

Visibility of Morphosyntactic Variations: A Study of Malabar Mappila Malayalam

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Abstract

The paper introduces the concept of 'visibility' of the linguistic variant and looks at how it influences language variation by examining the morphosyntactic variations in the discourses in Mappila Malayalam, a sociolect of Malayalam spoken by the Muslim community in Northern Kerala, India namely Mappilas. The study maps the variations in serial verb constructions, case marking, and the perfect aspect marker within the socio-historical context of Mappila Malayalam. The paper also develops towards a theoretical understanding of variation based on the visibility of the variants. Throughout, I observe the variants in Mappila Malayalam that contribute to a unique identity of the community and its extended variations. As such, I adopt a Labovian framework and included aspects of discourse analysis.

I advance the work on sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology by discussing the development of a progressive model of variation, while further evidencing that the structure of the variation and social factors conjointly promote further variation concurrently dependent on the visibility of the variant, while considering instances from Mappila Malayalam.

Keywords: Visibility, Variation, Morphosyntax, Mappila Malayalam, Linguistic Anthropology

Introduction

The Mappilas of Malabar is a Muslim community situated in the Malabar region of north Kerala, in Southern India, as one of the districts under British colonial rule. Malabar comprises six districts of present-day Kerala, within which, the majority of the Muslims in Kerala reside. The origin of Islam in the Malabar region largely emanates from with the early interactions of Arab traders, who entered the Malabar land and interacted with local women (Thurston 1909; Koya 1983; Miller 1992; Randathani 2007; Saidalavi 2017 et al.). At the time, the majority of the Islamic population were converts from the lower castes of the Hindu religion (Saidalavi 2017), who reacted to the caste discriminations and the caste hierarchy constituting the Hindu religion and society; here, Islam approached the local society with anti-caste and anti-hierarchy ideologies.

The visibility of the variant is itself predicated on the ways in which speakers of Mappila Malayalam, as one of the sociolects of Malayalam spoken by the Mappilas Muslim community in the Malabar region, identify with the variant, and also how speakers of other dialects and varieties also identify with the Mappila Malayalam variety. Malayalam is one of the prominent languages among Dravidian languages spoken in India, with a long-recorded history. It is used in the state of Kerala and the union territories of Lakshadweep and Puducherry (Mahé district), and is one of the 22 scheduled languages of India. Malayalam has many variations, the use of which is in accord with regional and social factors (Asher and Kumari 1997; Devy 2015). Similar to any other variation analysis, the visibility of variations in Mappila Malayalam among the speakers of a more general Malayalam is also defined by its phonological and lexical variation from the broader language umbrella. The variety comprises sub variations which exist non-symmetrically in size, distribution, and use.

Malabar Mappila Malayalam is a highly understudied variant, as the community has been historically quite insular, despite the massive attention that other languages and dialects throughout larger India have been afforded. Hence, the variety requires documenting and description, particularly through an ethnography.

In this paper, I investigate the visibility of three morphosyntactic variations in Malabar Mappila Malayalam (henceforth, Mappila Malayalam), and their influence on further variants of the language. Throughout the study, I define the concept of visibility in relation to linguistic variants, each of which covaries with the social and linguistic factors prevalent in the region. As such, the current study focuses on these morphosyntactic variations in Mappila Malayalam and some ways in which these variations are manifested in the changing dynamics predicated on a variety of social factors. As a central framework, I draw on the Labovian framework of variation, and extend this framework to the level of morphosyntax, to thus aid in the analysis of these variants.

As such, in the current study I also focus on variation through a sociohistorical lens, to examine the status of the variation in terms of visibility and popularity, ultimately attending

to the linguistic attitudes of this speech community and other surrounding speech communities. I stress that particular characteristic feature determine, or at least influence whether this morphosyntactic variety remains as a static variant or otherwise undergoes further variation. Ultimately, my analysis of speech events of Mappila Malayalam speakers leads to a mapping of the patterns of morphosyntactic variations in this sociolect.

I organize the paper as follows: In the second section, the Background section, I articulate the history and social factors that have influenced the shaping of modern Malabar Mappila Malayalam. I also begin to discuss the theoretical and analytical framework I include in this paper. In the third section, the Methodical Framework, I discuss my analytical method and how it becomes optimum as a framework for analyzing my data. In the fourth section, I analyze the data and discuss the characteristics of this variant. In the fifth section, the conclusion, I discuss the ramifications of the study, and suggest some ways for future progress on the analysis and understanding of the variant and other similar variants.

Background

Mappilas of Malabar and the development of Mappila Malayalam

Initially the term 'Mappila' was originally appropriated by people in Kerala to signify Jewish, Christian, as well as Muslim communities formed through interracial marriages in Kerala (Thurston 1909; Dale 1980). Later however, Mappila gradually came to reference only the Islamic community and its members in Malabar. Owing to the fact that the majority of Muslims in Malabar are addressed as Mappilas, this usage has created an impression of a homogeneous Muslim community in the region of Malabar (Lakshmi 2012), where the community largely attends Arabic education as part of its religious studies program. After the reformations and developments in the Mappila community, their migrations to Arab countries and trade relations with these countries forced an economic development in the region (Dale 1973; Osella and Osella 2008). Throughout, the articulation of the region's language variety as a variant distinctly different to others assisted in regional building, and hence regional identity as Mappilas during interethnic tensions within the conversion period. Among the set of dialects throughout the region respective to Malayalam, Mappila Malayalam has been identified as the possibly the most divergent sociolect in many aspects of the language (Asher and Kumari 1977; Namboothirippadu 1994; Devy 2015 et al.; amongst others), owing to the uniqueness of its linguistic and social properties and to its extensive cultural contact over the past several centuries with other groups and populations, both locally and with those at a distance.

