruit; result” is either [pʰalam] or [falam], and the word for “bear fruit” is either [pʰalikuka] or [falikuka]. Moreover, the breathy-voiced bilabial plosive /bʰ/ sometimes alternates with [f] as well. For example, the word for “earth” is either [bʰumi] or [fumi] and the word for “fear” is either [bʰajam] or [fajam]. I believe this is because Malayalam speakers tend to confuse /bʰ/ with /pʰ/. As a result, both /bʰ/ and /pʰ/ alternate with [f] in some cases. Also, [f] is most often found in loan words.
2.1.2. Vowels

Malayalam has 11 monophthongs and 5 diphthongs, as shown in Table 5 and 6 respectively. Like in some consonants, length is phonemic in all monophthongs except for the schwa, whose status is rather vague at this point. A diphthong is falling if it starts with a vowel of higher prominence and ends in a semivowel with less prominence (e.g. /ai/), and is rising if the case is the other way around (e.g. /ia/). Also, a diphthong is closing if it starts with a more open element and ends in a more close element (e.g. /au/), and is opening if the case is the other way around (e.g. /ua/). As shown in Table 6, all falling diphthongs are closing and all rising ones are opening, which is in accord with the typological tendency.

Table 5: Monophthongal phonemes of Malayalam

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Front</th>
<th>Central</th>
<th>Back</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>iː</td>
<td>uː</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid</td>
<td>eː</td>
<td>ø</td>
<td>oː</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>aː</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6: Diphthongal phonemes of Malayalam

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Rising or Falling</th>
<th>Opening or Closing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>/ai/</td>
<td>Falling</td>
<td>Closing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/au/</td>
<td>Falling</td>
<td>Closing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/ei/</td>
<td>Falling</td>
<td>Closing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/ia/</td>
<td>Rising</td>
<td>Opening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/ua/</td>
<td>Rising</td>
<td>Opening</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.1.2.1. Minimal pairs

To support the phonemes proposed in Table 5 and 6, some minimal pairs of vowels are provided in 7.

Table 7: Minimal pairs of vowels

(26) /a/-/i/    kaḷi ‘game’   kilī ‘bird’
    atikukā ‘fight; stab’ itiṅkūka ‘hit’
    kuṭal ‘intestines’ kuṭil ‘hut’

(27) /a/-/e/    aṟiḷukā ‘know’ eṟiḷuka ‘throw’
    ṟaḷi ‘key’ ṟeṛi ‘ear’
Pair (26)–(29) show that /a/ is different from /i/, /e/, /u/, and /ə/. I believe /a/ is also different from /o/ although I have not found any minimal pair to show this. There is, however, some indirect evidence. Since Pair (32) illustrates the contrast between /i/ and /e/, and Pair (34) the contrast between /u/ and /o/, and that /a/ is different from /i/, /e/, and /u/ for sure, it makes more sense if /a/ is also distinct from /o/. In addition, Pair (30) shows that the difference between short /a/ and long /aː/ is phonemic, and I believe length is also phonemic in other monophthongs (except for the schwa) although for now no minimal pairs have been found to illustrate this. However, my belief is based on two grounds: (a) the consultant is very sensitive to the difference between short and long vowels; (b) a vowel system with only one pair of short and long vowels would be highly implausible. Finally, Pair (31) shows the contrast between the monophthong /a/ and the diphthong /ai/, which confirms that Malayalam has diphthongs as a separate category that is phonologically distinct from monophthongs.

2.1.2.2. Distribution

Table 8 shows the distribution of each proposed vowel phoneme.
### Table 8: Examples of Malayalam vowel phonemes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>W-Initial</th>
<th>W-Medial</th>
<th>W-Final</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>/a/</td>
<td>/a/</td>
<td>/a/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ata ‘that’</td>
<td>cari‘am ‘body’</td>
<td>para ‘rice barn’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>acal ‘she’</td>
<td>mulako ‘chili’</td>
<td>puça ‘river’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>avacal ‘failure’</td>
<td>maravi ‘amnesia’</td>
<td>paça ‘bubble’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>arijuka ‘know’</td>
<td>paqajaŋ ‘old’</td>
<td>mula ‘breast’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>agi ‘fire’</td>
<td>aucaŋam ‘medicine’</td>
<td>muŋja ‘sharp’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/aː/</td>
<td>/aː/</td>
<td>/aː/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aŋa ‘male’</td>
<td>maŋaŋa ‘mother’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aŋa ‘who’</td>
<td>naŋa ‘tongue’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ara ‘six; river’</td>
<td>aihaŋam ‘food’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ana ‘elephant’</td>
<td>balika ‘girl’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>apaŋa ‘danger’</td>
<td>elaŋam ‘all’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/i/</td>
<td>/i/</td>
<td>/i/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ila ‘leaf’</td>
<td>ariju ‘know’</td>
<td>ıraŋi ‘meat; flesh’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ipxo ‘now’</td>
<td>ațiŋ ‘beat’</td>
<td>joni ‘skin’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ir心血管 ‘sit’</td>
<td>dʒiřaŋ ‘cumin’</td>
<td>agi ‘fire’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ịtja ‘leftside’</td>
<td>evișe ‘where’</td>
<td>bɔanja ‘beauty’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ịvițe ‘here’</td>
<td>maŋil ‘barrier’</td>
<td>ḡati ‘fat; heavy’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/iː/</td>
<td>/iː/</td>
<td>/iː/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>miŋ ‘fish’</td>
<td>nịŋa ‘long’</td>
<td>ṣʈi ‘female’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>niği ‘broad’</td>
<td>viți ‘house’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/u/</td>
<td>/u/</td>
<td>/u/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uli ‘onion’</td>
<td>kuni ‘child’</td>
<td>ațiŋ ‘beat’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>upa ‘salt’</td>
<td>atuŋa ‘near’</td>
<td>ṭaŋu ‘give’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/uː/</td>
<td>/uː/</td>
<td>/uː/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uŋduka ‘push’</td>
<td>dʒuŋ ‘sadness’</td>
<td>epoŋu ‘always’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>utamam ‘perfect’</td>
<td>gun ‘virtue’</td>
<td>koŋu ‘killed’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uraña ‘sleep’</td>
<td>kaŋ ‘neck’</td>
<td>viŋu ‘fall’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/uː/</td>
<td>/uː/</td>
<td>/uː/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uma ‘food’</td>
<td>guŋaŋ ‘crowd’</td>
<td>pu: ‘flower’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>muŋ ‘nose’</td>
<td>ruŋa ‘rupee’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/uː/</td>
<td>/uː/</td>
<td>/uː/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/e/</td>
<td>/e/</td>
<td>/e/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>erukuka ‘take’</td>
<td>peŋ ‘female’</td>
<td>anŋe ‘like that’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>elaŋm ‘all’</td>
<td>kaseŋa ‘chair’</td>
<td>ḡaŋe ‘below; under’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>epam ‘when’</td>
<td>meliŋa ‘thin’</td>
<td>ḗiȑite ‘here’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>evițe ‘where’</td>
<td>ḗevi ‘ear’</td>
<td>ḗeŋe ‘straight’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>epoŋu ‘always’</td>
<td>ven ‘okra plant’</td>
<td>paŋe ‘milk’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In terms of the distribution in Table 8, the following generalizations can be made.

1. Unlike geminate consonants, which only occur at the word-medial position, geminate vowels can occur at all positions, as evidenced by the distribution of /uː/.
2. Unlike monophthongs, diphthongs have a rather limited distribution. For instance, while
/ei/ and /ua/ occur only at the word-medial position, /ia/ occurs only at the word-final position.

3. The schwa never occurs at the word-initial position.

2.2. Allophonic Variations

In this section, I illustrate some allophonic variations that I have observed so far, including unreleased consonants, alternations of alveolar rhotics, and two assimilation patterns.

2.2.1. Unreleased consonants

As mentioned earlier, only some nasals (i.e. /m/, /n/, and /ɳ/) and approximants (i.e. /l/ and /ɭ/) are allowed to occur at the word-final position. Within these consonants, nasals and lateral approximants become unreleased when occurring at the word-final position, as shown in (1).

(1) Examples of unreleased consonants
a. /m/ → [m̚] [maɾi[m̚] ‘tree’ [v̚anam̚] ‘forest’ [paɾa[m̚] ‘money’
b. /n/ → [n̚] [na[n̚] ‘I’ [pe[n̚] ‘louse’ [te[n̚] ‘honey’
c. /l/ → [ɭ̚] [kaɾal̚] ‘ocean’ [kuɾil̚] ‘hut’ [µaral̚] ‘feather’
d. /ɭ/ → [ɭ̚] [aɾa[l̚] ‘she’ [kaɾa[l̚] ‘liver’ [epo[l̚] ‘when’

These unreleased allophones are in fact recognized in the Malayalam writing system, where released and unreleased consonants are represented by two different symbols.

2.2.2. Assimilation patterns

Two assimilation patterns are illustrated in this section. One is the voicing of voiceless plosives at the intervocalic position and the other the palatalization of geminate velar plosives after high front vowels.

2.2.2.1. Voicing of intervocalic plosives

All voiceless plosives (except for the alveolar one) become voiced at the intervocalic position, as illustrated in Table 9 below. The evidence for voicing comes from reversed syllables. We know the underlying form of the intervocalic voiced plosives in Table 16 is in fact voiceless but not voiced because they become voiceless when switched to the word-initial position. For instance, /maŋi/ [maŋi] ‘enough’ becomes [jiːma] ‘NONWORD’ when its two
Tables 9 and 10: Examples of the voicing of voiceless intervocalic plosives

### Table 9: Examples of the voicing of voiceless intervocalic plosives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word-initial</th>
<th>Intervocalic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>/p/</td>
<td>/paɻam/ [paɻam] ‘banana’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/para/</td>
<td>/paɻam/ [paɻam] ‘accident’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/tʂa/</td>
<td>/paɻa/ [paɻa] ‘danger’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/ʈaŋ/</td>
<td>/paɻa/ [paɻa] ‘bubble’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/ʈauŋ/</td>
<td>/maɻi/ [maɻi] ‘enough’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/kaɾanam/</td>
<td>/mɑɻi/ [maɻi] ‘enough’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/karupːa/</td>
<td>/paɖik ːʒam/ [paɖik ːʒam] ‘cumin’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/kaɾikːa/</td>
<td>/maʃika/ [maʃiga] ‘magazine’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/kaɾikːa/</td>
<td>/kaɻikːa/ [kaɻikːa] ‘fight; stab’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/kaɾikːa/</td>
<td>/irikːu/ [irikːu] ‘live’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/kaɾikːa/</td>
<td>/kuʈikːu/ [kuʈikːu] ‘eat’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/kaɾikːa/</td>
<td>/murikːu/ [murikːu] ‘split’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/kaɾikːa/</td>
<td>/paɖikːa/ [paɖikːa] ‘study’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/kaɾikːa/</td>
<td>/ʧiŋkːu/ [ʧiŋkːu] ‘think’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 10: Examples of plain and palatalized geminate velar plosives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Palatalized geminates</th>
<th>Plain geminates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

2.2.2.2. **Palatalization of geminate velar plosives**

The geminate velar plosive /kː/ has two allophones, the plain [kː] and the palatalized [kːʲ]. While [kːʲ] only occurs immediately after high front vowels, [kː] occurs elsewhere, as illustrated in Table 10, where all examples end with /-kːuka/, a suffix for the citation form of verbs.³

Additionally, the palatalization phenomenon is not restricted to the suffix /-kːuka/ even though the examples above all end with it. In fact, the same palatalization pattern also takes place in monomorphemic words. Compare for instance [aikːaːn̥] ‘unity’ with [ʧakːaːɻ] ‘tomato’ and [muːkːa] ‘nose’. Once again, the palatalized geminate occurs immediately after

---

2 Contrary to the expectation, the intervocalic [k] in [abakaʈaːn̥] ‘accident’ is not voiced. Since the apa- here a prefix meaning “bad”, I suspect there might be a constraint that prevents voicing from happening across morpheme boundaries, though more data are needed in order to confirm this constraint.

3 According to Piotr, the /u/ vowel is fronted to [ʉ] when it immediately follows a palatalized geminate. Since more acoustic evidence is needed in order to verify this, I transcribed all instances of /u/ as [u], which would be sufficient for the current purpose.
high front vowels, but not after other vowels.

2.3. Syllable Structure

In this section, I discuss the syllable structure in Malayalam. As a general rule, the syllable structure in Malayalam can be schematized as (C)(C)(C)V(V)(C), where parenthesis indicates optionality. That is to say, the onset can have up to three consonants whereas the coda only permits one consonant at most, and the nucleus can either be a monophthong or a diphthong. Theoretically, the possible syllable type is minimally V and maximally CCCVVC, but there are many gaps, as illustrated in Table 11.

Table 11: Examples of syllable types

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Syllable Type</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ON C</td>
<td>i.la</td>
<td>leaf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CV</td>
<td>ma nga</td>
<td>soil; sand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CC V</td>
<td>ra gri</td>
<td>night</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCC V</td>
<td>stri:</td>
<td>female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V C</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C V C</td>
<td>ma lam</td>
<td>tree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CC V C</td>
<td>sto tram</td>
<td>thanks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCC V C</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VV</td>
<td>au ca tam</td>
<td>medicine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C VV</td>
<td>dei cam</td>
<td>god</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CC VV</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCC VV</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VV C</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C VV C</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CC VV C</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCC VV C</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The maximal structure of an onset is “str” (as in /stri/ ‘female’), which is possibly the only three-consonant onset type in Malayalam. The order of its consonant types is, from the nucleus outwards, liquids, plosives, and fricatives. This order violates the Sonority Sequencing Principle, which states that sonority progressively decreases towards the onset and coda from
the nucleus, since /s/ (or fricatives) has higher sonority than /t/ (or plosives) but is further away from the nucleus than /t/.

2.3.1. Onset

Most consonants in Table 1 may occur in the onset position, as shown in (2).

(2) Consonants that occur in the onset

/p/ penn ‘louse’
/pʰ/ pʰa.lam ‘fruit’
/b/ ba.lam ‘strength’
/bʱ/ bʱu.mi ‘earth’
/j̪/ j̪a.ra ‘floor’
/j̪/ j̪i:j̪a ‘dirty’
/j̪ʰ/ j̪ʰa.ta: ‘also’
/d̪/ d̪i.ca ‘direction’
/d̪ʰ/ d̪ʰa.nam ‘money’
/tʰi/ tʰi.pu ‘name of a king’
/d/ qa.ku ‘rubber’
/dʱ/ dʱa.ma:nam ‘kettle’
/k/ ka.li.ku.ka ‘play’
/kʰ/ kʰa.li ‘tomato’
/kʱ/ kʱa:fi ‘expense’
/g/ gu.nam ‘virtue’
/gʱ/ gʱo:cam ‘noise’
/m/ mu.ti ‘hair’
/mʰ/ mʰa ‘mom’
/n/ ne.ɾʲe ‘straight’
/u/ u:ta: ‘red’
/n/ va:nam ‘sky’
/nʰ/ pa.na ‘bad’
/ŋ/ ma.ŋam ‘smell’
/ŋ/ va.ŋam ‘fat’
Consonant clusters are restricted to the type of plosives plus the trill (e.g. /ɾ̪a.ʈɾi/ ‘night’), with a third optional /s/ at the beginning of the cluster (e.g. /sʈɾi/ ‘female’).

