

# Polyfunctionality of Coordination in Dravidian

Prarthanaa Bharadwaj  
Goethe university, Frankfurt

In several Dravidian languages, the morphemes used to mark coordination appear in a strikingly wide range of environments that extend beyond canonical conjunction and disjunction. The particle *-oo* participates in the formation of disjunction (1-a), questions (1-c), epistemic indefinites (1-b), and correlative clauses (1-d) (Balusu, 2021). This type of polyfunctional particle – dubbed Q-particles in the literature – has been attested crosslinguistically in Sinhala (Slade, 2011), Japanese (Uegaki, 2018), and Hungarian (Szabolcsi, 2015), among others. Additionally, a similar behaviour is exhibited by the inclusive clitic *-uu* that, aside from marking conjunction, also occurs in negative indefinites, free relative clauses and conditionals. This raises a broader question about how questions, coordination, indefinites, and relative clauses are related in the grammar. Should such uses be traced back to a single semantic core, or do they reflect multiple unrelated lexical items?

(1) a. doddappa bass-all-**oo** kaar-all-**oo** bar-utta-re  
uncle bus-LOC-DISJ car-LOC-DISJ come-NPST-3PL  
'Uncle will come in a bus or a car'

b. yaar-**oo** baagilu taTTi-da-ru  
who-DISJ door knock-PST-3PL  
'Somebody knocked on the door'

c. niinu kuDi-di-ddu biiDi-n-**oo** sigareTT-**oo**?  
you dring-PST-GER beedi-ACC-DISJ cigarette-DISJ  
'Was it a beedi or a cigarette that you smoked?'

d. ravi yaava pustaka khariidisi-dan-**oo** ad-annu odi-da  
Ravi which book bought.PST-3SGM-DISJ that-ACC read-PST.3SGM  
'Which book Ravi bought, (he) read that'

The central goal of this work is to determine how the extended uses of these connective particles should be analysed within a formal semantic framework. The crosslinguistic robustness of this phenomenon motivates a unification analysis. This talk takes a problem-setting perspective. I introduce the empirical landscape of coordination in Dravidian and identify recurring interpretive patterns that cut across constructions.

In particular, the data suggest a preliminary distinction between environments that give rise to alternative-based interpretations (such as disjunctions and questions) and environments that involve dependency-like interpretations (such as indefinites and relative-type constructions). I situate these observations with respect to existing approaches to Q-particles and discuss what constraints the Dravidian facts impose on any unified account of coordination.

## References

Balusu, R. (2021). The dravidian correlative and the disjunction marker. In D. Alok & S. Raghatham (Eds.), *Proceedings of fasil 9*.

Slade, B. (2011). *Formal and philological inquiries into the nature of interrogatives, indefinites, disjunction, and focus in sinhala and other languages* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign].

Szabolcsi, A. (2015). What do quantifier particles do? *Linguistics and Philosophy*, 38(2), 159–204.

Uegaki, W. (2018). A unified semantics for the japanese q-particle *ka* in indefinites, questions and disjunctions. *Glossa: A Journal of General Linguistics*, 3(1), 14.