Visibility and Variation

The social and political factors described above are adequate for the selection of a sociolinguistic analysis of the data I have gathered on the community. This data has emerged

over a long term ethnography, which has been both thick and rich as a data source. I will thus combine elements of several areas of analysis, including sociolinguistics, linguistic anthropology, and syntax.

The focus of such research on language variation had shifted over the past century, but more so since the time of Labov, Halliday, and so forth. Here, a variety of approaches in analyzing language variation have emerged. Eckert (2012), for example, classifies studies of language variation into three waves of analytic practice: The first wave of variation studies established broad correlations between linguistic and social variables; the second wave employed an ethnographic approach in explaining language variation; the third wave of variation studies focused on stylistic perspective and its identity associations. In the first two waves, variation was viewed as a marking of social categories, yet overall, language variation has been considered to be a reflection of social identities and categories. I build on the highly grounded assumption that language and the social landscape correlate highly, and emerge in a tailored linguistic practice that can be determined through an ethnography (Eckert 2012). However, current trends in the analysis of variation incorporate the embodied as well as the cognitive aspects of language.

A variant develops through a sequence of eras over a period of time, and certainly in accord with the intensity of application and social significance at each stage (Labov 2001). As such, current analysis has in part incorporated a Labovian classification of phonetic variants into the analysis of morphosyntactic variation, thus facilitating the exploration of the degree of use of a variant within language variation. Labov categorizes phonetic variants into three types: A phonetic variant with little or no social meaning and one that significantly exists as an indicator, and that conveys social information about the speaker; one in which people are aware of markers that are related to social categories and speech styles, it becomes a marker, a variant termed as a stereotype when it represents a popular and conscious characterization of particular social groups (Labov 2001).

During the initial stages, a variant exists as an indicator. It becomes a marker through its increasing popularity, its increasing visibility, and its increasing recognition as a variable in its own right. The variant further undergoes a transition in terms of its popularity and visibility, and becomes a stereotype. As such, the variant moves through the scale of familiarity, a scale which is structured on the extent to which the variant has been indexed in the community and its occurrence in speech contexts within the community. Yet, some variants have greater visibility than others. In the case of Mappila Malayalam, the morphosyntactic variation would at least in part be predicated on the extent to which speakers appropriate these variants, in the Labovian sense. A morphosyntactic analysis would thus do well to categorize these variants, as interconnected variants rather than independent entities.

Mappila Malayalam exhibits a richness in morphosyntactic variation similar to the set of other levels of variations, including the phonological, the morphological, and the lexical.

However, while the phonological and lexical variations are largely visible and exist as markers, and even as stereotypes, the morphosyntactic variations mostly remain unidentified and arduously identifiable among the Malayalam speakers in the region, that is the realization of these morphosyntactic variation is not as noticeable as the phonological and lexical, owing to the complexity of the use of morphosyntax. Conversely, some morphosyntactic variations undergo processes of progression to achieve popularity use; the discussion of these processes can aid in the understanding of variation. I thus argue that the visibility or acceptance of variants, and their distinction from other variants, in the Mappila Malayalam region, is predicated on the following factors.

- a Divergence from the phonological familiarity of the forms in the existing language system.
- b Change in the number of elements in the structure
- c Frequency of occurrence of the variant structure in casual speech events

Factors influencing variants in Mappila Malayalam

At times when the variant exhibits a phonological form that differs to others in the structure, its unique form can facilitate its rise to popularity. People within the speech community are able to identify such forms and hence to specifically distinguish the variety from other varieties spoken in the region. Furthermore, any small alteration or variation in the morphosyntax may intensify the uniqueness of the Mappila Malayalam identity, whereby the form of the variant transfers from indicator to marker and then to stereotype, on the scale of popularity. The frequency of use of the variant structure in speech events throughout the community is also a factor that significantly influences the visibility of the variant, though this factor may be somewhat counter intuitive. In all instances, there is an alteration in the economy of the language and its social context, and thus, the visibility of the variant is highly associated with the economy of its structure, irrespective of the level or type of variation, that is, whether it affects the phonological or morphological form of the structure.

Methodical Framework

To facilitate data collection, my tenure in the field was extensive, during which, I interacted with the Mappila Malayalam community extensively, observing the appropriation of the morphosyntax of the variety in multiple settings. The interactions were both formal and informal, that is, 'spontaneous' (as natural as possible) speech (Milroy and Gordon 2008), in that I discussed this morphosyntactic variation with members of the community, while also viewing their use of this variation. In addition to the casual speech corpus, I also sought to develop a corpus through a cue card selection experiment, in order to better determine the visibility of each variant. In this method, each variant structure appears within its context to expose the choice of the speakers together with their language ideologies and processing of the choice of the variant. In addition to this, I take into account the socio-historical factors

and structural features that affect the visibility of the variant. Such a hybrid methodology of eliciting and analysing the data prompts the relationship between structural variation, visibility, and other factors such as the ideological and semantic malleability of the language.