2.3.2. Nucleus

The nucleus can be any monophthong in Table 5 or any diphthong in Table 6, as shown in (3).

(3) Vowels that occur in the nucleus
/a/  a.ʈɔ ‘that’
/a/  a.ʈa ‘elephant’
/i/  i.ła ‘leaf’
/i/  vi.ɖi ‘broad’
/u/  u.ʈi ‘onion’
/u/  u.ʈə ‘food’
/e/  e.po.ɖu ‘always’
/e/  e.ʈi ‘ladder’
/o/  o.ɾɔ ‘one (thing)’
2.3.3. Coda

Candidates for the coda are much more restricted than those for the onset in terms of both number and type. While the onset may allow up to three consonants in a row, the coda may not consist of more than one consonant. With regard to type, on the other hand, only a handful of consonant types are allowed in the coda whereas all but one consonant can occur in the onset.

Consonants that may occur in the coda are shown in (4).4

(4) Consonants that occur in the coda

/b/ ɲi.eab.ʃam ‘silent’
/g/ ag.ɲi ‘fire’
/m/ ma.m.sam ‘flesh’
/q/ tʃaŋ.ɬən ‘moon’
/n/ ma.ŋən ‘expert’
/ŋ/ tən ɬ ‘town’
/ɲ/ təŋ.kəl ‘you’
/r/ a.pə.sur.ɟi ‘bad rumor’
/l/ ku.ɭəl ‘intestines’
/l/ ka.rəl ‘liver’

They roughly fall into two natural classes, namely, stops (orals and nasals) and liquids (laterals and rhotics). However, not every member of these classes can occur in the coda. For instance, as a member of liquids, /ɻ/ is not allowed in the coda.

---

4 Although the consultant seems to think of the sequence [ŋd] in /ʧan.ɖən/ ‘moon’ as a unit, she made a pause between [ʧan] and [ɖən] when Casey asked her to tap for the stress of this word. I took this as the justification for syllabifying /ʧan.ɖən/ into [ʧaŋ.ɖən], rather than [ʧaŋ.ɖən]. Also, it makes sense if /ŋ/ can occur in the coda since most nasals are allowed in the coda.
2.4. Typological Status

On the whole, the proposed phoneme inventory is quite plausible and well-balanced, except for three relatively unusual matters. First, as the sole member of alveolar plosives, /tʰʲ/ is rather unusual because it is both aspirated and palatalized, with no other counterparts in the alveolar plosive category. For now, I have no extra comments on this particularity.

Second, the palatalized tap/flap /ɾʲ/ is a bit uncommon too. I suspect the tap/flap in Malayalam is palatalized so as to increase its perceptual difference from the trill /ɾ/ considering the fact that they are two different phonemes but perceptually similar. Despite this, the palatalized tap/flap is not completely bizarre anyway because Akamatsu (1997) for instance argues that in Japanese /ɾʲ/ is a phoneme distinct from /ɾ/ (e.g. shoryaku [ɕoɾʲagɯ] ‘abbreviation’), though it occurs mostly in Sino-Japanese lexical items.

Third, while there is a voiceless alveolar fricative /s/, there is no voiced alveolar fricative /z/, a phoneme quite common in many languages. However, lack of voicing contrasts in fricatives is actually not rare at all. Maddieson’s research (2005) shows that about two-thirds of the world's languages lack voicing contrasts in fricatives.

3. Morphology

To facilitate the inputting of data, I adopted a practical orthography of Malayalam for the discussions of morphology and syntax instead of using IPA. The correspondence between IPA and practical orthography is given in Appendix II.

The purpose of this section is not to present an exhaustive account of Malayalam morphology, but to provide some examples for three major morphological processes, namely, inflectional, derivational, and compounding. Moreover, in terms of morphological typology, Malayalam is more an agglutinating language than a fusional one since words tend to consist of multiple morphemes and that when they do the morpheme boundaries are usually clear, as shown by the multimorphemic words in (5) below.

(5) nyaan       brekfEst-inE oppam oryupaaTTE iracci kaRikky-um-aayiryunnu.
1SG.NOM breakfast-DAT with much meat eat-HAB-COP.PST
‘I used to eat lots of meat for my breakfast.’ (T&A.023)

3.1. Inflectional processes

Grammatical categories that are inflected in Malayalam include at least gender, number, case, tense, mood, and voice. Examples (6) through (11) are illustrative.
(6) Gender: -an ‘masculine’; -i ‘feminine’
   a. kaLL-an ‘thief (m.)’; kaLL-i ‘thief (f.)’
   b. kaary-an ‘doer (m.)’; kaary-i ‘doer (f.)’
(7) Number: -ø ‘singular’; -kaL ‘plural’
   a. puuca ‘cat’; puuca-kaL ‘cats’
   b. paaTE ‘song’; paaTu-kaL ‘songs’
(8) Case: -ø ‘nominative’; -(y)il ‘locative’
   a. muri ‘room’; muri-yil ‘in the room’
   b. viiT ‘house; home’; viiT-il ‘in the house; at home’
(9) Tense: -unnu ‘present’; -um ‘future’
   a. paray-unnu ‘say (prs.)’; paray-um ‘will say’
   b. samsaaryikky-unnu ‘talk (prs.)’; samsaaryikky-um ‘will talk’
(10) Mood: -u ‘imperative’; -aal ‘conditional’
   a. kaRikky-u ‘eat (imp.)’; kaRicc-aal ‘eat (cond.)’
   b. coodikky-u ‘ask (imp.)’; coodicc-aal ‘ask (cond.)’
(11) Voice: -ø ‘active’; -appeT ‘passive’
   a. koll-uka ‘to kill’; koll-appeT-uka ‘to be killed’
   b. kariyaakk-uka ‘to tease’; kariyaakk-appeT-uka ‘to be teased’

3.2. Derivational processes

In terms of the output of the derivational process, at least three types can be distinguished, namely, derived nominals, derived adjetivals, and derived adverbials.

3.2.1. Derived nominals

Nominals can be derived from adjectives suffixed by third person demonstratives/pronouns, as illustrated in Table 12.

Table 12: Attributive adjectives and nominalized adjectives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attributive adjectives</th>
<th>Nominalized adjectives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>nalla ‘good’</td>
<td>nalla-tE ‘good one’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>nalla-van ‘good person (m.)’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ceriya ‘small’</td>
<td>ceriya-tE ‘small one’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ceriya-van ‘small person (f.)’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iLaya ‘young’</td>
<td>iLaya-tE ‘young one’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>iLaya-van ‘young people (pl.)’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>marre ‘the other’</td>
<td>marre-tE ‘the other one’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5 The -aal conditional is suffixed to the past tense verb root.
Based on Asher & Kumari (1997) and Moag & Moag (1967), the third person demonstrative/pronominal paradigm is given in Table 13.

Table 13: Third person demonstratives/pronouns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Proximal</th>
<th>Distal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Singular</td>
<td>Masculine</td>
<td><em>ivan</em></td>
<td><em>avan</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Feminine</td>
<td><em>ivaL</em></td>
<td><em>avaL</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Neuter [+/-ANIM]</td>
<td><em>itE</em></td>
<td><em>atE</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plural</td>
<td>Masculine</td>
<td><em>ivary</em></td>
<td><em>avyary</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Feminine</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Neuter [+ANIM]</td>
<td><em>iva</em></td>
<td><em>ava</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By the same token, nominals can also be derived from verbs suffixed by the singular neuter pronoun *-tE* when they first derive into participles (which are adjectival in nature) via *-a* suffixation. The two-step derivational process is illustrated in Table 14.

Table 14: Finite verbs, participial verbs, and nominalized verbs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Infinitive verbs</th>
<th>Tense</th>
<th>Finite verbs</th>
<th>Participial verbs</th>
<th>Nominalized verbs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>paray <em>uka</em></td>
<td>Present</td>
<td><em>paray-unnu</em></td>
<td><em>paray-unn-a</em></td>
<td><em>paray-unn-a-tE</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘to say’</td>
<td>Past (with <em>-u</em> ending)</td>
<td><em>paranyynyu</em></td>
<td><em>paranyny-a</em></td>
<td><em>paranyny-a-tE</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>paaT <em>uka</em></td>
<td>Present</td>
<td><em>paaT-unnu</em></td>
<td><em>paaT-unn-a</em></td>
<td><em>paaT-unn-a-tE</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘to sing’</td>
<td>Past (with <em>-i</em> ending)</td>
<td><em>paaTTi</em></td>
<td><em>paaTTi-ya</em></td>
<td><em>paaTTi-ya-tE</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.2.2. Derived adjectivals

Other than verbal participles (see above), adjectivals can be derived from nouns suffixed by *uLLa* ‘having’, the present participle of the existential predicate *uNTE*, as in (12).

(12) Derived adjectivals

a. *viitti* ‘width’  \(\Rightarrow\) *viitti-yuLLa* ‘wide’ (lit. ‘having width’)
b. *puddhi* ‘wisdom’  \(\Rightarrow\) *puddhi-yuLLa* ‘wise’ (lit. ‘having wisdom’)

3.2.3. Derived adverbials

Adverbials can be derived from nouns suffixed by *-aayi* ‘becoming’, the converbal/past tense form of *aakkuka* ‘to become’, as in (13).

(13) Derived adverbials

a. *santooSam* ‘happiness’  \(\Rightarrow\) *santooSam-aayi* ‘happily’
b. *vritti* ‘cleanness’  \(\Rightarrow\) *vritti-yaayi* ‘cleanly’
Presumably, the adverb *nannaayi* ‘well’ is also the outcome of this derivational process.

### 3.3. Compounding processes

Finally, compounding is a morphological process whereby two (or more) free morphemes are juxtaposed to form a word, which may or may not inherit the semantics of its components. Some examples I found are shown in (14).

(14) Compound words
a. *kaalE* ‘leg’; *mutTE* ‘joint’ ➔ *kaalEmuTTE* ‘knee’
b. *paaTTE* ‘song’; *kaaryan* ‘doer (m.)’ ➔ *paaTTukaaryan* ‘singer (m.)’
c. *peNE* ‘female’; *kuTTi* ‘kid’ ➔ *peNkuTTi* ‘girl’
d. *tala* ‘head’; *muTi* ‘fur’ ➔ *talamuTi* ‘hair’
e. *oryu* ‘one’; *pakshe* ‘but’ ➔ *oryupakshe* ‘maybe’
f. *yaatra* ‘journey’; *ceyyuka* ‘to do’ ➔ *yaatraceyyuka* ‘to travel’

### 4. Syntax

The organization of this section basically follows that of Thomas Payne’s A Sample Grammatical Sketch of English[^6^], which is intended as a sample grammatical sketch for students who are expected to write about the descriptive morphosyntax of an unknown language for a one-year course. Due to the paucity of my current data, however, some sections in Payne’s sample are not included here, such as tense/aspect/mode, clause combinations, and pragmatically marked structures. Accordingly, that leaves the topics covered in the following sections to word classes, basic constituent orders, predicate nominals, existential/locational/possessive sentences, expression of grammatical relations, causatives, passives, reflexives, reciprocals, questions, imperatives, and finally negation.

#### 4.1. Word classes

Given the data I have collected so far, six word classes can be identified in Malayalam, including nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, postpositions, and conjunctions.

##### 4.1.1. Nouns

Malayalam nouns share four morphosyntactic properties. First, they inflect for number. While singular is unmarked, plural is marked by -*kal*, which can be suffixed to human, nonhuman animate, and inanimate nouns, as respectively shown in (15) through (17).

[^6^]: Payne’s Sample is available online at [http://www.uoregon.edu/~tpayne/engram.htm](http://www.uoregon.edu/~tpayne/engram.htm).
(15) anyjE aalukaL oryutaryaayiTTE vannu.
    five person-PL one.after.another come.PST
    ‘Five people came one after another.’ (RECIP.011)
(16) ryaNTE puuucca-kaL-e vaangng-aam.
    two cat-PL-ACC buy-HORT
    ‘Buy two cats.’ (NP.008)
(17) ii ryaNTE kaaru-kaL-il eet=aaNE ninakkE kuuTutal iSTam?
    this two car-PL-LOC which=COP1.PRS 2SG.DAT more liking
    ‘Which of these two cars do you like more?’ (INTERROG.019)

Although -kal marks plurality for most Nouns, there is a special plural marker -maary for some kinship terms. For instance, amma is “mother” and its plural form is ammamaary (see Onam.001 for the context it occurs in) instead of *ammakaL.

In addition to number, Malayalam nouns also inflect for case. In (18), for instance, each of the five Nouns is marked by a different morphological case.

(18) enre amma enikkyE kocil-yil ninnE oryu kattE-o ayaccu.
    1SG.GEN mom.NOM 1SG.DAT PN-LOC from one letter-ACC send.PST
    ‘My mom sent me a letter from Cochin.’ (Case.009)

Third, Malayalam nouns do not inflect for gender. The only exceptions are third person singular human pronouns and some human nouns. While “he” is avan (the familiar form) or addeeham (the honorific form), “she” is aval. Some human nouns may refer to males or females, depending on the nominal ending. For example, a male singer is paattukaaryan and a female one paattukaaryi. By the same token, a male sibling (i.e. brother) is sahooteryan and a female one (i.e. sister) sahooteryi. It seems that -an marks masculine nouns and -i feminine ones. But it is unclear at this point what kinds of nouns these gender markers may be affixed to.

Finally, Malayalam nouns immediately precede postpositions and form a constituent with them, as illustrated in (19).

(19) Shashi brekfEst kaRinyE avanre bustakam eRut-unn-a-tE tuTarynnu.
    Shashi.NOM breakfast pass.CVB his book write-PRS-ATTR-NMLZ continue.PST
    ‘Shashi continued writing his book after breakfast.’ (Case.018)

4.1.2. Verbs

Like verbs in many other languages, Malayalam verbs inflect for tense, aspect, and mode (or TAM for short). The complete range of grammatical TAM distinctions is not clear at this point. For now, only some instances from each category can be given for illustration.

Tense. The citation form of Malayalam verbs ends with -uka, such as verukkuka ‘to hate’ and torikkyuka ‘to kick’, and the citation form without -uka is the verb root. While present tense is marked by -unnu suffixed to the verb root, future tense is marked by -um, as shown in
(20) through (23).

(20) *shashi mohEn-e verukk-unnu.*
Shashi Mohen-ACC hate-PRS
‘Shashi hates Mohen.’ (RECIP.001)

(21) *shashi mohEn-e toRikky-unnu.*
Shashi Mohen-ACC kick-PRS
‘Shashi kicks Mohen.’ (RECIP.003)

(22) *nyaan iracci kaRikky-um.*
1SG.NOM meat eat-FUT
‘I will eat meat.’ (T&A.019)

(23) *anna iracci uNTaakk-um.*
Anna.NOM meat make-FUT
‘Anna will cook meat.’ (T&A.018)

In past tense, a different verb root is used, which is unpredictable from the citation form. For instance, the past tense verb stem of *kaRikkyuka* ‘to eat’ is *kaRiccu* and that of *uNTaakkuka* ‘to make’ is *uNTaakki*, as in (24) and (25) respectively.

(24) *nyaan iracci kaRiccu.*
1SG.NOM meat eat.PST
‘I ate meat.’ (T&A.007)

(25) *anna iracci uNTaakki.*
Anna.NOM meat cook.PST
‘Anna cooked meat.’ (T&A.006)

*Aspect.* The citation form (with a vowel change at the end) combined with the copula *aaNE* (present)/*aayiryunnu* (past) gives rise to progressive aspect, as shown in (26) and (27), where the infinitive ending -*uka* changes to -*uke*.

(26) *nyaan iracci kaRikky-uke=yaaNE.*
1SG.NOM meat eat-INF1=COP1.PRS
‘I am eating meat.’ (T&A.011)

(27) *nyaan iracci kaRikky-uke=yaayiryunnu.*
1SG.NOM meat eat-INF1=COP1.PST
‘I was eating meat.’ (T&A.015)

Moreover, the past tense verb root (with deletion of the final vowel) combined with *iryunnu* seems to indicate present perfect, as seen in (28) and (29).

(28) *joon-um anna-yum ii aruttE samsaaryicc=iryunnu.*
John-COORD Anna-COORD this close talk.PST=PRF.PRS
‘John and Anna have talked recently.’ (T&A.025)

(29) *anna ii maasEm ryaNTE praavashyam iracci uNTaak=iryunnu.*
Anna this month two time meat cook.PST=PRF.PRS
‘Anna has cooked meat twice this month.’ (T&A.026)
Mode. The suffix -aNam, when suffixed to the (nonpast) verb stem, is associated with deontic modality. In (30), for instance, varyaNam means “should come” while the citation form of the verb (i.e. varyuka) simply means “to come”.

(30) ni suuryen astamikky-unn-a-t-inu mumpE viiT-il vary-aNam.
2SG.NOM sun set-PRS-ATTR-NMLZ-DAT before home-LOC come-DNT
‘You should come home before sunset.’ (Case.015)

Finally, as can be seen from the examples above, there is no number or gender agreement between a Malayalam verb and any of its arguments.

4.1.3. Adjectives

Malayalam adjectives do not inflect and can directly modify nouns, as nalla ‘good’ in (31) shows.

(31) ni oryu nalla paaTTukaaryan aayiryunnu.
2SG.NOM one good singer.M COP1.PST
‘You used to be a good singer.’ (T&A.024)

One characteristic of Malayalam adjectives is that a great number of them end with -a, which can be analyzed as an attributive morpheme, as shown in (32).

(32) Some examples of adjectives
a. nalla ‘good’
  b. ceriya ‘small’
  c. iLaya ‘young’
  d. putiya ‘new’
  e. paRaya ‘old’
  f. valiya ‘big’
  g. pala ‘various’
  h. cila ‘few’
  i. valla ‘any’
  j. neeryiya ‘thin’
  k. marre ‘the other’
  l. onnaamatte ‘the first’

Another distinctive feature of Malayalam adjectives is that the attributive use and predicative use of adjectives differ in form. Specifically, an adjective can modify a noun in the attributive context without any change, but it has to be nominalized by the third person neutral pronoun -tE (or its allmorph -t) if used in the predicative context. Examples in (33)
and (34) illustrate this contrast.

(33) oryu melinynya peNkuTTi
    one  slim   girl
    ‘a slim girl’ (Elicited) [Attributive adjective]

(34) a. * anna melinynya=yaaNE.
    Anna  slim=COP.PRS
    Intended: ‘Anna is slim.’ (Elicited) [Attributive adjective]

b. anna melinynya-t=aaNE.
    Anna  slim-NMLZ=COP.PRS
    ‘Anna is slim.’ (lit. ‘Anna is a slim one.’) (COP.001) [Nominalized adjective]

4.1.4. Adverbs

Malayalam adverbs do not inflect and they modify verbs, as illustrated in (35) and (36).

(35) nyangngaL  naaLe  sanantonio-yikkyE pook-um.
    1PL.EXC.NOM tomorrow  San.Antonio-DAT  go-FUT
    ‘We will go to San Antonio tomorrow.’ (NEG.003)

(36) aaryE  nannaay-iTTE  bhakshaNam  viLampi  tann-aal=um,
    who   well-PFV   food   serve.CVB   give-COND1=UQ
    enikkyE  iSTam  aaNE.
    1SG.DAT  liking  COP1.PRS
    ‘I like whoever serves foods well.’ (Onam.012)

4.1.5. Postpositions

Malayalam postpositions are invariant and they take nouns as their complements, as mumpE ‘before’ in (37) and varye ‘until’ in (38) illustrate.

(37) namukkE  paryipaaT-ikkyE  oryu  manikuury  mumpE  kaaN-aam.
    1PL.INC.DAT program-DAT   one hour   before   see-HORT
    ‘Let’s meet one hour before the program.’ (Case.016)

(38) avary  karynaaTakam  varye  pooyi.
    3PL.NOM  Karnataka   until  go.PST
    ‘They went as far as Karnataka.’ (Case.012)

So far no prepositions of any kind have been found in Malayalam.

4.1.6. Conjunctions

Like postpositions, Malayalam conjunctions are also invariant, but unlike postpositions they link a whole clause, rather than a nominal phrase, to the main clause. This is shown by pakshe ‘but’ and kaaryaNam ‘because’ in (39) and (40) respectively.
(39) *joon sahaayikk-um, pakshe anna sahaayikk-attilla.*

John help-FUT but Anna help-FUT.NEG

‘John will help, but Anna won’t.’ (COORD.004)

(40) *amma uNTaakkii-tary-unn-a bhakshaNatt-inE*

mom made-give-PRS-ATTR food-DAT

*ryucci kuTuTtal aayiryikkyyum,*

taste more COP1.FUT

*kaaryaNam sneeham ennE paray-unn-a masaala*

because love QUOT call-PRS-ATTR spice

*kuuTi at-il-E ceerkk-um.*

also that-LOC-DAT add-FUT

‘Foods made and given by the mother will be more delicious because a spice called love will also be added (to them).’ (Onam.001&002)

4.2. Basic constituent orders

4.2.1. Main clauses

The constituent order of prototypical basic main clauses is SV in intransitive clauses and SOV in transitive clauses, as shown in (41) and (42) respectively.

(41) **S**  

*joon=um anna=yum samsaaryiccu.*  

John.NOM=COORD PN.NOM=COORD talk.PST

‘John and Anna talked.’ (T&A.005)

(42) **S O V**  

*aa kuTTi avaNTe sahooteryi-ye iTiccu.*  

that child.NOM 3SG.M.GEN sister-ACC hit.PST

‘The boy hit his sister.’ (NEG.005)

Despite the basic S(O)V word order, Malayalam may have a relatively free word order system since each argument in a clause is always marked by case and its grammatical relation to the predicate is thus unambiguous. Example (43) shows a case where four grammatical relations occur in the same clause, and it might just be one of the many word order possibilities. However, more naturally occurring data are needed in order to find out to what degree the word order is “free”.

(43) **S IO OBL DO V**  

*enre amma enikkEy koci-yil ninnE oryu kattE-o ayaccu.*  

1SG.GEN mom.NOM 1SG.DAT Cochin-LOC from one letter-ACC send.PST

‘My mom sent me a letter from Cochin.’ (Case.009)

4.2.2. Nominal phrases

In a nominal phrase, the head noun consistently occurs at the end, whether the preceding element is a numeral, a demonstrative, a possessor, an attributive word, or a clause-scale modifier (which functions like a relative clause), as shown in (44) through (47).
4.2.3. Verbal phrases

The status of a verbal phrase is rather obscure at this point. All that can be said is that the
verb always occurs at the end of a VP (if there is one).

4.2.4. Postpositional phrases

In a postpositional phrase, the postposition always follows the nominal that it forms a
constituent with. Multiple PPs can be juxtaposed in the same clause, as shown in (48).

(48) nyaan [panjaab-il ninnnum], [mahaarashtra vaRi], [keeryalam varye] yaatraceytu.
1SG.NOM Punjab-LOC from Maharashtra via Kerala until travel.PST
‘I travelled from Punjab, via Maharashtra, (and down) to Kerala.’ (Case.014)

Importantly, not every postposition requires its nominal complement to be marked in the
same grammatical case. For instance, while nominals headed by vaRi ‘via’ and varye ‘until’
are in nominative, those headed by ninnnum ‘from’ and iTakkyE ‘between’ should be marked
by locative and genitive respectively, as in (48) and (49).

(49) oryu manuSyan [rayNTE maryang-ngaL-uTe iTakkyE] nilkk-uke=yaaNE.
one man two tree-PL-GEN between stand-INF1=COP1.PRS
‘A man is standing between two trees.’ (Case.004)

4.3. Predicate nominals

Malayalam predicate nominal clauses take on the schema “SUB PRED COP”, which
means the subject NP comes first, then the predicate NP, and finally a copula. The present
tense form of the copula is aaNE and its past tense form aayiryunnu, as illustrated in (50) and
(51) respectively.

(50) ni oryu paTTukaaryan aaNE.
2SG.NOM one singer.M COP1.PRS
‘You are a singer.’ (T&A.004)
4.4. Existential/locational/possessive sentences

Malayalam existential clauses employ the schema “(LOC) SUB EXIST”, which means the locative phrase comes first (if there is one), then the subject NP, and finally the existential predicate uNTE, as (52) below shows.

(52) frij-il oryu kooRi uNTE.
   fringe-LOC one chicken.NOM EX
   ‘There is a chicken in the fridge.’ (NP.016)

Interestingly, if the subject NP is the one and only thing that exists, a special construction is used. Specifically, the predicate becomes uLLu and the subject NP is marked by -ee, which seems to express emphatic meaning of some sort. Example (53) is illustrative.

(53) frij-il oryu kooRi=yeE uLLu.
   fringe-LOC one chicken.NOM=EMPH EX.PRS
   ‘There is only one chicken in the fridge.’ (NP.017)

In locational clauses, the subject NP precedes the locative phrase and the same existential uNTE serves as the predicate at the end, as in (54).

(54) bustakam muri-yil uNTE.
   book room-LOC EX
   ‘The book is in the room.’ (Elicited)

The existential predicate uNTE is also used in possessive clauses, where the possessor is marked in dative case and the possessum in nominative. The possessum used in this construction can be body parts or kinship terms, as respectively shown in (55) and (56).

(55) enikkyE ryaNTE kai uNTE.
   1SG.DAT two hand.NOM EX
   ‘I have two hands.’ (NP.024)
(56) enikkyE oryu sahooteryan uNTE.
   1SG.DAT one brother.NOM EX
   ‘I have one brother.’ (NP.028)

Like the case in existential/locational clauses, the same “-ee plus uLLu” construction is used if the possessum is the only entity that is possessed, as illustrated in (57) and (58) below.
4.5. Expression of grammatical relations

Since there is no argument-predicate agreement in Malayalam, expression of grammatical relations is primarily indicated by case marking. The exact number of grammatical cases is unclear at this point, but some generalizations can be made regarding what grammatical relation is marked by what case.

While subject is usually marked by nominative -ø, object is marked by accusative -e, as (59) shows.

(59) aa kuTTi-ø avaNTe sahooteryi-y iTiccu.
    that child-NOM 3SG.M.GEN sister-ACC hit.PST
    ‘The boy hit his sister.’ (NEG.005)

However, if the object is inanimate, the accusative marking can be zero, as in (60), where the grammatical relation is indicated by word order.

(60) anna-ø iracci-ø uNTaakki.
    Anna-NOM meat-ACC cook.PST
    ‘Anna cooked meat.’ (T&A.006)

When there are two objects in the same clause, direct object is marked by accusative and indirect object by dative, as in (61).

(61) enre amma-ø enikkyE koci-yil ninnE oryu kattE-ø ayaccu.
    1SG.GEN mom-NOM 1SG.DAT Cochin-LOC from one letter-ACC send.PST
    ‘My mom sent me a letter from Cochin.’ (Case.009)

In addition to a recipient, the dative case also marks goal of motion, which can be alternatively marked by -ooTE, whose function is still unclear. Example (62) illustrates this point.

(62) nyaan ennum skuul-ekkyE/skuul-ooTE naTakk-uke=yaaNE.
    1SG.NOM every.day school-DAT/school-SOC walk-INF1=COP1.PRS
    ‘I walk to school every day.’ (Case.010)

Location, whether static or dynamic, is marked by locative case -il, as in (63) and (64) below.
(63) \textit{kuTTi muri-yil ninnE puratt-ekkyE ooTi.}\newline \text{child.NOM room-LOC from outside-DAT run.PST}\newline ‘The child ran out of a room.’ (Case.008)

(64) \textit{frij-il oryu kooRi uNTE.}\newline fridge-LOC one chicken.NOM EX\newline ‘There is a chicken in the fridge.’ (NP.016)

4.6. Causatives

In terms of transitivity, Malayalam seems to have three verb stems, namely, intransitive, transitive, and causative stems, as shown in (65) through (67) respectively.

(65) \textit{paatram poTTi/uTanynyu.}\newline \text{vase break.INTR.PST/break.INTR.PST}\newline ‘The vase broke.’ (CAUS.009)

(66) \textit{anna paatram poTTiccu/uTaccu.}\newline \text{Anna.NOM vase.ACC break.TR.PST/break.TR.PST}\newline ‘Anna broke the vase.’ (CAUS.014)

(67) \textit{anna shashi-ye koNTE paatram poTTi<ppi>ccu/uTa<ppi>ccu.}\newline \text{Anna.NOM Shashi-ACC by vase.ACC break<CAUS>TR.PST/break<CAUS>TR.PST}\newline ‘Anna made Shashi break the vase.’ (CAUS.017)

Comparing (66) with (67), we see that the causative stem is derived from the transitive stem infixed by the causative morpheme <ppi>. As (67) illustrates, the argument structure in Malayalam causative constructions is marked by nominative for the causer, accusative for the patient of the caused event, and the posposition \textit{koNTE} ‘by’ (which “governs” accusative) for the causee.