Analysis and Discussion

Morphosyntactic Variations in Mappila Malayalam

Mappila Malayalam contains a large number of morphosyntactic variations. In the present paper, I discuss three types of such variations, that is, the variation in serial verb constructions, variation in case marking (locative and genitive), and present perfect marking. Throughout the paper, then, I analyze the structural variations and visibility of these variations, and then observe and discuss some ways in which the visibility of the variant affects the variation. I have chosen to focus on the use of the serial verb, below, as this seems to predominate as an influence to the shifting of the morphology in the variety.

The Serial Verb in Mappila Malayalam

Serial verbs in Malayalam are a debatable area in the larger context of Dravidian linguistics. This debate is largely owing to the fact that some scholars do frame serial verbs as conjunctive constructions whereas other scholarship refutes the notion of these verbs as Dravidian conjunctive constructions (Steever 1988; Jayaseelan 2004; Aikhenval'd 2006 et al.). As such, in Malayalam, the serial verb constructions consists of one finite verb preceded by other verbal participles, yet which do not distinguish the tense of the construction nor the context. Asher and Kumari (1997) consider these vcategories of constructions as verb clusters with conjoined adverbial participles. However, Jayaseelan (2004) describes these as serial verb constructions. Jayaseelan denies the possibility of being these kinds of construction a conjunction precisely because of the absence of a conjunctive particle in these constructions (Jayaseelan, 2004). But the literature with various arguments on serial verb constructions in Malayalam agrees to a point that only the last verb is finite and marked for tense as seen in the Example 1 (below). The example is the sentence 'avan oru pe:rajkka pariccə kaḷiccu' (he plucked a guava and ate it).

Morphosyntactic Variation: 'He plucked a guava and ate'				
avan	oru	pe:rajkka	pariccə	kaḷiccu
he	one	guava	pluck	eat-pst
'He plucked a guava and ate it'				

Example 1: Morphosyntactic Variation

In Example 1, the tense is marked only on the final verb. To signify the other tenses, the

marking shifts at the final verb position, as I present below in Example 2 and in Example 3. The excerpt in Example 2 is marked for future tense on final verb, that is, the coda of the sentence, and in Example 3 the final verb is marked for the present continuous tense.

Morphosyntactic Variation: 'He will pluck a guava and eat'				
avan	oru	pe:rajkkā	pariccə	ka.ɟikkum
he	one	guava	pluck	eat-will-fut
'He will pluck a guava and eat'				

Example 2: Morphosyntactic Variation

Morphosyntactic Variation: 'He plucks a guava and eats'				
avan	oru	pe:rajkkā	pariccə	ka.ɟikkunnu
he	one	guava	pluck	eat-pres
'He plucks a guava and eats'				

Example 3: Morphosyntactic Variation

The structure can be given more verbal phrases as a serial construction as I present in example 4. In these structures, the tense information is also marked only at the final verb, where the preceding verbs will remain in their infinite forms.

Morphosyntactic Variation: 'He plucked a guava, washed, cut and ate'						
avan	oru	pe:rajkkā	pariccə	ka.ɟuki	muriccə	ka.ɟiccu
he	one	guava	pluck	wash	cut	eat-pst
'He plucked a guava, washed, cut and ate'						

Example 4: Morphosyntactic Variation

The above category of structure of serial verb construction does not significantly place stress on event order. The instances of serial verb constructions discussed so far do not reinforce such informative references that themselves emanate from the participle forms.

Malayalam exhibits two other serial verb constructions, which reinforces the order of events in a serial verb construction. The first of these occurs is by suffixing the participle verb with the emphatic marker $-t̪ə$. These categories of constructions emphasize the sequential order of the events given in the structure. The following presents an example of this:

Morphosyntactic Variation: 'He plucked a guava and ate'				
avan	oru	pe:rajikka	pariccittə	ka.ɟiccu
he	one	guava	pluck-EMPH	eat-pst
'He plucked a guava and ate'				

Example 5: Morphosyntactic Variation

Above in Example 5, I present that the event of plucking the guava is followed by the event of eating it. A similar construction is used with longer serial verb constructions (as I present in the text in Example 4) as well as the text in Example 6 (below).

Morphosyntactic Variation: 'He plucked a guava and ate'						
avan	oru	pe:rajikka	pariccittə	ka.ɟukittə	muriccittə	ka.ɟiccu
he	one	guava	pluck-EMPH	wash-EMPH	cut-EMPH	eat-pst
'He plucked a guava, washed, cut and ate'						

Example 6: Morphosyntactic Variation

Morphosyntactic Variation: 'He plucked a guava and ate'						
avan	oru	pe:rajikka	pariccittə	ka.ɟuki	muriccə	ka.ɟiccu
he	one	guava	pluck-EMPH	wash	cut	eat-pst
'He plucked a guava, washed, cut and ate'						

Example 7: Morphosyntactic Variation

However, suffixing each verb in a serial verb construction with $-ttə$ is not preferred by the speakers native to the variety in real communication events, despite the fact that they do not acknowledge any grammatical errors in this construction. Thus, the a speaker will frequently add a suffix to the first verb in the series with $-ttə$ yet will retain the infinitive form of all others (excluding the final verb with tense information), as I present in the text in Example 7, where I also indicate the sequential order of events in the sentence.