Interestingly, as an alternative to the causative stem, the transitive stem can also be used in the causative context (where there are causer, causee, and patient of the caused event). This alternative, however, is lexically restricted, as the contrast in (68) shows.

(68) a. \textit{anna shashi-ye koNTE paatram poTTiccu.}\newline \text{Anna.NOM Shashi-ACC by vase.ACC break.TR.PST}\newline ‘Anna made Shashi break the vase.’ (CAUS.017)

b.* \textit{anna shashi-ye koNTE paatram uTaccu.}\newline \text{Anna.NOM Shashi-ACC by vase.ACC break.TR.PST}\newline Intended: ‘Anna made Shashi break the vase.’ (CAUS.018)

While the transitive stem \textit{poTTiccu} and its synonym \textit{uTaccu} are interchangeable in the transitive context (as in (66)), only \textit{poTTiccu}, but not \textit{uTaccu}, is acceptable in the causative context.

In spite of the functional overlap between the transitive and the causative stem (such as
poTTiccU and poTTippiccU), the two stems should be distinguished as they denote different event structures. This difference in event structure is especially clear when the causee is absent, as the minimal pair in (69) shows. The transitive stem poTTiccU can only have the transitive interpretation when the causs ee is absent whereas the causative stem poTTippiccU always has the causative interpretation even if the causs ee is absent.

(69) a. anna paatram poTTiccU.
   Anna.NOM vase.ACC break.TR.PST
   ‘Anna broke the vase.’ (CAUS.014)
b. anna paatram poTTippiccU.
   Anna.NOM vase.ACC break<CAUS>TR.PST
   ‘Anna made (somebody) break the vase.’ (CAUS.015)

4.7. Passives

Malayalam passive verbs are derived from the present tense root encliticized by the passive auxiliary appeT-uka ‘PASS-INF1’, whose past tense form is appeTTu ‘PASS.PST’. For instance, while the active past tense form of koll-uka ‘kill-INF1’ is konnu, its passive counterpart is koll=appeTTu, as the contrast in (70) and (71) show.

(70) kaLLan shashi-ye konnu.
   thief.M Shashi-ACC kill.PST
   ‘The thief (m.) killed Shashi.’ (PASS.003)

(71) shashi kaLLan-aal koll=appeTTu.
   Shashi thief.M-INS kill=PASS.PST
   ‘Shashi was killed by the thief (m.).’ (PASS.004)

Aside from the difference in verb forms, the passive construction also differs from the active construction in terms of case marking. In actives, the agent and patient are marked by nominative and accusative respectively; in passives, the agent is marked by instrumental and the patient by nominative. More examples of the passive construction are given in (72) and (73), where the active infinitival verb forms are aTikky-uka ‘hit-INF1’ and kattikky-uka ‘burn-INF1’ respectively.

(72) shashi kaLLan-aal aTikky=appeTTu.
   Shashi thief.M-INS hit=PASS.PST
   ‘Shashi was hit by the thief (m.).’ (PASS.005)

(73) shashi kaLLan-aal kattikky=appeTTu.
   Shashi thief.M-INS burn=PASS.PST
   ‘Shashi was burned by the thief (m.).’ (PASS.006)
In addition, the agent in passives is optional, as is often the case in passives of many languages. Example (74) is illustrative.

(74) \textit{avaL kariyaakk=appeTTu.}  
\begin{tabular}{l}
3SG.F.NOM tease=PASS.PST \\
\end{tabular}
\begin{tabular}{c}
‘She was teased.’ (PASS.011) \\
\end{tabular}

Although \textit{appeT-uka} ‘PASS-INF1’ is quite productive in transforming an active verb into a passive one, its use is not without restrictions. For instance, \textit{keeLkk=appeT-uka} ‘hear=PASS-INF1’, the expected passive form of \textit{keeLkk-uka} ‘hear-INF1’, is not accepted by the consultant. In such cases, the “passive” interpretation is expressed by reversing the order of the agent and patient in the active construction. As the contrast in (75) and (76) show, the agent precedes the patient in the “active” interpretation, but the agent follows the patient in the “passive” interpretation.

(75) \textit{nyaan avaLuTe suaryam keeTTu.}  
\begin{tabular}{l}
1SG.NOM 3SG.F.GEN voice hear.PST \\
\end{tabular}
\begin{tabular}{c}
‘I heard her voice.’ (PASS.007) \\
\end{tabular}

(76) \textit{avaLuTe suaryam nyaan keeTTu}  
\begin{tabular}{l}
3SG.F.GEN voice 1SG.NOM hear.PST \\
\end{tabular}
\begin{tabular}{c}
‘Her voice was heard by me.’ (PASS.008) \\
\end{tabular}

Syntactically, both (75) and (76) should be considered “active” since they only differ in word order. But pragmatically, (76) is more “passive-like” than (75), for the patient is profiled and the agent backgrounded in (76).

4.8. Reflexives

Malayalam makes use of the reflexive adverb \textit{tanne} to express reflexivity, as shown in (77). Without \textit{tanne}, (77) would be ambiguous over two readings, as illustrated in (78).

(77) \textit{lata avaL-e \textcolor{red}{tanne} kaNNaTi-yil kaNTu.}  
\begin{tabular}{l}
Lata 3SG.F-ACC REFL mirror-LOC see.PST \\
\end{tabular}
\begin{tabular}{c}
‘Lata saw herself in the mirror.’ (REFL.003) \\
\end{tabular}

(78) \textit{lata avaL-e kaNNaTi-yil kaNTu.}  
\begin{tabular}{l}
Lata 3SG.F-ACC mirror-LOC see.PST \\
\end{tabular}
\begin{tabular}{c}
‘Lata saw her/herself in the mirror.’ (REFL.002) \\
\end{tabular}

4.9. Reciprocals

There are two ways to express reciprocality. One is to use the adverb \textit{tammil}, which
literally means ‘among them’ and is probably the locative form of some word on account of the -il ending in it. Example (79) is illustrative.

(79) \textit{shashi=yum mohen=um tammil toriccu.}
\hspace{1cm} Shashi=COORD Mohen=COORD RECP kick.PST
\hspace{1cm} ‘Shashi and Mohen kicked each other.’ (RECIP.004)

Another way is to use two demonstrative adverbs in a row, namely, \textit{angngooTTum ingngooTTum}, which literally means “this direction and that direction”, as in (80).

(80) \textit{shashi=yum mohen=um angngooTT=um ingngooTT=um verup=aaNE.}
\hspace{1cm} Shashi=COORD Mohen=COORD that.direction=COORD this.direction=COORD hate=COP1.PRS
\hspace{1cm} ‘Shashi and Mohen hate each other.’ (RECIP.002)

It is unclear what conditions the use of one way or the other, but the demonstrative adverb strategy seems to be quite productive, as seen in (81) through (83).

(81) \textit{shashi=yum lata=yum angngooTT=um ingngooTT=um samaaNam koruTTu.}
\hspace{1cm} Shashi=COORD Lata=COORD that.direction=COORD this.direction=COORD present give.PST
\hspace{1cm} ‘Shashi and Lata gave each other a present.’ (RECIP.008)

(82) \textit{shashi=yum lata=yum angngooTT=um ingngooTT=um kurrapeTuTTi.}
\hspace{1cm} Shashi=COORD Lata=COORD that.direction=COORD this.direction=COORD complain.PST
\hspace{1cm} ‘Shashi and Lata complained about each other.’ (RECIP.009)

(83) \textit{shashi=yum lata=yum angngooTT=um ingngooTT=um muTi veTTi.}
\hspace{1cm} Shashi=COORD Lata=COORD that.direction=COORD this.direction=COORD hair cut.PST
\hspace{1cm} ‘Shashi and Lata cut each other’s hair.’ (RECIP.010)

4.10. Questions

4.10.1. Polar questions

Polar questions in Malayalam are formed by adding the interrogative clitic =\textit{oo} to the predicate of an affirmative clause, as in (84) and (85), which without =\textit{oo} would have been a statement rather than a question.

(84) \textit{ni \textit{malayalam} samsaaryikky-um=oo?}
\hspace{1cm} 2SG.NOM Malayalam speak-HAB-AFF.Q
\hspace{1cm} ‘Do you speak Malayalam?’ (INTERROG.025)

(85) \textit{ni \textit{enre} pustakam erutt=oo?}
\hspace{1cm} 2SG.NOM 1SG.GEN book take.PST=AFF.Q
\hspace{1cm} ‘Did you take my book?’ (INTERROG.023)

In the case of negative polar questions, the interrogative clitic =\textit{ee} is attached to the predicate of a negative clause, as in (86) and (87), which without =\textit{ee} would have been a negative statement rather than a question.
4.10.2. Content questions

To form content questions, questions words are used to replace the content that is being interrogated. The subject may occur at the sentence-initial position, as in (88), or at the sentence-final position, as in (89). Question words do not involve “movement” of any kind; rather they stay where they would have been in a non-interrogative clause.

(88) *taangkaLuTe peeryE enr=aaNE?*
    2SG.GEN name what=COP1.PRS
    ‘What is your name?’ (INTERROG.003)

(89) *eviTε=yaaNE enre buukh?*
    where=COP.PR S 1SG.GEN book
    ‘Where is my book?’ (INTERROG.007)

For content questions which involve a verb that is not the copula, a special cleft-like construction is used, whereby a nominalized verb co-occurs with the copula, as in (90) through (92).

(90) *it-inE malayаЬLatt-il enr=aaNE paray-unn-a-tE?*
    this-DAT Malayalam-LOC what=COP1.PRS call-PRS-ATTR-NMLZ
    ‘What do (you) call this in Malayalam?’ (lit. ‘Calling this in Malayalam is what?’) (INTERROG.004)

(91) *ningngaL eviTε=yaaNE tamasikky-unn-a-tE?*
    2SG.NOM where=COP1.PRS live-PRS-ATTR-NMLZ
    ‘Where do you live?’ (lit. ‘Your living is where?’) (INTERROG.008)

(92) *ningngaL eviTε=yaaNE pook-unn-a-tE?*
    2SG.NOM where=COP1.PRS go-PRS-ATTR-NMLZ
    ‘Where are you going?’ (lit. ‘Your going is where?’) (INTERROG.010)

4.11. Imperatives

Imperative mood in Malayalam is expressed by some suffixes attached to the nonpast Verb stem, and the addressee is unexpressed but implied. There are several suffixes that can carry out this job. First, the citation form ending -uka:

(93) *kooRi vaangng-uka.*
    chicken buy-INF1
    ‘Buy a chicken.’ (NP.021)
Second, the suffix -\textit{u}, which might be a shortened form of -\textit{uka}:

(94) \textit{ryaNTE kooRi vaangng-u.}  
\begin{tabular}{ll}
  two & chicken \\
\end{tabular} 
\begin{tabular}{l}
  buy-IMP \\
\end{tabular}  
\begin{tabular}{l}
  ‘Buy two chickens.’ (NP.022) \\
\end{tabular}

Third, the deontic suffix -\textit{aNam}:

(95) \textit{paalE vaangng-aNam.}  
\begin{tabular}{ll}
  milk & buy-DNT \\
\end{tabular}  
\begin{tabular}{l}
  ‘Buy (some) milk.’ (NP.014) \\
\end{tabular}

I call this suffix “deontic” because it adds a deontic meaning to the verb it is attached to, as in (96). So the literal meaning of (95) might be “(You) should buy (some) milk.”

(96) \textit{ni suuryen astamikky-unn-a-t-inu mumpE viiT-il vary-aNam.}  
\begin{tabular}{llllll}
  2SG.NOM & sun & set-PRS-ATTR-NMLZ-DAT & before & home-LOC & come-DNT \\
\end{tabular}  
\begin{tabular}{l}
  ‘You should come home before sunset.’ (Case.015) \\
\end{tabular}

Fourth, the hortative suffix -\textit{aam}:

(97) \textit{ryaNTE puucca-kaL-e vaangng-aam.}  
\begin{tabular}{llll}
  two & cat-PL-ACC & buy-HOR \\
\end{tabular}  
\begin{tabular}{l}
  ‘Buy two cats.’ (NP.008) \\
\end{tabular}

The evidence of -\textit{aam} being a hortative suffix comes from sentences like (98), where the suffix adds a “let’s” meaning to the verb it is attached to.

(98) \textit{namukkE paryipaaT-ikkyE oryu manikuury mumpE kaaN-aam.}  
\begin{tabular}{llllllll}
  1PL.INC.DAT & program-DAT & one & hour & before & see-HOR \\
\end{tabular}  
\begin{tabular}{l}
  ‘Let’s meet one hour before the program.’ (Case.016) \\
\end{tabular}

Finally, the prohibitive suffix -\textit{aNTa}, which expresses a negative command or request:

(99) \textit{akatt-E vary-aNTa.}  
\begin{tabular}{ll}
  inside-DAT & come-PROH \\
\end{tabular}  
\begin{tabular}{l}
  ‘Don’t come in.’ (IMP.002) \\
\end{tabular}

4.12. Negation

Negation is formed by using the negative existential predicate \textit{illa}, whose positive counterpart is \textit{uNTE}. Example (100) and (101) show a minimal contrast between these two existential predicates.
The negative *illa* is by default in the present tense, so if it is used in other tenses the copula is required so as to indicate tense, as in (102).

(102) aviTe aa puucca *ill=*aayiryunnu.
    there  that cat  NEG=COP1.PST
    ‘That cat was not there.’ (NP.009)

In clauses where the main verb is not a copula, the negative *illa* is suffixed to the verb. In past tense, it is suffixed to the past tense verb root (with deletion of the final vowel), as in (103).

(103) aa kuTTi avaNTe sahooteryi-ye iTicc-*illa*.
    that child.NOM 3SG.M.GEN sister-ACC hit.PST-NEG
    ‘The boy didn’t hit his sister.’ (NEG.006)

In present tense, the verb is negated by -*aarilla*, where *illa* obviously indicates negation but the function of *aar* is not clear. This is illustrated in (104).

(104) nyaan *skuuL-il pook-*aar-*illa*.
    1SG.NOM school-LOC go-??-NEG
    ‘I don’t go to school.’ (NEG.002)

In future tense, the verb is negated by -*attilla*, which again has a mysterious morpheme in it (i.e. *att*), as shown in (105) below.