In an additional structural category in Malayalam stressing the order of events of serial construction, a post position $-konɟə$ is added to the participle form of the first verb in the series, and is also a form for instrumental case marking. The post position *Konda* indicates a progression, which, together with the tense-marking succeeding verb, acts as a marker of simultaneity of these two events, as I present in the text in Example 8.

Morphosyntactic Variation: 'He plucked a guava and ate'		
avan	kararṇə koṇḍə	kuḷiccu
he	cry- prog-PP	bath-pst
'He took bath crying'		

Example 8: Morphosyntactic Variation

These types of serial verb constructions in Malayalam are also seen in other Dravidian languages. Here, another Dravidian language, Tamil, contains a similar category of serial verb construction, as I present in Example 9 (below) in several parts.

Morphosyntactic Variation: 'He plucked a guava and ate'			
avan	ma:ṇṇa	pariccu	sa:pṭa:n
he mango	pluck	eat-pst-3M-sg	
'He plu'He plucked a mango and ate'			

Example 9a: Morphosyntactic Variation

Morphosyntactic Variation: 'He plucked a guava and ate'				
avan	ma:ṇṇa	pariccu	muriccə	sa:pṭa:n
he	mango	pluck	cut	eat-pst-3M-sg
'He plucked the mango, cut, and ate'				

Example 9b: Morphosyntactic Variation

Morphosyntactic Variation: 'He plucked a guava and ate'					
avan pal	ṭe:iccu	kuḷiccu	porapṭu	(sku:lkkə)	po:na:n
he	teeth	brush	bath	getting	ready school-to LOC go-pst-3M-sg
'He brushed, bathed, dressed and left (to school)'					

Example 9c: Morphosyntactic Variation

Morphosyntactic Variation: 'He plucked a guava and ate'		
avan pal	ṭe:iccəṭṭu	kuḷicca:n
he	teeth-brush-EMPH	bath-pst-3M-sg
'He brushed his teeth and took a bath'		

Example 9d: Morphosyntactic Variation

Morphosyntactic Variation: 'He plucked a guava and ate'		
avan a.ɨəɨəkəŋɖe: pa:ɖina:n		[Written Tamil]
he	cry-prog-PP	sing-pst-3M-sg
'Crying, he sang'		
Example 9e: Morphosyntactic Variation 1		

Example 9e: Morphosyntactic Variation

Morphosyntactic Variation: 'He plucked a guava and ate'		
avan a.ɨəɨəkəŋɖe: a.ɨuɨukkittɛ:/ a.ɨuɨittɛ: pa:ɖina:n		[Spoken Tamil]
he	cry-prog-PP	sing-pst-3M-sg
'Crying, he sang'		

Example 9f: Morphosyntactic Variation

The serial verb constructions in the Tamil language show patterned similarities to Malayalam. The structures of the text in Example 9a, Example 9b, and 9c, all do not stress the order of events. Here, the structures in Example 9b and Example 9c indicate that Tamil serial verb constructions can also house more than two verbs, as is the case in Malayalam, in Example 4 (above). Similarly, the emphatic marker *-ttu* marking the initial verb in Example 9d further signifies the sequential order, whereas the texts in Example 9e and Example 9f evidence the simultaneity of events in each of these structures.

Aspect marker differences, as well as conjunctive markers, do not appear in serial verb constructions of Dravidian languages (Jayaseelan 2004). However, Mappila Malayalam deviates from the pattern of not containing the conjunctive marker in serial verb constructions by containing the conjunctive marker *-um* in the structure. *-um* functions differently in Malayalam, as I present in the examples, *avan-um paŋ-um* 'he and I.' *-um* can also act as the future marker in Malayalam, as I present in the example *aɖikk-um* 'will beat,' and as a stress marker in negative polarity constructions, such as in *vannitt-um kaŋɖ-illa* 'did not see even though I came' (Asher and Kumari 1997). However, in serial verb construction in Mappila Malayalam, *-um* functions as a conjunctive marker. Moreover, Mappila Malayalam exhibits only one type of serial verb construction, for all three aspects of serial verb construction event order, as I present in Example 10.

Morphosyntactic Variation: 'He plucked a guava and ate'				
o:n	oru	pe:rakka	pariccum ka:ŋɖə	ɨŋŋu
he	one	guava	pluck-Conj-PP	eat-pst
'He plucked a guava and ate'				

Example 10: Morphosyntactic Variation

Morphosyntactic Variation: ‘He plucked a guava and ate’						
o:n	oru	pe:rakka	pariccum	ka:ηdə	muriccu	ṭṭṇṇu
he	one	guava	pluck-	Conj-PP	cut	eat-pst
‘He plucked a guava and ate’						

Example 11: Morphosyntactic Variation

Morphosyntactic Variation: ‘He plucked a guava and ate’			
a	o:n	karəṇṇum	ka:ηdə kuliccu
b	he	cry- Conj-PP	bath-pst
c	‘He took a bath, crying’		

Example 12: Morphosyntactic Variation

Similar to other Malayalam dialects, Mappila Malayalam marks tense at the coda of serial verb constructions. The structure, as in Example 10, contains the conjunctive marker -um suffixed at the first participle form of the verb followed by the post position ka:ηdə. As the conjunctive or coordinative marker in Malayalam, in noun phrases, -um is marked as ka:ηdə, which signifies both simultaneity and sequential order of events in the structure. Though no structural variations appear in these structures, the meaning between these is appropriated by speaker and context. However, there is a slight variation in intonation between Example 10b and Example 10c, which indicates the sequential order and simultaneity of events. The ka:ηdə in the structure more strongly indicates simultaneity than it does sequential order.

As in Example 10b, the structure is extended by adding more participle verbs. However, the conjunctive marker is added only at the first participle verb. Speakers do not find ungrammaticality when adding the conjunctive markers to participles, yet these markers are not deployed. The texts in Examples 10a and 10b have a fixed order, where Example 10c evidences their randomness in natural conversation. Sufficing each participle form with the conjunctive marker -um, as in Example 11, the construction evidences its habitual scope, i.e., a repeating and prolonging process. However, it should be noted that the post position ka:ηdə is added only once at the participle preceding the final verb with tense information

Morphosyntactic Variation: ‘He plucked a guava and ate’					
o:n	ṭṭṇṇum	kudiccum	pa:dijum	ka:ηdə	ṇṇaḍṇṇu
he	eat-Conj	drink-Conj	sing-Conj- PP		walk-pst
‘He walked eating and drinking’					

Example 13: Morphosyntactic Variation

Also, the Mappila dialect does not evidence a structure at times when each participle form of the verb is suffixed by *-um* and followed by the post position *ka:ɳɖə* in the serial verb construction, as I present in the text in Example 12.

Morphosyntactic Variation: 'He plucked a guava and ate'				
*o:n	tiṅṅum ka:ɳɖə	kudiccum ka:ɳɖə	pa:dijum ka:ɳɖə	ṅaḍaṅṅu
he	eat-Conj-PP	drink-Conj-PP	sing-Conj-PP	walk-pst
'He ate, drank, sang and then walked'				

Example 14: Morphosyntactic Variation

The sentence above provides a sense of that the person ate (something), then drank (something), then sang, and then walked away. I note that, though the structure stresses the sequential order of events, it is not used in natural conversation, nor is it identified as a potential sentence in the variety. The feature altogether renders Mappila Malayalam different from other dialects of Malayalam largely owing to the lack of availability of structure in serial verb construction. At the same time, it conveys this notion through the available structure by licensing the speakers and listeners to extract the meaning from the context, at times with the help of suprasegmental features.

Case marking

Case marking in Malayalam occurs primarily through suffixation and through post positions. In this section, I discuss the variations in case marking exhibited by Mappila Malayalam in genitive and locative case making.

The Genitive Form

The genitive suffix has two variants, *-uḍe* and *-(in)te*, which are both phonologically characterized. The variant *-te* appears with singular nouns with stems ending in *-an* (as in Example 15a), and appears with certain nouns with stems augmented by *-in* (as in the Example 15b and Example 15c following). Other singular nouns and plural nouns accept *-uḍe* as the genitive case marker suffix, as I present in Example 15d, Example 15e, Example 15f, and Example 15g (all below).

Morphosyntactic Variation: 'He plucked a guava and ate'				
<i>makan</i>	'son'	<i>makan-te</i>	son-GEN	'son's'

Example 15a: Morphosyntactic Variation

Morphosyntactic Variation: 'He plucked a guava and ate'

<i>pa:lam</i>	'bridge'	<i>pa:latt̪-in-te</i>	<i>bridge-AUG-GEN</i>	'bridge's'
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Example 15b: Morphosyntactic Variation

Morphosyntactic Variation: 'He plucked a guava and ate'

<i>kaḍal</i>	'sea'	<i>kaḍal-in-te</i>	<i>sea-AUG-GEN</i>	'sea's'
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Example 15c: Morphosyntactic Variation

Morphosyntactic Variation: 'He plucked a guava and ate'

<i>makaḷ</i>	'daughter'	<i>makaḷ-uḍe</i>	<i>daughter-GEN</i>	'daughter's'
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Example 15d: Morphosyntactic Variation

Morphosyntactic Variation: 'He plucked a guava and ate'

<i>kutti</i>	'child'	<i>kuttij-uḍe</i>	<i>child-GEN</i>	'child'
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Example 15e: Morphosyntactic Variation

Morphosyntactic Variation: 'He plucked a guava and ate'

a <i>a:na</i>	'elephant'	<i>a:naj-uḍe</i>	<i>elephant-GEN</i>	'elephant's'
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Example 15f: Morphosyntactic Variation

Morphosyntactic Variation: 'He plucked a guava and ate'

<i>kuttikaḷ</i>	'children'	<i>kutti-kaḷ-uḍe</i>	<i>child-PL-GEN</i>	'children's'
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Example 15g: Morphosyntactic Variation

Conversely, Mappila Malayalam presents a different pattern of dative case marking. Genitive case nouns appear in Mappila Malayalam by suffixing the singular nouns with –(n)te, except in noun stems ending in the retroflex 'l.' This feature is adopted from the Arabi-Malayalam tradition, as Arabi-Malayalam deploys –nte as the generic form for genitive case marking. In Mappila Malayalam, the singular noun ending in the retroflex l, as well as all plurals, are suffixed with –uḍe after the elision of the phoneme– uḷ from the marker, to form the genitive case, as in Example 16.