(105) nyangngaL naaLe sanantonio-yikkyE pook-*att-*illa*.
    1PL.EXC.NOM tomorrow San.Antonio-DAT go-??-NEG
    ‘We won’t go to San Antonio tomorrow.’ (NEG.004)
Appendix I: Glossary

aː ‘that (adnominal)’
aba ‘Father’
adxen ‘rich man; powerful man’
adəmbaram ‘celebration; show’
adxəxam ‘celebration’
adəxikuka ‘celebrate’
adxar ‘food’
am ‘elephant’
amə ‘male’
amkutu ‘boy’
adxaga ‘danger’
adxə ‘who’
adxə¹(big) river’
adxə² ‘six’
adxəjam ‘help’
adəjam ‘acting’
adxəham ‘he (formal; distal)’
adxəpam ‘honor’
adxə ‘fire’
adxəŋ ‘person name’
adxə ‘five’
adxə ‘you (sg.)’
adxəne ‘like that’
adxəgəl ‘uncle’
adxəkaram ‘recognition’ (But written as amgikaram)
apa ‘dad’
apoxol ‘then’
apa- ‘bad’
apakətam ‘accident’
apasəɾə ‘bad rumor’
də ‘half’
ara ‘secure room; storage’
arə ‘rice’
arijuka ‘know’
adxən ‘father’
adə ‘that (pronominal)’
adxənə ‘otherwise; also’
ataruka ‘fight; stab’
atarə ‘near’
axedam ‘medicine’
axedəlam ‘flop; failure’
avəl ‘she’
avən ‘he’
ava ‘they’
avə ‘there’
badik ‘girl’
baibol ‘Bible’
balam ‘strength’
balaram ‘strong man’
bəxəram ‘heavy’
bəxəjam ‘fear’
bəxəkanam ‘food’
bəxəŋi ‘beauty’ (But written as bəxəmgi)
bəxəa ‘wife’
bəəmi ‘earth’
dəam ‘jam’
dədəmam ‘pomegranate tree’
dəkə ‘rubber’
ɖąmar'u ‘a small drum’
ɖaŋe ‘below; under’
ɖaŋti ‘fat; heavy’
ɖeiram ‘god’
ɖənənam ‘birth’
ɖəkəca ‘large drum’
ɖənamənam ‘kettle’
ɖənəm ‘money’
ɖiəvi ‘creature’
ɖirićikuka ‘live’
ɖirićakəm ‘cumin’
ɖıća ‘direction’
ɖıvasam ‘day’
ɖoktiə ‘doctor’
ɖukəm ‘sadness’
ɖu- ‘bad’
ɛni ‘ladder’
ɛŋə ‘which’
ɛləm ‘all’
ɛlə ‘bone’
ɛŋə ‘what’
ɛnəne ‘how’
epəm ‘when’
epəl ‘when’
epu ‘always’
erićuka ‘throw’
erukuka ‘take’
ećițe ‘where’
fajam ‘fear’
palaga ‘(wood) plank’
falagam ‘(wood) plank’
falam ‘fruit; result; product’ (=pələm)
faňəm ‘head of a serpent’
faugunam ‘Aquarius’

gənəm ‘group’
garə ‘pride’
gənam ‘heaviness’ (= kanam)
gətəm ‘landing place’
gətikəm ‘clock’
gəɔəm ‘frightful’
gəɔəm ‘noise’
gətambə ‘wheat’
guťəm ‘crowd’
gunəm ‘virtue’
gunəm ‘multiplication’
guru ‘guru’
hańkəm ‘dangerous’
həɾdəjam ‘heart’
hiwavam ‘snow’
i: ‘this (adnominal)’
iʃe:ham ‘he (formal; proximal)’
-il ‘in; at’
ila ‘no’
ila ‘leaf’
iŋone ‘like this’
ipələ ‘now’
iraʃi ‘meat; flesh’
iɾikuka ‘sit’
iʃəm ‘liking’
iʃə ‘leftside’
iʃə ‘this (pronominal)’
iʃikuka ‘hit’
iʃițe ‘here’
jaουənəm ‘youth’
joːni ‘skin’
-kja ‘fruit’
ka:kə ‘crow’
ka:lə ‘leg’
mançam ‘smell’
manasːə ‘mind’
manucen ‘person, human’
manja ‘dim’
maqa ‘rain’
mara ‘shade’
maraqə ‘manner’
marəm ‘tree’
marəm “amnesia”
maçi ‘ink’
maçi ‘enough’
maçi ‘lap; laziness’
maçi ‘barrier’
megbəm ‘cloud’
meː ‘on’
melijə ‘thin’
məkam ‘animal’
min ‘fish’
mukə ‘nose’
mukəm ‘face’
mula ‘jasmin’
mula ‘breast’
mulakə ‘chili’
muçə ‘three’
muri room’
murikuka ‘split’
murja ‘sharp’
muʃə ‘egg’
muʃə ‘knee; joint’
muʃ ‘hair’
nakə ‘tongue’
ŋaː ‘day’
ŋaː ‘four’
ŋaːle ‘tomorrow’
ŋaːn ‘I’
ŋaːtəm ‘foul smell’
nəd ‘lake’
nagəm ‘claw; nail’
naləɡə ‘good’
naməl ‘we’
ŋanaŋa ‘wet’
ŋanəcə ‘wetness’
ŋaŋal ‘us’
nərənjia ‘lemon’
nətakuka ‘walk’
nəti ‘actress’
ŋəː ‘straight’
ŋei(jə) ‘fat; butter’
neŋdo ‘chest’
nədəjəm ‘merciless’
ŋi- ‘un-; without’
ni(ŋal) ‘you (casual)’
niŋda ‘long’
nigua ‘stood’
niŋə ‘full’
ŋisəːam ‘unimportant’
ŋicabđam ‘silent’
oːla ‘palm leaf’
oː ‘one’
opə ‘signature’
oːlu ‘one (thing)’
oːkuno ‘flowing; floating’
oːŋapə ‘many’
paʃəːlam ‘underground’
paʃəm ‘foot’
paːle ‘milk’
paːlam ‘bridge’
pra ‘rock’
paña 'road'
pajara 'beans'
palpa 'tooth'
palaga 'a piece of wood'
pana 'bad'
pañam 'money'
pandgasara 'sugar'
para 'rice barn'
pajajapa 'old'
parakūno 'flying'
pañam 'banana'
pañja 'green'
pañjaapara 'greenery'
pañji 'dog'
pañja 'bubble'
pañjikuka 'study'
peñ 'louse'
peñə 'name'
peñi 'fear'
peñə 'female'
peñkūṭi 'girl'
pəlam 'fruit; result; product' (= falam)
pəlikukara 'work out; bear fruit'
pinc 'then; later'
pīlijuka 'squeeze'
pīlikuka 'hold'
pū(cə) 'flower'
pūqa 'creek; pond'
puram 'back of the body'
purata 'outside'
pūqua 'worm'
pū/qucen 'male'
rañji 'place name'
rañjara 'king'
rañjatam 'blood'
ramasan 'Ramsaan Festival'
rañji 'queen'
rañjə 'two'
rañjiri 'night'
raça 'Rava flower'
raçile 'morning'
rupara 'rupee'
rañjiram 'beauty'
safalam 'bear fruit; come true'
samajam 'time'
sançocam 'happiness'
rañjikuka 'vomit'
rañjira 'correct'
rañjiram 'body'
simham 'lion'
sinima 'cinema'
stoṭram 'thanks'
stri 'female'
suəram 'voice'
susəam 'breath'
sukəam 'good; health'
surji 'rumor'
jañkəl 'you (formal)'
fəram 'ash'
jañra 'duck'
jañə 'yogurt'
jañkali 'tomato'
jałala 'head'
jañdrən 'moon'
jañra 'floor'
jañrakəm 'star'
jañru 'give'
ʧâtî ‘pot; vase’
ʧâbʰu ‘tatoo’
ʧâti ‘wood’
ʧanq ‘town’
ʧaici ‘key’
ʧen ‘honey’
ʧeŋə ‘coconut tree’
ʧerijâ ‘small’
ʧeṭî ‘plant’
ʧeṭi ‘ear’
ʧiːpə ‘comb (n.)’
ʧiqr ‘dirty’
ʧiŋdikuka ‘think’
ʧirako ‘wing’
ʧiɾîjuka ‘turn’
ʧiɾîkuka ‘laugh’
ʧoli ‘skin’
ʧor ‘blood’
ʧora ‘rice’
ʧukuka ‘wipe’
ʧu’re ‘far’
ʧuṭaikuka ‘wipe’
ʧuṭ ‘warm’
ʧuṭal ‘feather’
ʧuṭaŋ qa ‘red’
ʊnə ‘food’
ʊ-lasting ‘have’
ʊli ‘onion’
ʊŋəja ‘dry’
ʊŋduka ‘push’
ʊpə ‘salt’
ʊraŋuka ‘sleep’
ʊṭamambʰə ‘ideal wife’
ʊṭamambʰətə ‘ideal husband’
ʊṭamam ‘perfect’
va(jə) ‘mouth’
va(tə) ‘sky’
vaɾə ‘pick’
vaik:juka ‘play (instruments)’
vaŋ ‘tattoo’
vaŋa ‘belly’
vaŋq ‘rightside’
vaɾi ‘big’
vaɾik:juka ‘pull’
vaɾuq ‘big’
vaŋəm ‘fat’
vaŋq ‘came’
vaɾa ‘line’
vaɾak:juka ‘fry’
vaɾalə ‘dry’
vaq ‘road; way’
vaɾəm ‘year’
vaɾu ‘come’
vaɾuqənəja ‘eggplant’
vaqi ‘water’
vaɾ ‘white’
vaŋa ‘okra plant’
vaŋ ‘other’
vaŋəm ‘wound’
viː ‘broad’
viːlə ‘wide’
viːləkuraŋ ‘narrow’
vǐŋu ‘fall’
vǐːŋə ‘house’
vǐnu ‘person name’
vicajam ‘subject; topic’
vicam ‘poison’
vicamam ‘sadness’
vicecam ‘news’
vǐŋə ‘seed’
Appendix II: A Practical Orthography of Malayalam

Malayalam consonants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Malayalam consonants</th>
<th>Voice</th>
<th>Bilabial</th>
<th>Labiodental</th>
<th>Dental</th>
<th>Alveolar</th>
<th>Alveolo-palatal</th>
<th>Retroflex</th>
<th>Palatal</th>
<th>Velar</th>
<th>Glottal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Plosive</strong></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>(/p/=p)</td>
<td>(/p^h/=ph)</td>
<td>(/t/=t)</td>
<td>(/t^h/=th)</td>
<td>(/\omega/=c)</td>
<td>(/t^h/=Th)</td>
<td>(/k/=k)</td>
<td>(/k^h/=kh)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
<td>(/b/=b)</td>
<td>(/b^h/=bh)</td>
<td>(/d/=d)</td>
<td>(/d^h/=dh)</td>
<td>(/\partial/=j)</td>
<td>(/d^h/=Dh)</td>
<td>(/g/=g)</td>
<td>(/g^h/=gh)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nasal</strong></td>
<td>+</td>
<td>(/m/=m)</td>
<td>(/n/=n)</td>
<td>(/n/=ny)</td>
<td>(/n^h/=Ny)</td>
<td>(/n^h/=ng)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Trill</strong></td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(/r/=r)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tap/flap</strong></td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(/t/=ty)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fricative</strong></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>(/f/=f)</td>
<td>(/s/=s)</td>
<td>(/\varsigma/=sh)</td>
<td>(/\varsigma^h/=S)</td>
<td>(/h/=h)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cen. Approx.</strong></td>
<td>+</td>
<td>(/\upsilon/=\upsilon)</td>
<td>(/\partial/=\partial)</td>
<td>(/\partial^h/=R)</td>
<td>(/j/=y)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lat. Approx.</strong></td>
<td>+</td>
<td>(/l/=l)</td>
<td>(/l/=L)</td>
<td>(/l/=L)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Malayalam vowels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Malayalam vowels</th>
<th>Front</th>
<th>Central</th>
<th>Back</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>High</strong></td>
<td>(/i/=i)</td>
<td>(/u/=u)</td>
<td>(/u^h/=uu)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mid</strong></td>
<td>(/e/=e)</td>
<td>(/o/=o)</td>
<td>(/o^h/=oo)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Low</strong></td>
<td>(/a/=a)</td>
<td>(/a/=aa)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Part II: A Text of Malayalam

1. Introduction

The goal of this second part is to provide an interlinear glossed text of spoken Malayalam and then to analyze the grammatical features as seen in the text. The chosen discourse is a TV interview on Onam Festival, which is the biggest festival in the state of Kerala, India, where Malayalam is spoken on the daily basis. Onam Festival falls in the first Malayalam month (i.e. between August and September), and is intricately linked to many aspects of Malayalam culture, including songs, dancing, cuisine, dresses, flower decorations, and Snake Boat racing, etc.

The interview took place between a female host and a male guest. The host, whose name is Meera Krishnan, is a famous film actress in her early thirties, and the guest, whose name is Padmasree Mohanlal (called Lal in the text), is a famous film actor and producer in his early forties. Throughout the interview, Krishan asked Mohanlal a series of questions that are more or less related to Onam Festival. While the whole interview lasted over sixteen minutes, only about three minutes of it were transcribed due to the time constraint. In transcribing the interview, I was assisted by a Malayalam consultant, whose name is Sona Joseph, a 26-year-old female who speaks Malayalam natively and English fluently. She originally came from Kochi (formerly Cochin), Kerala, India, and is currently a graduate student at Rice University.

The procedure of the transcription work goes as follows. I first played back the whole interview to Sona, who then explained to me the general ideas of it. After that, we discussed which part of it was most worth transcribing in terms of both speech clarity and cultural relevance. Once the agreement was reached, I played back a small chunk of the interview at a time and Sona repeated to me what she had heard on the recordings at a slower speed. After two to three small chunks, we would stop transcribing, she would translate the recently transcribed chunks, and I would ask her relevant questions in order to correctly parse and gloss the transcriptions.

In what follows, I will first present a bird’s-eye view of the text, that is, a view of the text from top down. In this view, the text, consisting of parallel Malayalam transcriptions and English free translations, is organized in terms of conversational turns so that the readers would have an overall picture of the text contents. Then I will present a worm’s-eye view of the text, that is, a view of the text from bottom up. In this view, the text, this time consisting of three interlinear tiers (i.e. text tier, morpheme-by-morpheme tier, and glossing tier), is chunked into syntactic units roughly at the level of clauses or sentences so that the readers would have

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7 The interview is available at [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kXcD7PFE9aE&feature=channel](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kXcD7PFE9aE&feature=channel).
detailed ideas about the morphosyntax, phonology, and morphophonology.

2. A bird’s-eye view of the text

In this section, I first present a bird’s-eye view of the text, i.e. a view of the text from top down. The text is comprised of three short questions from the interviewer and relatively long answers to them from the interviewee. For ease of cross-reference, the text is chunked into 44 syntactic units, with each numbered in the bracket at the end of each unit, both in the transcriptions and their corresponding translations. Then I offer some justifications for the transcriptions presented here as well as a preliminary analysis of the text.

2.1. The text from top down

**Interviewer:** nammuTe ammamaaryE, amma uNTaakki taryunna bhakshaNattinE ryucci kuuTutal aayiryikkum [01], kaaryaNam sneeham ennE parayunna masaala kuuTi atilE ceerkkum [02]. laaleeTTanE amma viLampi taryunna bhakshaNam aaNoo, bhaarya viLampi taryunna bhakshaNam aaNoo, kuuTutal iSTam [03].

‘Our moms, foods made and given by the mother will be more delicious [01], because a spice called love will also be added (to them) [02]. Do you like foods served by the mother more, or foods served by the wife more [03]?’

**Interviewee:** amma ennE parayunnatE namukkoryu veeroryu taryattil ryiples ceyyaan vayaata kaaryam aaNE [04]. aaryE bhakshaNam nannaayi viLampi tannaalum, sneehattooTe viLampi tannaalum, atinE suaaduNTaakum [05]. bhaarya ennE parayunna oryu koNseptE ammayaayiTTE maaraam, allee [06]? oryu sahooTeryiayiTTE maaraam [07]. oryupaTTE ryifikleshEns uLLayaaLaaNE bhaarya parayunnatE [08]. amma ennE parayunnnavykkE atillokke mukeLil uLLa oryu staanam aaNE [09]. bhaarya viLampi taryunna bhakshaNattinE veeroryu suaadE, amma viLampi taryunnatinE veeroryu suaadE [10]. ennee enikkEy parayaan parru oLLu [11]. iSTam nalla, aaryE nannaayiTTE bhakshaNam viLampi tannaalum, enikkEy iSTam aaNE [12]. atiE amma bhaarya ennulla vyatyaasam onnumilla [13].

‘What we call “mother” is something that cannot be replaced in any other way [04]. Whoever serves foods well, serves (them) with love, they (i.e. foods) will have a good taste [05]. A concept called “wife” can become like “mother”, can’t it [06]? (It) can become like “sister” [07]. The one called “wife” is a person who has many reflections [08]. What those called “mother” have is a position above all those (i.e. reflections) [09]. Foods served by the wife have one good taste; those served by the mother have another good taste [10]. I can only say
like that [11]. (I) like, I like whoever serves and gives foods well [12]. In those (i.e. foods) there isn’t any difference between the mother and the wife [13].’

**Interviewer:** laaleeTTanE eerravum iSTappeTTa bhakshaNam eetaaNE [14]?

‘Which is your most-liked food [14]?’

**Interviewee:** alla, ii test ennE parayunnatE nammaL develeopytE eTutta oryu kaaryamaaNallee [15]? nyaan, enre vitiIl aadyam kaRiccE shiliicca aahaaryangngaL tanneyaairyikkyum, enre testbdsiiloo allel enre memoryiloo, enikkyE taalparyam uLLatE [16]. nammaL peTTenE aaloojikkyumppooL, namukkE coorum allenkgil ryaisil uNTaakunna oryupaaaTTE kaaryangngaLum iSTamaairyikkyum, allel [17]? ipo, bryekfEstiE iTili kaRikkyunmatE iSTamaaicryikkyaaL, allel dosha, angngane oLLa kaaryangngaLokke [18]. oryupaekshe purattE pookumppooL, oryu cenjinE allengkil oryu maarrangngaLkkE veenNTiyiTTE onnoo ryaNToo divisangngaL kaRikkyaan [19]. ennatoLLatalalaate [20]. nammuTe sisrrEvumaayiTTE inangngi ceeryniryikkyunna, ii aryi ennE parayunna, ryais aayiTTuLLa, atE angngane uLLa kaaryangngaLaaNE namukkE kuutTaul iSTam [21], pinne, enikkyE oryupaatTTE kuutTTaan kuutTTiyiTTE bhakshaNam kaRikkyunmatE iSTamaaNE, alle [22]? atE nanvejityiyenaaayalaum, vejityiyenokkeayayalaum [23]. pakshe kuraccE naLaayiTTE namukkE ii vejityiyen ennE parayumnattinoote oryu taalparyam kuutTum [24]. nanvejityiyenokke kurakkyaan oLLa oryu sramattilaNE [25]. kuutTatalum ryaisbest aayiTTuLa kaaryangngaLkkaaNE enikkyE taalparyam [26].

‘Well, what is called “taste” is really a thing we certainly developed (over time), isn’t it [15]? I, what I have interest in is (usually) only foods that I first used to eat at home, (whether) in my taste buds or in my memory [16]. When we think quickly, we (usually) like cooked rice or many things made of rice, don’t we [17]? For instance, for breakfast (we) might like eating the idli or dosa, and all things like that [18]. Maybe when (we) go out, to have a change, or a “maarram” if you will, (we) might eat (something else) for one or two days [19]. There is nothing more than that [20]. What we like more is things which get along (well) with our (digestive) system, which are called “aryi”, which have rice (in them), (and) which have something like that [21]. And then I like eating food with many dishes, don’t I [22]? Whether that is non-vegetarian or (that) is all vegetarian [23]. But in the (past) few days our interest towards what is called vegetarian (food) has increased [24]. (We) are in an attempt to reduce non-vegetarian (food) [25]. What I am interested in are things that have more rice-based (stuff) [26].
'To the Malayali, Onam songs are what is preferred every day [27]. Similarly, when you think of Onam, which Onam song comes to your mind first [28]?'

'I know many songs I sang in the cinema [29]. In the song “ooNapuwe puuve puuve” enNE paaTTE, atiEL koree oryu saahityam uNTE [30]. atE ente oryupaatTE kaaryangngaL [31]. nyEn pinne pala steejukaLil aa paaTTE paaTiTTuunte [32]. pinne namukke ottiyi paaTTukaLillee [33]? “kTTanaTn kunjayile” angngane kuree ooNapaaTTukaL enne parannyiTTE [34]. ippam ii ooNam aTu- aTuKuntoorum, ippo oryu valiya oryu ooNapaaTTukaLuTe samhaarya- samaaharyam [35]. suyreykkEy parayeeNTatE [36]. samaaharyam unTaakkille [37]? oryupaatTE peeryE ooNattine kuriiccuLLa paaTTukaL eRutaan tuTangngunnu [38]. ippam kaRiyumpoopooL atellaam marakum [39]. apparyatteykkEy veere oryu festiveL vannu [40]. atine kuriicce paaTTukaL eRuti [41]. kaaryangngaLyileekkyE poovukeyaaNE [42]. ippo atE oryu festiveL enne parayunnaTE oryu valiya bisnisayiTTE angngE maarunnu, ooNaccanrakLaayi, murratte kaaryangngaLaayi [43]. pakshe ooNapaaTTukaLil peTTennE enikkyE manassil varyunnatE ii ooNampuuve enna daseeTTan paaTiya paaTTaaNE [44].

2.2. Justifications for the transcriptions

The transcriptions presented here are by and large phonemic. Taking the first word in the text for example, nammuTe ‘our (inclusive)’ would be rendered as nammuDe (i.e. [ŋəmmude]) had it been transcribed phonetically. However, since there is a general phonological rule in Malayalam whereby voiceless singleton plosives are voiced at the intervocalic position, a
phonemic transcription helps to distinguish minimal pairs like *mantan* ‘foolish one’ and *mandan* ‘slow one’; otherwise both would be realized as *mandan* (i.e. [maŋdan]) under a phonetic transcription (see Mohanan & Mohanan (1984: 599) for details).

Similarly, although both the alveolar plosive [t] and alveolar nasal [n] can be found at the phonetic level, their transcriptions are rendered at the phonemic level. According to Mohanan & Mohanan (1984: 581), [t] only occurs as a geminate or is preceded by the alveolar nasal. Moreover, /tː/ is realized as [tt] when undergoing gemination (e.g. *aarE* ‘river’ vs. *aattil* ‘in the river’). Also important is the fact that there are no morpheme-internal [rr] sequences at the phonetic level. Accordingly, Mohanan & Mohanan (*ibid.*) consider the underlying form of [tt] to be /rr/ and thus that of its singleton counterpart [t] to be /r/. Following their analysis, I transcribed words like [eːttaʋum] as *eerravum* ‘most’ and [ende] as *enre* ‘my’. Note that the sequences of /r/ plus vowels would not be ambiguous. Wherever the sequences follow the alveolar nasal, /r/ is realized as [d] (“first” as [t] and “then” [d] due to the voicing effect at the intervocalic position); otherwise it is always realized as [r] elsewhere. As for the alveolar nasal, Mohanan & Mohanan (*ibid.*: 582) again point out that the singleton dental and alveolar nasal are in complementary distribution: [ɲ] occurs morpheme-initially while [n] morpheme-finally and intervocically. Thus, I used the symbol *n* to transcribe both [ɲ] and [n]. Most importantly, subsuming [t] under /r/ and [n] under /n/ give rise to an elegant phonemic inventory which would otherwise contain two “aberrant” alveolar stops (i.e. the plosive [t] and the nasal [n]).

I said the transcriptions are “by and large” phonemic because in some cases they are rather phonetic when they could have been more phonemic (i.e. more abstract) given the general phonological rules in Malayalam. To achieve a maximal descriptive economy, Mohanan & Mohanan (1984: 596) propose to subsume [ɲ], [ŋ], and [ŋ] all under /N/, whose place of articulation is unspecified and determined by the following stop. For instance, the underlying form of [aŋjə] ‘five’ could be postulated as /aNC/ (where /c/ determines /N/ is realized as [ŋ]) and that of [pangajam] ‘lotus’ as /paNkajam/ (where /k/ determines /N/ is realized as [ŋ]). Elegant as this proposal is, I chose to specify in my transcriptions the place of articulation for nasals (except for the contrast between dentals and alveolars for the reasons stated above). The decision was motivated by two reasons. For one, I would like to strike an (admittedly somewhat arbitrary) balance between descriptive economy and the level of abstractions. For the other, keeping nasals like [ɲ] and [ŋ] at the phonemic level leads to a balanced phonemic inventory in which where there is a plosive there is a corresponding nasal at the same place of articulation.

Another aspect where my transcriptions are not strictly phonemic has to with palatals stops. Mohanan & Mohanan (1984: 585) propose a palatalization rule where all surface palatal stops (such as [kʲ], [kʲʰ], [ɡʲ], [ɡʲʰ], and [ŋʲ]) derive from velar ones followed by front vowels. So the dative suffix as in [magaŋkkə] ‘to the daughter’ and [kudŋikkə] ‘to the child’ can both be rendered as */kkə/ at the phonemic level. However, the fact is much more complicated than the
palatalization rule reveals. As Mohanan & Mohanan admit, “[p]alatalization applies in monomorphemic words, with numerous lexical exceptions. It applies across affixal junctures in causatives, verbalizers, and datives, but not in plurals and across compound junctures” (ibid.: 588; italics mine). On top of this, palatalization is also subject to “a number of idiosyncratic dialectal and idiolectal variations” (ibid.: note 23). Given these numerous exceptions and idiosyncracies that block the application of the palatalization rule⁸, I found it more desirable to specify the palatalization at the lexical level. Thus, in my transcriptions palatal stops are rendered by their corresponding velar stops followed by the symbol y. For instance, [kaʃikːuga] ‘to eat’ is transcribed as kaRikkyuka, where “kky” represents [kkʲ].

2.3. Preliminary analysis

At glimpse of the text, one of the features that stand out is Mohanlal’s frequent use of English loan words. In less than three minutes, he used 18 different English loan words, four of which were used twice⁹. As shown by boldface in the text, these loan words include “replace, develop, concept, reflections, change, memory, taste, taste buds, rice, rice-based, vegetarian, non-vegetarian, breakfast, cinema, stage, festival, system, business.” Judging from semantics, the use of loan words may be explained by the lack of corresponding native words, such as “breakfast, cinema, business, system” This explanation, however, does not account for all the data. For instance, of all the loan words used, English “rice” would be the last to be used given the fact that Malayalam makes finer lexical distinctions of rice (i.e. rice in the field, raw rice, and cooked rice) than English does. Despite this, “rice” was used twice. A more interesting case is found in [19], where Mohanlal first used English “change” and then immediately switched to its Malayalam counterpart (i.e. maarram ‘change’). This seems to suggest that English loan words might be quite common in spoken Malayalam and that using loan words is more a matter of style (conditioned by sociolinguistic factors) than a matter of lack of lexical items.

In terms of morphosyntax, an interesting observation is that loan words are used as nouns in Malayalam even when their English sources are verbs. As [04] and [15] illustrate, English verbs like “replace” and “develop”, when borrowed into Malayalam, function as the nominal object of the verb ceyyuka ‘to do’. So “to replace” is literally “to do replace” and “to develop” “to do develop”. This “loan word plus ceyyuka” seems quite established, and the loan word does not even have to be a verb. For instance, on ceyyuka means “to turn on (e.g. the light)”.

Moreover, English words are not simply borrowed and used without any change (aside from phonotactic changes); instead they are marked for case and plurality (among others), merging well with the Malayalam morphosyntax. For instance, ryaisil in [17] and bryekfEstinE in [18]

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⁸ To account for the complicated cases where the application rule does not apply, Mohanan & Mohanan (1984) have to posit four strata in which different phonological rules are applied under certain circumstances.
⁹ That is if “rice” and “rice-based”, “taste” and “taste buds”, “vegetarian” and “non-vegetarian” are all counted as “different words”.
are marked for locative and dative case respectively. The marking of plurality is a bit tricky since it is sometimes expressed by English -s (e.g. ryifleksEns in [8]) and sometimes by Malayalam -kal (e.g. steejukaLil in [32]). More data are needed in order to find out why some English nouns are borrowed as plural forms (i.e. those having English -s) while others are borrowed as singular forms and then undergo native pluralization (i.e. those having Malayalam -kaL).

3. A worm’s-eye view of the text

To complement a bird’s-eye view, in this section I present a worm’s-eye view of the text, i.e. a view of the text from bottom up. The text, again chunked into 44 syntactic units, takes the form of three interlinear tiers, namely, a text tier, a morpheme-by-morpheme tier, and a glossing tier. Transcriptions on the text tier are “by and large” phonemic, just like those in the previous section. Transcriptions on the morpheme-by-morpheme tier, however, are intended to be on a level similar to a morphophonemic one, that is, more abstract than those on the text tier. These two levels of transcriptions differ in one crucial way: while the text transcriptions reflect all phonological changes (except intervocalic voicing for the reason stated above), the morpheme-by-morpheme transcriptions generalize those changes to “underlying” forms so that the same morpheme always bears the same form on this level. For instance, the plural suffix -kal is assimilated to -ngaL when followed by a nasal. Hence, the plural form of divasam ‘day’ is transcribed as divasang-ngaL on the phonemic level, but as divasam-kal on the morphophonemic level, indicating that -kal is the underlying form of -ngaL. This morphophonemic level of transcription is analogous to the plural form in English orthography, where -s is used to transcribe at least three allomorphs.