Morphosyntactic Variation: 'He plucked a guava and ate'

<i>kutti</i>	'child'	<i>kutti:-nte</i>	<i>child-GEN</i>	'child'
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Example 16a: Morphosyntactic Variation

Morphosyntactic Variation: 'He plucked a guava and ate'

<i>a:na</i>	'elephant'	<i>a:ne:-nte</i>	<i>elephant-GEN</i>	'elephant's'
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Example 16b: Morphosyntactic Variation

Morphosyntactic Variation: 'He plucked a guava and ate'

<i>makan</i>	'son'	<i>makan-te</i>	<i>son-GEN</i>	'son's'
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Example 16c: Morphosyntactic Variation

Morphosyntactic Variation: 'He plucked a guava and ate'

<i>pa:lam</i>	'bridge'	<i>pa:latt̪-in-te</i>	<i>bridge-AUG-GEN</i>	'bridge's'
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Example 16d: Morphosyntactic Variation 1

Example 16d: Morphosyntactic Variation

Morphosyntactic Variation: 'He plucked a guava and ate'

<i>kaḍal</i>	'sea'	<i>kaḍal-in-te</i>	<i>sea-AUG-GEN</i>	'sea's'
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Example 16e: Morphosyntactic Variation

Morphosyntactic Variation: 'He plucked a guava and ate'

<i>mo:l̪</i>	'daughter'	<i>mo:l̪-e</i>	<i>daughter-GEN</i>	'daughter's'
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Example 16f: Morphosyntactic Variation

Morphosyntactic Variation: 'He plucked a guava and ate'

<i>kuṭṭikal̪</i>	'children'	<i>kuṭṭi-ka-l̪-e</i>	<i>child-PL-GEN</i>	'children's'
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Example 16g: Morphosyntactic Variation

As seen in the above Example 14a and Example 14b, the nouns ending in the vowels /i/ and /a/ undergo phonological variation. The nouns ending in /i/ lengthen the final vowel /i/ when it suffixes with the genitive marker -(in)te, as in Example 14a. However, I note that the nouns ending in the vowel /a/ change the final vowel /a/ to the [e:] (a lengthened e) at time when they form the genitives, as in Example 14b. Mappila Malayalam exhibits the -(in)te as the generic suffix for the genitive case marking on singular nouns, and the -uḍe as the generic genitive case marker for plurals. In the case of the singular noun ending in a retroflex l, all the plurals are suffixed with -e to form genitive case forms in Mappila Malayalam. As a result, Mappila Malayalam exhibits a case syncretism, since -e functions as the accusative case marker as well as the genitive case marker in some instances. This feature is present in casual speech of other dialects of Malayalam throughout the Malabar region.

The Locative Form

Locative case marking in Malayalam shows a pattern. Similar to the other case marking systems in Malayalam, the locative case marking also undergoes suffixation. Of the dominant markers for the locative case is *-il*, as in *peṭṭij-il* ‘in the box,’ *kuṭṭikaḷ-il* ‘in children,’ and so forth. Movement to a location is often expressed by adding the suffix *-e:kkə* to the locative marker *-il* which results in a complex to-locative case marker *-ile:kkə* (Prabhakara Variar 1979), as in the following example, *ka:ṭṭile:kkə* ‘to the forest.’ This to-locative case marking is otherwise termed as allative (ALL). However, Mappila Malayalam shows a variation in the to-locative case marking pattern. Instead of the complex case marker *-ilekku*, Mappila Malayalam adds the suffix *-kku* to the noun stem, as I present in Example 17.

Morphosyntactic Variation: ‘He plucked a guava and ate’

<i>ka:ḍə</i>	‘forest’	<i>ka:ṭṭakkə</i>	forest-ALL	‘to the forest’
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Example 17: Morphosyntactic Variation

Morphosyntactic Variation: ‘He plucked a guava and ate’

<i>maram</i>	‘tree’	<i>marattakkə</i>	tree-ALL	‘to the tree’
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Example 18: Morphosyntactic Variation

I note that *-kkə* is the dative case marker in Malayalam, as it is in Mappila Malayalam. Thus, both the allative case marker and the dative case marker, being the same suffix, exhibit a case syncretism in Mappila Malayalam. Even so, the speakers distinguish between these two through recognition of context. Together with this, Mappila Malayalam shows a semantic selection in locative case markings with certain words. *-kkal* is the case marker considered as a locative marker for proximal locations. One of the variations regarding the locative case marking in the Mappila dialect is in the word *paḷḷi*, which represents both churches and mosques in Malayalam. When referring to a mosque, a Mappila dialect speaker marks the case differently to speakers of other dialects. Instead of the case marker *-il* as used by the speakers of other dialects, as I present in Example 16a, Mappila dialect speakers use *-kal* as I present in Example 16c. Note that Mappila Malayalam speakers use *-il* as the locative marker when referring to a church, as I present in Example 16b.