I put “underlying” in a quotation mark because it deserves some qualifications since it is not always the underlying form that is transcribed on the morpheme-by-morpheme tier. Two conspicuous examples are worth mentioning here. First, there are nominal stems whose endings alternate between /m/ and /tt/, depending on whether they are suffixed by case markers or not. So the word for “food” is bhakshaNam in the citation form (which is also the nominative form), but when suffixed by the dative marker -inE it alternates to bhakshaNattinE. Since the /m/-/tt/ alternation is neither conditioned by phonology (at least synchronically) nor motivated in phonology, it makes little sense to ask which form is the “underlying” one. In cases like this, the citation form (i.e. /m/) is given on the morphophonemic level. Second, there is another alternation that happens between /u/ and /E/. For instance, the word for “song” is paaTT in singular but paaTTukaL in plural, and the imperfective finite past tense form of “to eat” is kaRicc, but its converbal form is either or kaRiccE or kaRiccE. Since the citation form for

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10 Aside from a velar assimilated to the manner of articulation of its preceding nasal, a nasal is also assimilated to the place of articulation of its following stop in this example.
11 In other words, the past tense form and converbal form can be identical. However, the /E/ ending is preferred
nouns is the /E/ ending whereas that for finite verbs is the /u/ ending, it is hard to decide whether /E/ or /u/ is the “underlying” form (if there is one). Thus, in cases like this the citation form is given on morphophonemic level, that is, /E/ for nouns and /u/ for verbs.

After presenting the text, I offer some justifications for the glossing and then a linguistic analysis of the morphosyntax observed in the text.

3.1. The text from bottom up

Onam.01
nammuTe ammamaaryE, amma uNTaakki taryunna bhakshaNattinE
nammuTe amma-maary-E amna uNTaakki tary-unnu-a bhakshaNam-inE
1PL.INC.GEN mom-HON.PL-DAT mother make.CV B give-PRS-ATTR food-DAT

ryucci kuuTutal aayiryikkyum.
ryucci kuuTutal aayiryikky-um
more
COPI-FUT
‘Our moms, foods made and given by the mother will be more delicious’

Onam.02
kaaryaNam sneedham ennE parayunna masaala
kaaryaNam sneedham ennE paray-unnu-a masaala
because love QUOT call-PRS-ATTR spice

kuuTi atilE ceerkkum.
kuuTi atE-il-E ceerkk-um
also that-LOC-DAT add-FUT
‘because a spice called love will also be added (to them).’

Onam.03
laaleeTtanE amma vilampi taryunna bhakshaNam aaNoo,
laal-ceedTan-E amna vilampi tary-unnua bhakshaNam aaNE=oo
PN-older.brother-DAT mother serve.CV B give-PRS-ATTR food COP1.PRS=COORD

bharya vilampi taryunna bhakshaNam aaNoo,
bharya vilampi tary-unnu-a bhakshaNam aaNE=oo
wife serve.CV B give-PRS-ATTR food COP1.PRS=COORD

kuuTutal iSTam?
kuuTutal iSTam
more liking
‘Do you (lit. Brother Laal) like foods served by the mother more, or foods served by the wife more?’

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for the converbal form in most cases.
What we call “mother” is something that cannot be replaced in any other way.

Whoever serves foods well, serves (them) with love, they (i.e. foods) will have a good taste.

A concept called “wife” can become like “mother”, can’t it?

The one called “wife” is a person who has many reflections.

What those called “mother” have is a position above all those (i.e. reflections).
Onam.10

bharya viLampi taryunnyu bhakshaNam inE veeroryu suaadE.
bhya viLampi tary-unnu-a bhakshaNam inE veere-oryu suaadE
wife serve.CVB give-PRS-ATTR food-DAT other-one good.taste

amma viLampi taryummatinE veeroryu suaadE.
amma viLampi tary-unnu-a-tE inE veere-oryu suaadE
mother serve.CVB give-PRS-ATTR-NMZ-DAT other-one good.taste

‘Foods served by the wife have one good taste; those served by the mother have another good taste.’

Onam.11

enmE=ee enikkyE parayaan parru=ooLLu.
enmE=EMPH enikkyE paray-aan parru=ooLLu
‘I can only say like that.’ (i.e. ‘That’s all I can say about it.’)

Onam.12

iSTam nalla aaryE nannaayiITTE bhakshaNam viLampi
iSTam nalla aaryE nannaayiITTE bhakshaNam viLampi
liking good who well-PFV food serve.CVB

‘(I) like, I like whoever serves and gives foods well.’

Onam.13

attE amma bharya ennella vyatsyaam omnumilla.
atE-il E amma bharya ennella vyatsyaam omnumilla
that-LOC-DAT mother wife like.that difference anything-NEG.EX.

‘In those (i.e. foods) there isn’t any difference between the mother and the wife.’

Onam.14

laaleeTTanE eerravum iSTappeTTa bhakshaNam eetaaNE?
laal-ceeTTanE eerravum iST-appetTu-a bhakshaNam eet=aaNE
PN-old brother-DAT most like-PASS.PST-ATTR food which=COP1.PRS

‘Which is your (lit. Brother Laal) most-liked food?’

Onam.15

alla, iit test ennE parayummataE nannaL developeyiE
testa ii test ennE paray-unnu-a-tE nannaL develop-ceytu
NEG.COP1.PRS this taste QUOT call-PRS-ATTR-NMZ IPL.NC.NOM develop-do.CVB

eTutta oryu kaaryamaaNaalee?
eTutta-a oryu kaaryam=aaNE=alla=ee
take.PST-ATTR one thing=COP1.PRS=NEG.COP1.PRS=NEG.Q

‘Well, what is called “taste” is a thing we certainly developed (over time), isn’t it?’
Onam.16

nyaa,  enre  viiTil  aadyam  kaRiccE  shiilicca  aahaaryangngaL
nyaan  enre  viiT-IL  aadyam  kaRiccu  shiiliccu-a  aahaaryam-kaL
1SG.NOM  1SG.GEN  house-LOC  first  eat.CVB  accustom,PST-ATTR  food-PL

tamneayiriyyikyum,  enre  testbadsiloo  allel  enre
only=COPI-HAB  1SG.GEN  taste.bud-LOC=COORD  or  1SG.GEN

memoryiloo,  enikkyE  taalparyam  uLLatE.
memory-LOC=COORD  enikkE  taalparyam  uLLu-a-tE
1SG.DAT  interest  EX.PRS-ATTR-NMZ
‘I, what I have interest in is (usually) only foods that I first used to eat at home, (whether) in my
taste buds or in my memory.’

Onam.17

nammaL  peTTenE  aalooyikkyumppool,  namukkE  cooruum
nammaL  peTTenE  aalooyikky-umu-ppoolL  namukkE  coorE=um
1PL.INC.NOM  quickly  think-HAB-when  1PL.INC.DAT  cooked.rice=COORD

allengkil  ryaisal  uNTaaknumma  oryupaaTTE  kaarryangngaLum
or  rice-LOC  make-PRS-ATTR  many  kaarryam-kaL=um

iSTamaayiriyyikyum,  allee?
iSTam=ayiriyyik-um  alla=ee
liking=COPI-HAB  NEG.COPI.PRS=NEG,Q
‘When we think quickly, we (usually) like cooked rice or many things made of rice, don’t we?’

Onam.18

ipo,  bryekfEstine  iTili  kaRikkyummatE  iSTamaayiriyyikyaam.
ipo  bryekfEst-inE  iTili  kaRikky-unnu-a-tE  iSTam=ayiriyyik-yaam
for.instance  breakfast-DAT  idli  eat-PRS-ATTR-NMZ  liking=COPI-POT

allel  dosha,  amngane  oLLa  kaaryangngaLokke.
allel  dosha  angane  uLLu-a  kaaryam-kaL-okke
or  dosa  like.that  EX.PRS-ATTR  thing-PL-all
‘For instance, for breakfast (we) might like eating the idli or dosa, (and) all things like that.’

Onam.19

oryupakshe  puratte  pookumppool,  oryu  cenjinE  allengkil
oryupakshe  purum-E  pook-um-ppoolL  oryu  cen-jinE  alla-engkil
maybe  outside-DAT  go-HAB-when  one  change-DAT  NEG.COPI.PRS-COND2

oryu  maarrangngaLkkE  veeNTiTTE  omnoo
oryu  maarram-kaL-kkE  veeNTi-TTE  onnE=oo
one  change-PL-DAT  intend.CVB-PFV  one=COORD

ryaNToo  divisangngaL  kaRikkyaam.
ryaNT=oo  divisam-kaL  kaRikky-yaam
two=COORD  day-PL  eat-POT
‘Maybe when (we) go out, to have a change, or a “maarram” if you will, (we) might eat
(something else) for one or two days.’
Onam.20

emoaLLatallaate.
ennE-ullu-a-te-allaate
 QUOT-EX.PRS-ATTR-NMZ-except
 ‘That’s it. (lit. It) isn’t (anything) other than that.’

Onam.21

nammuTe sisrEvumaayiTTE inangngi ceerynnyiikkynna, ii aryi
nammuTe sisrE=um=aayi-iTTE inang ceerynnu=irikkyy-unmu-a ii aryi
1PL.INC.GEN system=UQ=COP2.CVb-PFV befriend.CVb
join.CVb=si-te-PRS-ATTR this rice

ennE parayuma, ryais aayiITTuLLa, atE angngane
ennE paray-unmu-a ryais aayi-iTTE-ullu-a atE angane
QUOT call-PRS-ATTR rice COP2.CVb-PFV-EX.PRS-ATTR that like.that

uLLa kaaryangngaLaaNE namukkE kuUTuTaI iSTam.
uLLu-a kaaryam-kLa=aaNNE namukkE kuUTuTaI iSTam
EX.PRS-ATTR thing-PL=COPl.PRS 1PL.INC.DAT more liking

‘What we like more is things which get along (well) with our (digestive) system, which are
called “aryl”, which have rice in (them), (and) which have something like that.’

Onam.22

pinne, enikkE oryupaATTE kuUTaam kuUTTiiTTE bhakshaNam
pinne enikkE oryupaATTE kuUTaam kuUTTii-iTTE bhakshaNam
and.then 1SG.DAT many dish carry.CVb-PFV food

kaRikkynmaaE iSTamnaaNE, allee?
kaRikkky-unmu-a-te iSTam=aaNNE alla=ee
eat-PRS-ATTR-NMZ liking=COPl.PRS NEG.COPl.PRS=NEG.Q

‘And then I like eating food with many dishes, don’t I?’

Onam.23

atE narnwejiriyiynaayiNm, vejiriyiynokke aayaahum.
atE narnwejiriyiyna=aayi-aal=um vejiriyiynokke aayi-aal=um
that non-vegetarian=COP2.PST-COND1=UQ vegetarian-all COP2.PST-COND1=UQ

‘Whether that is non-vegetarian or (that) is all vegetarian.’

Onam.24

pakshe kuraccE naLaayiTTE namukkE ii vejiriyiyn ennE
pakshe kuraccE naLE=aayi-iTTE namukkE ii vejiriyiyn ennE
but some day=COP2.CVb-PFV 1PL.INC.DAT this vegetarian QUOT

parayummatinooATTE oryu taalparyam kuUTaam.
paray-unmu-a-te-mooTE oryu taalparyam kuUTaam
call-PRS-ATTR-NMZ-SOC one interest increase-HAB

‘But in the (past) few days our interest towards what is called vegetarian (food) has increased.’
Onam.25

nanvejiyeryenokke kurakkyaan oLLa oryu sramattleaNE.
nanvejiyeryen-okke kurakky-aaN uLLu-a oryu sramann-il=aaNE
non-vegetarian-all reduce-INF2 EX.PRS-ATTR one attempt-LOC=COPI.PRS
‘(We) are in an attempt to reduce all non-vegetarian (food).’

Onam.26

kunTutalum ryaisbest aayiTTuLLa kaaryangngaLkkaaNE
kunTutal=um ryaisbest aayi-i-TTE=uLLu-a kaaryam-kaL-kkE=aaNE
more=UQ rice-based COP2.CVB-PFV=EX.PRS-ATTR thing-PL-DAT=COPI.PRS
enikkyE taalparyam.
enikkE taalparyam
1SG.DAT interest
‘What I am interested in are things that have more rice-based (stuff).’

Onam.27

malayalikkyE ennum priyappeTTaanaNE ooNapaaTTukaL.
malayalik-kkE ennum priy-appeTTu-a-tE=aaNE ooNap-paaTTE-kaL
Malayali-DAT every.day prefer-PASS.PST-ATTR-NMZ=COPI.PRS Onam-song-PL
‘To the Malayali, Onam songs are what is preferred every day.’

Onam.28

atEppooLe, laaleeTTaanE ooNam emE manassil varyunuppooL.
atEppooLe laal-ceeTTan-E ooNam emE manassE-il vary-un-ppool
similarly PN-older.brother-DAT Onam QUOT mind-LOC come-HAB-when

eerrar aadyma ooryyma varyunma ooNapaattTeetaaNE?
eerrar aadyma ooryyma vary-unuma ooNam-paaTTE=eee=aaNE
best firstly memory come-PASS-ATTR Onam-song=which=COPI.PRS
‘Similarly, when you think of Onam, which Onam song comes to your mind first?’

Onam.29

sinimayile nyaan oryuppaaTT paaTiya paaTTartyaan.
sinimayil-E nyaan oryuppaaTT paaTi-a paaTTar-ry-aam
cinema-LOC-DAT 1SG.NOM many sing.PASS-ATTR song=know-POT
‘(I) know many songs I sang in the cinema.’

Onam.30

“ooNapruee pruee pruee” emE paaTTE, atilE koree oryu
ooNam-prueE-e prueE-e prueE-e emE paaTTE atE-il-E kuree oryu
Onam-flower-ACC flower-ACC flower-ACC QUOT song that-LOC-DAT many one

saahityam uNTE.
saahityam uNTE
lyrics EX
‘In the song “Onam flower, flower, flower” there are many lyrics.’
Onam.31

atE enre oryupaTTE kaaryangugaL.
atE enre oryupaTTE kaaryam-kaL

that 1SG.GEN many thing-PL

‘(It has) many of my things.’

Onam.32

nyaan pinne pala steejukaLiL aa paaTTE paaTiiTUuNTe.
yyaN.NOM pinne pala steej-kaL-il aa paaTTE paaTiiTUuNTe=UuNTe

1SG.NOM and then various stage-PL-LOC that song sing.CVB-PFV=EX

‘And then on various stages I have sung that song.’

Onam.33

pinne namukkE oittiyyi paaTTukaLillee?
pinne namukkE oittiyyi paaTTE-kaL=illa=ee

and then 1PL.INC.DAT many song-PL=NEG.EX.PRS=NEG.Q

‘And then don’t we have many songs?’

Onam.34

"kuTTanaaTu kunjyayile" angngane kuree ooNapaaTTukaL ennE paranyynyitTE.
kuTTanaaTu kunjyayile angane kuree ooNam-paaTTE-kaL ennE paranyynyu-itTE

PN PN like that many Onam-song-PL QUOT call.PST-PFV

‘Many (songs) like “kuTTanaaTu kunjyayile” have been called Onam songs.’

Onam.35

ippam ii ooNam aTuka-t aTukuntoorum, ippoo oryuu vaiya oryu
ippam ii ooNam aTuka-t aTukuntoorum ippoo oryuu vaiya oryu

now this Onam FS approach-SBRED now one big one

ooNapaaTTukaLuTe samhaarya- samaaharyam.
ooNam-paaTTE-kaLU Te samhaarya- samaaharyam

Onam-song-PL-GEN FS collection

‘Now as this Onam is coming closer, now there is a big, a destruct- collection of Onam songs.’

Onam.36

samhaaryaam ennNE sheryikkyE parayeeNTaTE.
samhaaryaam ennE-aaNNE sheryikkyE paray-eenTE-a-tE
destruction QUOT-COP1.PRS actually say-NEC-ATTR-NMZ

‘What (I) need to say is actually “samhaaryaam” (i.e. destruction).’

Onam.37

samaaharyam uNTaakkillee?
samaaharyam uNTaakk=illa=ee
collection make=NEG.EX.PRS=NEG.Q

‘Don’t (people) make collections?’
Onam.38
oryupaattE peeryE ooNattine kuriccuLLa paaTTukaL
oryupaattE peeryE ooNam-ine kuriccu-ullu-a paaTTE-kaL
many person Onam-ACC concern.CVB-EX.PRS-ATTR song-PL

eRutaam tuTanggnyunu.
eRut-aam tuTang-imnu
write-INV2 start-PRS
‘Many people start writing songs about Onam.’

Onam.39
ooNam kaRiyumpooL, atellaam marakum.
OOnam kaRiy-um-pooL atE-ellaam marak-un
Onam pass-HAB-when that-all forget-HAB
‘When Onam passes, (people) forget all those (songs).’

Onam.40
apparyatteyykkEy veere oryu festiveL vamnu.
apparyatteyykkEy veere oryu festiveL vamnu
then other one festival come.PST
‘Then another festival came.’

Onam.41
atine kuriccE paaTTukaL eRuti.
atE-ine kuriccE paaTTE-kaL eRuti
that-ACC concern.CVB song-PL write.PST
‘People wrote songs about that.’

Onam.42
kaaryangugaLyileekkyE poovukeyaanaE.
kaaryam-kaL-il=ee-kkE poov-uoka=aaNE
thing-PL-LOC=EMPH-DAT go-INF1=COP1.PRS
‘They are doing (lit. going to) things (like that).’

Onam.43
appo atE oryu festiveL ennE parayummate oryu vallya
appo atE oryu festiveL ennE paray-umu-a-tE ryu vallya
then that one festival QUOT call-PRS-ATTR-NMZ one big

bisntsaayiTTE angnE maarunu,
bisnis=aayi-iTTE angE maar-umu
business=COP2.CVB-PFV like.that become-PRS

ooNaccanrakaLaayi, murratte kaaryangugaLaayi.
ooNam-caan=kal.=aayi murram-e kaaryam-kaL=aayi
Onam-market-PL=COP2.CVB front.porch-ACC thing-PL=COP2.CVB
‘Then that so-called festival becomes like a big business, (such as) Onam markets (and) things for the front porch (i.e. Onam flowers).’
3.2. Justifications for the glossing

As is the case for transcriptions, it can be a thorny issue as to what levels of abstraction should be arrived at for the glossing. There are two extreme approaches. One is to completely go by forms, namely, to gloss a morpheme the same way regardless of its meanings or functions in the context where it occurs. This form-based approach is often adopted when it comes to glossing case markers, which crosslinguistically tend to assume multiple functions (see Haspelmath 2009 for discussions on the glossing of case markers). The other extreme is to completely go by functions, namely, to gloss a morpheme based on the meanings or functions it assumes in the context where it occurs. This function-based approach can be useful in glossing morphemes which have too general functions that their meanings would seem opaque if glossed the same way across the board. Obviously, both approaches have drawbacks of their own. While the form-based approach can sometimes veil the meanings of a morpheme in certain context (e.g. what does dative on temporal or abstract nouns mean?), the function-based approach results into enumeration of seemingly unrelated glosses that could have gone by the same name.

Considering the pros and cons of these two extreme approaches, I adopted a mixture of the two, with probably more weight put on the form-based approach. The purpose here is to provide glosses that are as fine-grained as possible. To this end, a phonological unit on the text tier was decomposed, to the best of my knowledge, on the morpheme-by-morpheme tier to the degree that further decomposition would make no sense. For instance, *oryupakshe* ‘maybe’ in Onam.19 could have been decomposed into *oryu* ‘one’ and *pakshe* ‘but’, but it seems difficult (at least to me) to derive the meaning “maybe” from “one” and “but”. So I left it as it is. On the other hand, *allengkil* again from Onam.19 could have been glossed simply as “or” (which is the meaning given by the consultant) instead of being broken into *alla* ‘NEG.COP1’ and *-engkil* ‘COND2’. However, I opted for the decomposition route because I found the literal interpretation “if not” fits as equally well in Onam.19 as “or”, at least logically speaking.
In addition, some remarks are necessary regarding the glossing of the imperfective finite past tense form (which always ends with /u/) and the converbal form (which ends with either /u/ or /E/). Jayaseelan (2005) convincingly shows that the converbal form should be treated as functionally distinct from the imperfective finite past tense form, in spite of their formal identity, because the former can also co-occur with finite future and past tense in the serial verb construction. Due to this, I adopted the function-based approach and glossed some forms as CVB for converbs and others as PST for imperfective finite past tense, depending on the context.

Furthermore, there is evidence that some postpositions in Malayalam historically evolve from converbs, thus sharing the same form with converbs. So to make this historical development clear, I glossed all postposition-like forms as converbs wherever possible. For instance, kuriccE in Onam.41, which could have been glossed simply as “about”, was glossed as “concern.CVB” for it shows a structural identity with converbs in general. Note that the distinction between postpositions and converbs is not discrete and clear-cut, but instead is a matter of degree on a continuum. Some postpositions/converbs may have their finite counterparts, but this is not always the case. While kaRinynyE ‘pass.CVB’ (or simply ‘after’) and its finite present tense counterpart kaRiyunnu ‘pass.PRS’ are both acceptable forms, kurikkyunnu, the potential finite present tense counterpart of kuriccE “concern.CVB” (or simply “about”), is not acceptable.

Finally, the morpheme -iTTE is quite common in the text and its gloss “PFV” might not seem straightforward from the context, so a justification is needed. Admittedly, there is little (if at all any) perfective meaning in bisnisaayiTTE of Onam.43. In fact, Onam.43 would still be acceptable and mean roughly the same if -iTTE had not been used, as is the case in ooNaccanrakaLaayi and kaaryangngaLaayi from the same clause. However, the evidence for -iTTE indicating a perfective meaning comes from minimal pairs like (1) and (2).

(1) nyaan paissa eNNi karyanyanyu.
   nyaan paissa eNNi karyanyanyu
   1SG.NOM money count.CVB cry.PST
   ‘I cried (while) counting the money.’ (Elicited)

(2) nyaan paissa eNNiiTTE karyanyanyu.
   nyaan paissa eNNi-iTTE karyanyanyu
   1SG.NOM money count.CVB-PFV cry.PST
   ‘I counted the money, and then cried.’ (Elicited)

While the events of counting and crying happen simultaneously in (1), the event of counting precedes that of crying in (2), with the only difference being the presence or absence of -iTTE. Nevertheless, it seems that this particular morpheme has grammaticalized to some extent since there are cases where its presence or absence does not make much difference in meanings, such as (3).
That is to say, the morpheme -iTTE synchronically may or may not mark perfectivity, depending on the context where it occurs. But to specify its role as a special morpheme and maintain the same gloss across the board, I glossed it as “PFV” irrespective of whether it in fact carries perfective meanings or not.

3.3. Linguistic analysis

Although the interlinear glossing per se is imbued with linguistic analyses, some conspicuous morphosyntactic features are still worthy of special mention. First, in terms of clausal word order verb-final is the entrenched trend, with only two kinds of exceptions. One has to do with the copula aaNE, as in Onam.08, where it occurs in the middle rather than at the end, thus separating two nominal phrases. Exceptions of this kind are understandable since they usually involve relatively long NPs, whose boundary would not be easy to demarcate were they put together without aaNE as a delimiting marker. The other kind of exceptions is so-called “verbless clauses”. For instance, there are no finite verbs in Onam.10, where two clauses share a parallel syntactic structure. This example may be considered an instance of what Mohanan & Mohanan (1999) call “doubly reduced cleft” construction, where both aaNE ‘COP1.PRS’ and uLLatE ‘EX.PRS.ATTR.NMLZ’ are omitted.

Next, the most common “relative clause strategy” is the use of adjectival participles, which can be either “present” or “past”. Descriptively speaking, the present participle is formed by substituting the /u/ in the finite present verb ending -unnu with the attributive morpheme -a

Accordingly, from taryunnu ‘give.PRS’ we get taryunna ‘give.PRS.ATTR’, as in Onam.01. Other examples include parayunna ‘call.PRS.ATTR’ in Onam.02, uNTaakunna ‘make.PRS.ATTR’ in Onam.16, and varyunna ‘come.PRS.ATTR’ in Onam.28. The past participle, on the other hand, is formed by suffixing the attributive morpheme -a to the finite past verb, which for the purpose of suffixation drops the final vowel if it ends with /u/ but keeps the final vowel if it ends with /i/. For instance, from paranynyu ‘call.PST’ we get paranynya ‘call.PST.ATTR’. There is only one instance of the past participle in the text, which is paaTiya ‘sing.PST.ATTR’ in Onam 29. Interestingly, not only a single verb, but also a series of verbs,

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12 This -a morpheme could have been glossed as PTCP for “participle” instead of ATTR for “attributive”. However, this morpheme is also found in many adjectives (e.g. nulla ‘good’, puthiya ‘new’, valiya ‘big’, paraya ‘old’, etc.), and it can also be suffixed to non-adjectival and non-verbal words like ennE ‘QUOT’, giving rise to enna, as in Onam.44. Thus, I found the term “attributive” better describes its general attributive function than “participle” does.

13 In cases where the finite past verb ends with /i/, it is -ya, an allomorph of -a, that is actually suffixed to it “on the surface”.

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can be turned into a participle and then function as an adjective (hence the term “adjectival participles”). In Onam.03, for instance, two adjacent verbs modify the noun bhakshaNam ‘food’. In cases like this, only the last verb has to be in the participial form, and the rest of the verb series (if there are more) remain in the converbal form, just as if they were in finite clauses. Moreover, not only internally there can be multiple verbs in a participial phrase, but externally there can be multiple participial phrases that occur in a row to modify the same nominal. An amazing example comes from Onam.21, where four participial phrases (headed by ceeryniriyikkyunna, parayunna, aayiTTuLLa, and uLLa) are used to modify the noun kaaryangngaL ‘things’.

Finally, a last feature quite characteristic of Malayalam morphosyntax is the so-called “dative construction”. Jayaseelan (2004) classifies instances of this construction in Malayalam into four “rough semantic rubrics”, namely, possession, experiencer, certain modals, and “know”-class verbs. All these types can be found in the text, except for the last one. In the possession type, the possessor is marked by dative and the possessum by nominative, as in Onam.33, where namukkE ‘1PL.INC.DAT’ is the possessor. The “possessor” in this type can be rather general and does not even have to be animate, as bhakshaNattinE ‘food.DAT’ in Onam.01 shows. In the experiencer type, the experiencer of some mental or physical state is marked by dative while the state is coded as a noun in nominative. As Onam.22 illustrates, enikkyE ‘1SG.DAT’ is the experiencer that undergoes the state of liking something, which is reified by the noun iSTam ‘liking’. In the “certain modal” type, the verb has some kind of modal meanings and the “notional subject” is marked by dative. For instance, in Onam.11 the “notional subject” is enikkyE ‘1SG.DAT’ and the modal verb is parru ‘can.CV’.

Among the many modals in Malayalam, -aam is of particular interest. According to Jayaseelan (2004: 233), “the modal -aam ‘may’ occurs in the dative construction when it has the meaning of ‘permission’, and in the nominative construction when it has the meaning of ‘possibility’.” The examples he used to illustrate this point are given in (4).

(4) The modal -aam (Jayaseelan 2004: 233; original format)

a. niηnaL-kkɔ pook-aam
   you.PL-DAT go-may
   ‘You may go.’ (I.e. ‘You have permission to go.’)

b. John caak-aam
   John die-may
   ‘John may die.’ (I.e. ‘It is possible that John will die.’)

However, there is an example in the text that does not seem to accord with Jayaseelan’s generalization above. In Onam.06, where the verb suffixed with the modal is maaraam ‘become.POT’, koNseptE ‘concept.DAT’ is marked in dative, but the “possibility” interpretation
appears more plausible than the “permission” interpretation, if the latter is even applicable in this context\textsuperscript{14}. This suggests that the semantics of -\textit{aam} is actually quite complex. As a matter of fact, the very same morpheme can also have a cohortative and imperative interpretation as illustrated in (5) and (6) respectively\textsuperscript{15}. Apparently, more data and work is needed in order to find out how the (possible/permissive) modal, cohortative, and imperative meanings are all instantiated by the morpheme -\textit{aam} and what other “potential” (no pun intended) functions it may undertake.

(5) \textit{namukkE paryipaaTikkyE oryu manikuury mumpE kaaNaam.}  
\textit{namukkE paryipaaTE-ikkyE oryu manikuury mumpE kaaN-aam}  
1PL.INC.DAT program-DAT one hour before see-HORT  
‘Let’s meet one hour before the program.’ (Elicited)

(6) \textit{ryaNTE puuccakaLe vaangngaam.}  
\textit{ryaNTE puucca-kaL-e vaang-aam}  
two cat-PL-ACC buy-IMP  
‘(You) buy two cats.’ (Elicited)

\textsuperscript{14} I found the term “modal” too general for -\textit{aam}, for it conveys only some special kinds of modal meanings. Thus, to incorporate the “possibility” and “permission” interpretation, I glossed -\textit{aam} as POT for potential.

\textsuperscript{15} Morphemes are assumed to be “the same” if they demonstrate the same distribution patterns.
References