Morphosyntactic Variation: ‘He plucked a guava and ate’

<i>avan</i>	<i>paḷḷi:l</i>	<i>pa:ji</i>	
2sg-M-NOM	mosque-LOC	go-pst	[other dialects]
‘He went to the mosque/church’			

Example 19: Morphosyntactic Variation

Morphosyntactic Variation: 'He plucked a guava and ate'				
a	avan	pa[[i:l	po:ji	
b	2sg-M-NOM	church -LOC/*mosque-LOC	go-pst	[Mappila Malayalam]
c	'He went to the church/ *mosque'			

Example 20: Morphosyntactic Variation

Morphosyntactic Variation: 'He plucked a guava and ate'				
o:n		pa[[ikkal	po:ji	
2sg-M-NOM		mosque-LOC	go-pst	[Mappila Malayalam]
'He went to the mosque'				

Example 21: Morphosyntactic Variation

Adding to this, in Kerala, several place names end in pa[[i, where, Mappila dialect speakers do not deploy -kkal constructions for those words. Notably, the speakers of other dialects do not use the -kkal construction for mosques or churches. Mappila Malayalam thereby undergoes semantic selection for locative case marking, and thus creates a distinction between the homonym *palli*, where one of the senses is associated with religious practice and the other is associated with other social groups.

Post Positions

Malayalam is a language with a significant number of post positions across various functions. These post positions differ from affixes, and are partially detachable from phrases. One of the significant types of the post position is case marking. In the following sections, I discuss the variations present in Mappila Malayalam, in comparison to other varieties of Malayalam.

Perfect Marking

The perfect aspect in Malayalam comprises a combination of -ttə (post position to mark the completion of an event as seen in the serial verb construction with an emphasis on the sequential order), immediately followed by *uṇḍə* and added to the verb as the suffix as I present in Example 17. *uṇḍə* is also used in copular constructions with adverbial complements. The existential sentences with an absolutely clear position are usually produced with the copular form *uṇḍə* (Asher and Kumari 1997), as I present in the following example. Here, *uṇḍə* is used as the verb for 'exist' or 'be at a place.'

Morphosyntactic Variation: 'He plucked a guava and ate'		
<i>ke:ra[att̪il</i>	<i>te:ɳukal</i>	<i>uɳd̪ə</i>
Keralam-LOC	coconut tree-PL	be-PRES
'There are coconut trees in Keralam'		

Example 22: Morphosyntactic Variation

Asher and Kumari (1997) noted that one of the potential structures of copular sentences with an adverbial complement is that containing *uɳd̪ə*. The existential sentences with a clear position are usually produced with the copular form *uɳd̪ə*, which is used as the verb for 'exist' or 'be at a place' (Asher and Kumari 1997).

Morphosyntactic Variation: 'He plucked a guava and ate'		
<i>avan</i>	<i>vi:t̪til</i>	<i>vaɳɳitt̪uɳd̪ə</i>
he	home-LOC	come-PERF-pres
'He has come home'		

Example 23: Morphosyntactic Variation

Morphosyntactic Variation: 'He plucked a guava and ate'		
<i>avan</i>	<i>paɳi:l</i>	<i>vaɳɳitt̪uɳd̪ə</i>
he	mosque/church-LOC	come-PERF-pres
'He has come to the mosque/church'		

Example 24: Morphosyntactic Variation

However, the same form *uɳd̪ə* also appears as a component in several aspectual forms, such as past (*uɳd̪ə:jirunnu*), present (*uɳd̪ə*), and future (*uɳd̪ə:vum*), as well as the perfective aspect. The perfect aspect becomes a combination of *-tt̪-* immediately followed by *-uɳd̪ə*, and added to the verb as the suffix. Malayalam exhibits another structure for present perfect with *irikkun̪nu*, as I present in Example 25 (below).

Morphosyntactic Variation: 'He plucked a guava and ate'		
<i>avan</i>	<i>paɳi:l</i>	<i>vaɳɳirikkun̪nu</i>
he	mosque/church	come-PERF-pres
'He has come to the mosque or church'		

Example 25: Morphosyntactic Variation

The marker *irikkunnu* derives from the word *irikkuka*, a lexical verb that has the meaning ‘to sit.’ However, it also has the status as a ‘being’ verb (Asher and Kumari 1997), for which, Mappila Malayalam exhibits variation. The perfective in Mappila Malayalam is marked with a different form, yet the copular constructions remain the same as those of *uṇḍā*. This variation in Mappila Malayalam distinguishes the structures with the *uṇḍā* - copular constructions and the structures which contain a perfective aspect. Mappila Malayalam only has one structure with the marker *-kkəṇə* (a contracted form of *irikkunnu* as the perfective marker), as I present in Example 25.

Morphosyntactic Variation: ‘He plucked a guava and ate’		
o:n	paḷḷikkal	vaṇṇə-kkəṇə
he	mosque-LOC	come-PERF-pres
‘He has come to the mosque’		

Example 26: Morphosyntactic Variation

Morphosyntactic Variation: ‘He plucked a guava and ate’		
avan	veetil	vannkknu
he	home-LOC	come-PERF-pres
‘He has come home’		

Example 27: Morphosyntactic Variation

Morphosyntactic Variation: ‘He plucked a guava and ate’		
nja:n	a:naje	kandkknu
I	elephant-ACC	see-PERF-pres
‘I have seen elephant’		

Example 28: Morphosyntactic Variation

The variation in perfect marking is one of the most observed variations of Mappila. Similar to the other visible variants of Mappila Malayalam that has obtained the status of a marker, the perfect marker also diverges from existing forms. The phonological for *-kkəṇə* is less familiar among Malayalam speakers, having been identified as a unique feature of Mappila Malayalam.

Visibility and Impact of Variations in Mappila Malayalam

The analysis of variations that I discuss above suggests that the phonological and formal divergence from the existing language system of variants gives more visibility, and prompts

the speakers to identify the variants with the language variety. This phenomenon has led to the development of the variants from the status of an indicator to a marker. In the case of Mappila Malayalam, the evidence suggests that the variants that are divergent phonologically and structurally in terms of quantity as well as structural form have been identified with Mappila Malayalam by Malayalam speakers and thereby realized a marker. The other variations with structural and phonological similarity with Malayalam have not attained marker status among the Malayalam speakers nor have they become indexed for speakers of Mappila Malayalam.

The analysis of the visibility of serial verb construction in Mappila Malayalam also suggests that the structure gains visibility among the speakers of Mappila Malayalam as well as those speakers of surrounding varieties of Malayalam. This visibility may be influenced by the diversion of the structure from the existing structure in Malayalam. The sequence of the conjunctive marker –um followed by the post position ka:ɳɖə in a serial verb construction unique to Mappila Malayalam is identifiable, thereby indexing the structure with the speech community. The variation is both in terms of the number of elements in the structure as well as the forms in the structure, thus affecting the entire economy of the serial verb construction pattern in Malayalam. This divergence from the existing system of Malayalam results in an increased visibility of the variant, thus becoming a morphosyntactic variation marker for Mappila Malayalam.

When observing the visibility of variation in case marking, apparent becomes the fact that it is not highly evident. The invisibility of these variations is influenced by structural similarity in terms of form and element number. The variants in the Mappila Malayalam locative case marking are already existing forms in the linguistic system of Malayalam. Here, speakers of the variety do not identify these variations as a deviation from the language system. However, analysis indicates that this visibility has resulted in the stereotyping of the variant. The features among the morphosyntactic variations of Mappila Malayalam that gained visibility, attention, and marker status are the perfective marker –knu and serial verb construction, largely owing to their frequent usage and divergence from the existing system in the casual speech. These collective forces have forced the visibility of the variants and thus their emergence as markers.

Yet, the dynamics of language do not allow their progress to halt at this level. The popularity of the markers creates a consciousness among the people with regards to the variation associated with the speech community. The concomitant effect of the socio-political background, including the education background of the Mappilas linking their language, has mediated the development of a consciousness of the variants as constituting a less prestigious variety spoken by uneducated Mappilas. This consciousness has resulted in variant markers attaining the status of stereotypes. Thus, as the variant structure becomes popular and divergent from the existing system, it will gain visibility and move from the status of an indicator to the status of marker and finally to the status of a stereotype.

This present analysis finds that the phenomenon of elevation from indicator to marker and then to a stereotype in the instance of variants has initiated the development of further variations in Mappila Malayalam. The stereotype variants create a conscious characterization of the Mappilas. The variations may well be motivated to contribute to a more prestigious variety, thereby contributing to a higher social status through language use. Hence, I argue that the motivation for language variation in Mappila Malayalam is largely predicated on its social acceptance. I notice that the visibility of the variants which are predicated on purely structural features in the case of morphosyntactic variations have categorized the variants as situated within a progressive scale and to attain further variation. Therefore, the linguistic structure responsible for language variation appears by taking aid from external social factors, not remaining as a static variant and thereby enriching the dynamics of language.

Conclusion

The analysis of morphosyntactic variations in Mappila Malayalam suggests that the dynamic behavior of Mappila Malayalam is largely influenced by the collective forces initiated internally within language licensed by its structure as well as externally by various social factors. The visibility of the variant becomes an important factor in the dynamism of the language. Yet, concurrently, the visibility of a variant is highly dependent on three aspects; phonological divergence, variation in the number of elements in the structure, and the frequency of occurrence of the variant in casual speech. In accordance with the visibility, variants move through a progressive sequence, being indicator, marker, and stereotype. The most visible variant moves swiftly through the sequence and reaches the final position of a stereotype. The variant becomes a popular and conscious characterization of a particular social group, and in the case of morphosyntactic variations of Mappila Malayalam, the variants have become indexed with the respective community.

The elevated status of a variant as a stereotype initiates further variation by creating a certain consciousness among the speakers. Accordingly, the structure of the language variation and the social factors conjointly promotes further variation in the language, and conserves its dynamism. The process can be observed in other levels of linguistic expressions as well as in other languages too.

The current analysis opens up an area for further scholarship within Mappila Malayalam and other language varieties, in order to understand and describe the configuration of variation happening in languages. It is thus my hope that this study will encourage other scholars to develop such work and to hence contribute to the understanding of both Mappila Malayalam and other languages or varieties and hence to describe the progress of such varieties through their morphosyntax and other factors.

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Abbreviations

3M- 3rd person Masculine
ACC- Accusative case
ALL- Allative
AUG- Augment
Conj- Conjunctive Marker
EMPH- Emphatic Marker

Fut- Future
GEN- Genitive case
LOC- Locative case
PERF- Perfective marker
PL- Plural
PP- Post Position

Pres- Present
Prog- Progressive
Pst- Past
Sg- Singular